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# A Case Study of Chinese Teachers' Experiences of Multiliteracies and Multimodality in Teaching Young Students Chinese Literacy in Canada

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## Abstract

Existing literature regarding teachers' practices of multiliteracies has proven that multiliteracies enables teachers to deal with diversity and build creative teaching practices in classrooms. However, few studies have shed light on Chinese teachers' understanding and practices of multiliteracies. This qualitative case study investigated and displayed two Chinese teachers' diverse perceptions and practices of implementing multiliteracies in teaching young children Chinese literacy in Canada. A constant comparison approach was adopted to analyze the data collected from interviews, curriculum materials and reflective writings from two Chinese teachers. The findings show that these Chinese teachers have different perceptions regarding multiliteracies, and create innovative Chinese literacy practices responding to students' learning needs and interests. The implications highlight the importance of professional development in promoting teachers' understanding and practices of multiliteracies.

*Keywords:* multiliteracies, multimodality, Chinese literacy teaching, Chinese teachers' perceptions, professional development

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## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
List of Tables.....	vi
List of Figures.....	vii
List of Appendices.....	viii
Chapter 1.....	1
Introduction.....	1
1.1 Research Problem.....	1
1.2 Research Purpose and Questions.....	5
1.3 Outline of the Study.....	7
Chapter 2.....	8
Literature Review.....	8
2.1 Introduction.....	8
2.2 A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies for Guiding Innovative Literacy Teaching and Learning for Young Children.....	8
2.3 Teachers' Perceptions of Literacy and Multiliteracies for Young CLD Children's Literacy Development.....	20
2.4 Summary.....	24
Chapter 3 .....	26

Methodology and Methods.....	26
3.1 Introduction.....	26
3.2 A Qualitative Case Study Methodology.....	26
3.3 Research Participants.....	28
3.4 Data Collection.....	29
3.4.1 Interviews.....	30
3.4.2 Curriculums materials collection.....	31
3.4.3 Reflection writing.....	32
3.5 Data Analysis.....	33
3.6 Trustworthiness.....	37
3.7 Ethical Considerations.....	38
3.8 Summary.....	39
Chapter 4.....	40
Findings.....	40
4.1 Introduction.....	40
4.2 Theme 1: Chinese Teachers' Diverse Perceptions of Multiliteracies and Multimodality.....	40
4.3 Theme 2: Classroom Practices/Pedagogy, Tools and Strategies, Responding to Students' Needs and Interests.....	45
4.4 Theme 3: Insufficient Technological Support and Practical Instructions for Teaching.....	68

4.5 Theme 4: Teachers' Development.....	71
4.6 Summary.....	73
Chapter 5.....	74
Discussion and Implications.....	74
5.1 Introduction.....	74
5.2 Diverse Perceptions of Multiliteracies and Multimodality.....	74
5.3 Classroom Practices/Pedagogy, Tools and Strategies, Responding to Students' Needs and Interests.....	77
5.4 Insufficient Technological Support and Practical Instructions for Teaching...82	
5.5 Teachers' Professional and Personal Development.....	83
5.6 Implications for Practice and Recommendations for Future Research.....	84
5.7 Significance of the Study.....	87
References.....	89
Appendix A.....	108
Appendix B.....	110
Curriculum Vitae.....	112

## List of Tables

Table 1: Timeline of Data Collection.....	30
-------------------------------------------	----

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Data analysis process.....	34
Figure 2: An example of open codes.....	35
Figure 3: Axial codes to categories.....	36
Figure 4: An example of peer debriefing.....	37
Figure 5: Lesson plan of four seasons in Beijing.....	44
Figure 6: XINHUA Dictionary.....	53
Figure 7: Two Story Books.....	57
Figure 8: A Photo from the story book.....	58
Figure 9: The poem of Spring Rain.....	61
Figure 10: A screenshot of Google Translate.....	65
Figure 11: Lesson plan of Chinese Kung Fu.....	67



## List of Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Questions.....	108
Appendix B: A Letter of Information.....	110

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

This study was born out of the need to better understand how in-practice Chinese literacy teachers see and use multiliteracies and the hope to help other teachers new to the field possibly benefit from these observations. In more concrete terms, the purposes of this research can be divided into three categories: (1) to explore the experiences and relevant perceptions of Chinese teachers who use multiliteracies for the literacy development of young Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) children in a Canadian context; (2) to introduce innovative Chinese literacy learning practices being used by Chinese teachers who have undergone academic multiliteracies training ; and (3) to provide suggestions and resources for novice Chinese teachers who are looking to incorporate multiliteracies practices in their work for young CLD children. This chapter starts with an outline of the research problem, presents the research purpose and questions, and ends with an overview of the study.

#### 1.1 Research Problem

As China is becoming one of the most influential countries in the world, learning Chinese is becoming more prominent (Sara, 2015; Shao, 2015). Due to China's expanding economy and widespread emigration of its population into different countries, people from other cultural backgrounds are becoming more familiar with Chinese culture and choosing to learn the language as their future second or foreign language. According to a 2011 survey by Canada's National Household Survey, the largest source of immigrants in Canada is Asia and the most common language spoken, besides English and French which are the two official languages, is Chinese. Apart from the current significance of Chinese language which triggers governments to encourage their citizens to learn it, many Chinese immigrants in Canada are looking to have their children learn their language by establishing Chinese

schools which interested locals can attend as well. At present, Canada has thirty Confucius institutes and classrooms across the country to help familiarize people with Chinese culture and language (Hanban, 2015) which is a substantial growth compared to 1899 when the first Chinese school was established by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) to help children learn Chinese (Jenny, n. d.).

Students from English-speaking countries are working hard to improve their Chinese literacy, but the literacy teaching methods their Chinese educators are using are lagging behind. One problem is that Chinese teachers have less experience in providing innovative teaching practices and resources for students. For example, Jin and Cortazzi (1998) noted that Chinese teachers have “very little creativity” (p. 756) in teaching young students and are faced with “limitations on resources” (p. 743) they can use for teaching Chinese literacy. This is in line with Albert’s (2011) findings which showed many Chinese teachers followed traditional Chinese literacy teaching methods. The methods referred to, focus more on a teacher-directed and content-based way of teaching reading and writing skills through consistent repetition and memorization (Li, Rao, & Tse, 2012). This can also be revealed in Li, Wang, and Wong’s (2011) study, in which over 95% of the 20 Chinese teachers surveyed in a Chinese kindergarten used copying and reciting exercises in Chinese literacy teaching. Also, Albert’s (2011) study stated that Chinese teachers rely mainly on a written textbook in classrooms and lack the awareness needed to utilize multimodal sources such as technology tools, movies or arts into their teaching.

However, to properly function in the twenty-first century, students need to become multiliterate through different meaning-making processes (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Thus, it is important for teachers to help engage students in “multimodal” (Unsworth, 2001, p. 7) learning practices. Relying solely on print-based material or a single teaching method limits the ways students communicate and creatively make meaning. Claims regarding the

widespread use of traditional Chinese literacy teaching methods (Albert, 2011; Li, Rao, & Tse, 2012) mentioned above reminded me of my own learning experiences in China when teachers heavily emphasized reading and writing skills. They valued written textbooks as the most useful teaching material in classrooms and ignored the importance of students' diverse literacy abilities and requirements such as critical thinking and creative meaning making. An issue contributing to the persistence of these practices and perspectives is the fact that Chinese teachers do not have appropriate and relevant examples of innovative literacy teaching methods within a similar context from which they can learn and enhance their own classrooms (Cole & Pullen, 2009; Jin & Cortazzi, 1998; Li, Corrie, & Wong, 2008).

In 2015, I came to Western University to pursue a master's degree in Education. While studying the topic of literacy, I realized how it involves much more than reading and writing, and that there is more than one way and source to motivate young students in their literacy learning process. Specifically, a pedagogy called multiliteracies can assist teachers in providing multiple ways and multimodal sources for motivating students to make meanings in diverse contexts (New London Group [NLG], 1996).

During my studies here, I have had access to the research and findings of many scholars' who have investigated the benefits of employing multiliteracies and multimodality in literacy teaching environments. For instance, Selber's (2004) book indicated that students get more involved in a computer assisted literacy learning environment and become effective users of technology tools with proper guidance from their teachers. Other multiliteracies techniques such as "fanfiction writing" (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003, p. 558) have also been used to facilitate students "to construct meaning in sophisticated ways" (p. 582). Additionally, Makin, Diaz, and McLachlan (2007), encouraged young students to use writing journals, painting, singing and other innovative ways to promote their literacy learning experiences while accommodating their unique needs and interests. These findings further

revealed that the pedagogy of multiliteracies proved to urge students, especially young children, towards literacy learning (Cole & Pullen, 2009; Hartnell-Young, 2006; Makin, Diaz, & McLachlan, 2007; Schwarzer, 2001; Yelland, 2011).

The existing studies referred to show the importance of employing multiliteracies pedagogy within a context of Chinese literacy teaching with the goal of helping other Chinese teachers (Qin-hong, 2009). The multiliteracies pedagogy accepts the diversity of language and culture (NLG, 1996) by encouraging educators to use various methods to make and express meaning in a wide range of forms across different languages and cultures around the world (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Lo Bianco, 2000).

According to numerous teacher education scholars (Fang, 1996; Hutchison & Reinking, 2011; Mather, Bos, & Babur, 2001), teachers' perceptions of literacy can highly influence their teaching methods and techniques. Unfortunately, many Chinese teachers have a limited perception of multiliteracies. That is, many Chinese teachers have not realized the broad range of literacy teaching (involving concepts such as cultivating students' critical thinking abilities) and the value in incorporating different learning resources into their work. As a result, their classroom multiliteracies practices are affected. For example, the application of technology is an important component in multiliteracies practices, but it is often disregarded in Chinese classrooms because of teachers' "narrow definition of literacy" that consists of utilizing only print-based teaching materials, and also because of the teachers' "lack of understanding of and confidence in the potential of the use of technology in early years" (Turbill, 2001, p. 255). Similarly, Martello (2007) demonstrated in her study that "teachers' understandings about the social and cultural dimensions of diverse literacy practices inform the beliefs and values underpinning their teaching practices" (p. 89).

Therefore, teachers' perceptions of innovative literacy practices are essential for the literacy development of young children. This is because "early childhood teachers play a

central role in building children's literacies" (Martello, 2007, p. 89), and young children who are living in the twenty-first century need multiple ways to develop literacy abilities (Makin, Diaz, & McLachlan, 2007). Both Chinese and Canadian teachers are suggested to have a broad understanding of literacy teaching and try to utilize various resources for young children to benefit from in literacy learning (Cole & Pullen, 2009; Li, Corrie, & Wong, 2008; Li, Wang, & Wong, 2011; Unsworth, 2001).

Studies show that if Chinese teachers learn from other Chinese teachers who have a strong grasp of multiliteracies, it may help them properly implement optimal literacy practices when working with young children (Bin & Freebody, 2009; Chu, Tse, & Chow, 2011; Li, Wang, & Wong, 2011).

## **1.2 Research Purpose and Questions**

This research aims to explore Chinese teachers' experiences of multiliteracies with the goal of helping other Chinese teachers enhance their capabilities of implementing the same pedagogy when working with young culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) children in a Canadian context. In this study, I have defined diversity as cultural and linguistic diversity (NLG, 1996). More specifically, it refers to the different cultural backgrounds of Chinese teachers and their students (such as a Chinese and Canadian culture), and the different languages they speak (such as Chinese and English). The main objectives of this research are:

- To explore the experiences and relevant perceptions of Chinese teachers who use multiliteracies for young CLD children's literacy development in a Canadian context
- To introduce innovative Chinese literacy practices created by Chinese teachers who have undergone academic training in multiliteracies
- To provide suggestions and resources for novice Chinese teachers who are looking to incorporate multiliteracies practices in their classrooms for young CLD children

After communicating with my peers who are teaching Chinese to young students in Canada, I learned they all have quite a bit of experience in adopting multiliteracies pedagogy in their teaching settings. These Chinese teachers had completed courses on multiliteracies and multimodality while studying their Master of Professional Education and they have been working hard to put the pedagogy into practice in their own literacy teaching classrooms. In the absence of research that shows examples of Chinese teachers' experiences of using multiliteracies pedagogy in teaching young children Chinese literacy, introducing the practices of these experienced teachers becomes crucial.

The following research questions will guide me in pursuing the research purposes mentioned above:

1. What perceptions do Chinese teachers who have experienced multiliteracies education and practices in Canada have about multiliteracies?
2. How do they apply multiliteracies pedagogy into their Chinese literacy teaching to young students?
3. What challenges do these Chinese teachers experience in the process of implementing multiliteracies in their own teaching practices with young children?
4. And what suggestions do they have for other teachers who want to use multiliteracies in teaching young students literacy?

The first two research questions address the problem with Chinese teachers' limited perception of multiliteracies which prevents them from creating innovative teaching methods and utilizing multiple resources to teach students Chinese literacy. For the first research question, through interviews and reflective writings, it was possible to directly exhibit how some Chinese teachers who have experienced multiliteracies understand its theory and pedagogy in a diverse teaching environment. For the second research question, in order to provide good examples of using multiliteracies, other than interviews and reflective writings,

curriculum materials (such as lesson plans and literacy practice assignments) created by Chinese teachers which reflected their multiliteracies practices were analyzed. For the third and fourth questions, first and follow-up interviews shed light on the problems and challenges that these teachers have encountered, along with their suggestions for both Chinese and Canadian teachers who want to incorporate multiliteracies in teaching young CLD children.

### **1.3 Outline of the Study**

In the first chapter of this study, I summarize the research problem, research purpose and research questions regarding Chinese teachers' experiences in utilizing multiliteracies pedagogy in teaching Chinese to students in Canada. In Chapter two, I provide existing literature on multiliteracies pedagogy and provide relevant practical teaching examples. Chapter three presents the merits of using a case study for this research, as well methodology details of my work. In Chapter four I describe findings from the two participants' practical teaching experiences. And in the last chapter, I present discussions and suggestions corresponding to the findings presented in Chapter four, in hope of helping Chinese and Canadian teachers better implement multiliteracies pedagogy in their teaching environments.



## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine existing literature on multiliteracies. I first review the development of multiliteracies theories in literacy teaching (NLG, 1996). Then, I will present the components of multiliteracies as well as multimodality in helping teachers implement innovative literacy practices and resources for students (Cope & Kalantizis, 2009; NLG, 1996). Next, I review existing literature referring to the importance and effectiveness of implementing multiliteracies to support young students' literacy development (Makin, Diaz, & McLachlan, 2007). Then, I examine existing research concerning teachers' perceptions of multiliteracies as well as the importance of professional development for promoting teachers' understanding of multiliteracies (Rowell, Kosnik, & Beck, 2008). The chapter contains the following two sections: (1) a pedagogy of multiliteracies for guiding innovative literacy teaching and learning for young children, and (2) teachers' perceptions of literacy and multiliteracies for young culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) children's literacy development.

#### 2.2 A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies for Guiding Innovative Literacy Teaching and Learning for Young Children

From a traditional perspective, literacy mainly refers to the reading and writing abilities (Tong, McBride-Chang, Shu, & Wong, 2009), which is quite a narrow concept. Due to the rapid development of the economy and technology, the scope of literacy should be expanded (Copo & Kalantizis, 2000). Other than reading and writing, literacy should also include other discourses (such as multiple meaning making skills) and the expression of meaning through multiple forms (such as digital tools, art, or music) (Cope & Kalantizis, 2009; New London Group, 1996).

In addition, traditional literacy pedagogy is known to “disregard children’s cultural and linguistic resources” in order to “assimilate them into the fictions of mainstream culture” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2014, vii), which means traditional literacy pedagogy does not cherish young CLD children’s diversities. However, in the globalized environment due to the “proliferation of communications channels and media supports” (New London Group, 1996, p. 61), people have increasing new ways to communicate with each other in the world, which “extends cultural and subcultural diversity” (p. 61) and leads to increasing differences arising from diverse cultures and languages. Thus, in today’s schools, students are simultaneously experiencing the presence of a multitude of cultures and languages in learning practices (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). To address the “question of differences” (NLG, 1996, p. 61) and hence, be able to assist every student with their learning, a new pedagogy should be considered and put into practice for young students (Cope & Kalantzis, 2014).

A pedagogy of multiliteracies, initiated by the New London Group (NLG) in 1996, is an ideal solution which can help deal with “cultural and linguistic diversity” and help all students achieve success in literacy learning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 3). According to the New London Group (1996), multiliteracies is a new term which refers to “the multiplicity of communications channels and medias, and the increasing saliency of cultural and linguistic diversity” (p. 63). This new approach optimizes the concept of literacy by “emphasizing how negotiating the multiple linguistic and cultural differences in our society is central to the pragmatics of the working, civic, and private lives of students” (NLG, 1996, p. 60). Moreover, multiliteracies support teachers and students to experience “a variety of forms associated with information and multimedia technologies” (NLG, 1996, P. 61) in literacy teaching and learning.

In terms of the pedagogy of multiliteracies, there are two main components, design and multimodality (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; New London Group, 1996). First, the design in

multiliteracies includes three key elements: Available Designs, Designing, and the Redesigned (New London Group, 1996). Available Designs are the accessible information we seek from various resources such as different cultures and regions to make meanings, Designing is transforming the meanings on/with the Available Designs, and the Redesigned is the what has been transformed and reproduced through the Designing process (New London Group, 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Through this designing process, teachers develop engaging literacy practices which help students become “fully makers and remakers of signs and transformers of meaning” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 10) by drawing on students’ diverse cultures and linguistic differences and experiences. By searching for this designing process in the classrooms of my participant teachers, I was able to see how they are helping their students to become active meaning designers. This understanding helped me answer my research questions of how Chinese teachers perceive and practice Multiliteracies in their work.

Second, multiliteracies focuses on the important role of multimodality in providing a variety of modes of meaning-making in an information era (NLG, 1996). In traditional literacy teaching, written language is the predominant form considered for the creation of any meaning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). However, along with the rapid development of new media in communication environments, a wide range of modalities became accessible to learners for meaning making and expressing (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Traditional forms of literacy and language (such as written language) are no longer the only pathways for meaning-making and meaning-transferring (Kress, 2000). Multimodality provides teachers and students with various modes (such as visual and audio) to fulfill the purposes of meaning making and communication (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; NLG, 1996). With the help of a deep understanding of the notion of multimodality, I investigated the diverse modes chosen and used by the participant Chinese teachers in their teaching and how they utilized these

different modes to facilitate their students meaning-making processes.

To help teachers provide students with multiple modalities in learning, Cope and Kalantzis (2009) provided a range of possible modes for designing and expressing meaning. Seven modes are included in the range, these are: “Written Language” (such as written works and print literature), “Oral Language” (like a spoken lecture), “Visual Representation” (like photos), “Audio Representation” (for example, noises, sounds and music), “Tactile Representation” (senses such as taste, touch, etc.), “Gesture Representation” (such as body language), and “Spatial Representation” (such as space and geographical factors) (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, pp. 12-13). With the utilization of different modes, students are capable of processing knowledge and meaning in multiple forms. Moreover, these different modes provide different opportunities for meaning-making (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Therefore, learners can choose different modes to make and transform meaning based on their own learning interests and needs.

Students in today’s schools are from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and this fact makes the current school context diverse with interests and experiences (Mills, 2006). With a multiliteracies pedagogy, teachers can recognize student diversity and draw on differences to create meaning (Makin, Diaz, & McLachlan, 2007). Students are also able to become multiliterate through multiliteracies practices tailored to their specific qualities (Cole & Pullen, 2009; Hamston, 2006; Mills, 2006).

Then how can multiliteracies pedagogy be implemented in literacy teaching? According to the New London Group (NLG) (1996), there are four crucial dimensions in multiliteracies pedagogy: Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, Critical Framing, and Transformed Practice. These four components of multiliteracies do not follow a hierarchical order, but are interactive in complicated ways. According to the New London Group (1996),

these four “elements of each may occur simultaneously, while at different times one or the other will predominate, and all of them are repeatedly revisited at different levels” (p. 84).

Situated Practice emphasizes putting learning and teaching practices and experiences into the real world and contexts (NLG, 1996). Teachers need to create various teaching and learning practices according to their particular teaching environments and students’ needs. They must also help students connect their own life experiences with their school experiences. For example, Mills (2006) introduced an Australian teacher who designed collaborative Claymation movie-making practices for her young culturally and linguistically diverse students. In this study, the Australian teacher emphasized “culture purposes” (p. 19) and movie themes that arose from “students’ own interests” (p. 19). Through a collaborative Claymation movie-creating process (involving phases such as designing stories and setting up movie sets), students “moved from a school culture that focused predominately on monomodal writing, to a culture of visual, spatial, gestural and audio designing of digital movies characteristic of contemporary popular culture” (p. 27). The findings of Mills’s (2006) study highlighted that the Claymation films practices enabled students to experience “culture shift(s)” (p. 27) by combining their different cultures to design Claymation movies, and engaging them “in a multimedia world” (p. 28). With guidance from the concept of Situated Practice, teachers stay on the lookout to capture students’ diversity and situate the meaning-making in real world contexts (NLG, 1996), so that the literacy practices become “profoundly interactional” (Mondada & Doehler, 2004, p. 501).

Overt Instruction calls for teachers to cherish students’ existing experiences and conduct collaborative activities with their students to develop their problem-solving skills (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; 2009). In this process, teachers can give tasks to their students and provide instructions to help them complete the tasks. Through a process referred to as scaffolding, as students gradually obtain new skills and knowledge, they gain a systematic

and analytical understanding of their knowledge and become enabled to manage their learning goals by themselves (e.g., Cumming-Potvin, 2007; Makino & Hartnell-Young, 2009).

In the scaffolding process, teachers should also learn how to enact Overt Instruction and Situated Practice “simultaneously”. Taking Mills’s (2006) research as an example again, in instructing students to design Claymation movies, the Australian teacher provided Overt Instructions to students on how to write stories properly. Also, she provided direct instructions in each lesson to help her students understand what tasks they needed to complete. Through this instructional scaffolding, students copy the knowledge taught by their teachers and master the Claymation movie-making skills by participating in collaborative activities with their peers. Therefore, the implications of the study pointed to the need for teachers to realize that “scaffolding in Situated Practice requires recognizing the complementary role of Overt Instruction” (Mills, 2006, p. 29).

Critical Framing suggests teachers help “learners frame their growing mastery in practice (from Situated Practice) and conscious control and understanding (from Overt Instruction) in relation to the historical, social, cultural, political, ideological, and value-centered relations of particular systems of knowledge and social practice” (NLG, 1996, p. 21). Within the Critical Framing process, students can critically think, interpret, analyze, and express their own meanings in different learning practices (NLG, 1996). Students can also improve their interpretation skills when there are “important interactions with the learners’ ability to access designs of meaning by relating meanings to their social and cultural contexts and purposes” (Mills, 2006, p. 12).

Critical Framing also encourages teachers to provide diverse literacy forms to help students comprehend knowledge from diverse perspectives (Kalantzis & Cope, 2015; Mills, 2009). In the traditional literacy sensibilities, a single form (such as written textbooks) of meaning-making is predominant in classrooms (Li, Wang, & Wong, 2011). However, Critical

Framing encourages teachers and learners to be critical about traditional literacy practices, as well as to provide chances for new forms of literacy activities (NLG, 1996). For example, Domingo, Jewitt, and Kress (2014) presented that their young and old learners of the 21<sup>st</sup> century were able to choose different writing and reading methods (such as online poetry reading or food blog writing) to make meanings according to their interests and needs. This resonates with Flicker, Danforth, Wilson, Oliver, Larkin, Restoule, and Prentice's (2014) observations that the teachers and students in their study knew that besides mechanical traditional literacy practice forms, like reading and writing, they were able to use pictures, music, movies, and all kinds of digital and technological tools and platforms to conduct literacy teaching and learning based on their own purposes (Flicker et. al., 2014).

At last, Transformed Practice refers to learners applying what they have learned through Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, and Critical Framing to new environments (Kalantzis & Cope, 2005; NLG, 1996). In order to improve students' abilities to transform learned knowledge into different contexts, teachers need to create various circumstances for students to practice this knowledge transformation. For example, teachers can use role-play to help students learn to approach things from new angles (NLG, 1996). When students realize that their environment can influence their learning, "theory becomes reflective practice" (NLG, 1996, p. 87) because this awareness can guide them in dealing with different situations (Pahl & Rowsell, 2006). Furthermore, Transformed Practice enables students to switch from "reproduction to innovation" (Mills, 2008, p. 122) when they apply what they learned to solve new problems in the literacy learning process (such as writing a play or composing music).

For a better understanding and employment of these four dimensions of multiliteracies, Kalantzis and Cope (2005) further developed them as: Experiencing, Conceptualizing, Analyzing, and Applying respectively. In terms of experiencing, Kalantzis

and Cope (2005) believed that learners should be aware of their previous knowledge and experiences, at the same time, they ought to connect them with their new acquired knowledge from new situated environments. Conceptualizing requires learners to become conceptualizers in the process of making the tacit explicit and generalizing from the particular (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Analyzing emphasizes students to functionally and critically examine and analyze a piece of knowledge and its meaning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2005). At last, applying signifies that learners are capable of properly and creatively applying what they have learned into their lives and surroundings to solve new problems, and make their innovative contributions to the world (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). All in all, teachers can be inspired by and utilize multiliteracies pedagogy to create their own literacy practices and activities. With the consideration of different teaching environments as well as students' learning interests and needs, teachers can engage young CLD children in diverse literacy learning experiences (Anstey & Bull, 2006; Borsheim, Merritt, & Reed, 2008; Unsworth, 2001).

Additionally, beyond the four vital aspects of multiliteracies that help teachers guide young children to design and make meanings, another key field in multiliteracies which should be paid attention to in literacy teaching and learning as well, is multimodality (NLG, 1996). According to its literal meaning, multimodality means various and multiple modes or mediums. Particularly, in the area of literacy learning, multimodality signifies using various resources like visual, spatial or textual forms to transfer meaning and conduct communications (Lutkewitte, 2013; Murray, 2013). With the appearance of advanced technology, literacy teaching in classrooms needs a “full range of representational modes” (Siegel, 2006, p. 65) to help young children become “literate in this new landscape” (Jewitt, 2008, p. 241). The reason lies in the fact that multiple modes and medias are able to support young students with their “knowledge construction” and allow them to “make the form of



representation integral to meaning and learning more generally” (Jewitt, 2008, p. 241).

Additionally, multimodality in literacy learning such as the use of new technologies “has introduced new dimensions into young children’s’ literacy learning” (Wolfe & Flewitt, 2010, p. 387). Moreover, with the help of multimodality, the new literacy experiences created from different modes and media are able to “underpin metacognitive development and are crucial to children's abilities to act strategically in future situations” (Wolfe & Flewitt, 2010, p. 387).

By adopting multimodality in teaching environments, teachers leverage alternative ways and forms of teaching and communicating with their students (Jewitt, 2008; Pahl & Rowsell, 2006; Siegel, 2006) and take advantage of all opportunities to make learning happen. For example, in Lotherington and Jenson’s (2011) study, a variety of visual, spatial and other modes were adopted in different teaching contexts by teachers, which enabled “multidimensional communication” (such as social interaction and alphabetic literacy, p. 228) to take place. The same study indicated that the application of multimodality also contributed to further “reshape how we understand, teach, and test language and literacy in the classroom” (p. 228). In Pahl’s (2007) research, an English teacher from England employed drawing, talking and gestures to create different text-making opportunities for children. The findings highlighted that multimodality facilitated students’ creativity in text-making as well as the communications between teacher and students. Walsh’s (2010) research demonstrated that multimodality in literacy teaching is “needed in contemporary times for reading, viewing, responding to and producing multimodal and digital texts” (p. 211). Therefore, teachers should fully recognize the value of multimodality and try to create multiple forms of literacy teaching and learning for students (Bazalgette & Buckingham, 2013). The diverse applications of multimodality presented by these existing studies provided me with a useful body of research to compare to my own findings on Chinese teachers’ experiences with multimodality.

Multimodality requires diverse mediums as platforms or meaning carriers to compose and express meaning to people (Murray, 2013) and the most common form is digital technology (Lotherington & Jenson, 2011). Digital technologies such as television, computers and smart boards are frequently used in literacy teaching and learning (Mills, 2010). Moreover, due to the rapid development of advanced technology and economics, literacy learning is gradually changing from a text-based to a screen-based form in the information era (Kress, 2009; Walsh, 2010). For example, Segers, Takke, and Verhoeven (2004) presented that a kindergarten in the Netherlands used computers to read stories for young children to develop their comprehension abilities. Silverman and Hines's (2009) research revealed the utilization of videos to enhance young children's vocabulary in an American kindergarten.

Digital technology provides teachers and students with more flexible learning opportunities and experiences. For instance, technology can break the barriers of location and time (Tabatabaei & Gui, 2011) and digital tools can provide creative opportunities for "students' writing and text production" (Walsh, 2010, p. 215). With digital tools, students have the means to combine pictures, sounds and other forms to express their thoughts and make meanings in their own ways. This trend of involving technology into literacy teaching should be paid attention to by teachers in their classrooms (Littlejohn, 2003).

As a matter of fact, existing literature has acknowledged the wide use and benefits of technology in classrooms to support literacy teaching for young children (Bai, 2003; Kozma, 2003; Kress, 2003; Sandholtz, 1997; Wang, 2009). For instance, in Levy's (2009) research, computers were adopted in an East Anglia classroom to provide online readings for young students. The finding revealed that computer technology could "encourage young children to develop both understanding about texts and the skills needed to read them" (p. 75). What's more, Wohlwend's (2010) research manifested that technology encouraged young culturally

and linguistically diverse children to engage in various literacy activities and promoted their lived literacy experiences. Another example in support of the effective use of technology is from Sadik's (2008) research, in which Egyptian teachers were encouraged to employ a digital story telling approach to teach their students literacy. Through this approach, it was acknowledged that "the digital storytelling projects could increase students' understanding of curricular content and they [students] were willing to transform their pedagogy and curriculum to include digital storytelling" (Sadik, 2008, p. 487).

A typical example of utilizing technology in literacy teaching and learning is the adoption of the iPad. The use of this digital tool was found to be effective in Bazalgette and Buckingham's (2013) study, in which the authors investigated a fourth-year teacher's practical experiences of using iPads to fulfill her literacy teaching aims. In their study, Bazalgette and Buckingham helped their participant teacher select different apps that were downloaded on iPads to help teach her students literacy skills. The research outcomes verified that these apps promoted students' creativity to express their ideas and make meanings while learning "digital literacy skills" (p. 21) at the same time. According to Eshet-Alkai (2004), digital literacy skills are crucial for young learners" to function effectively in digital environments" (p. 93).

Besides technology tools such as computers and iPads, other modes and resources are widely utilized to support young children's literacy development as well. For example, music has been shown to efficiently create a positive learning environment for young children and help improve their reading fluency and writing (Darrow, 2008; McIntire, 2007; Paquette & Rieg, 2008). In addition, visual arts such as picture books can greatly enable young children to connect "visual and verbal texts" (Duncum, 2004, p. 261). Drawing can help teachers understand what students have learned, and provide an alternative way to support young children to make and express meanings in their literacy development (Kendrick & McKay,

2004). Also, some educational play activities (like role playing) designed by teachers allows students to play and engage in literacy learning skills (such as speaking and reading the rules) at the same time. This combination makes it possible for teachers to insert teaching goals into the process while designing playing activities for young students (Owocki, 1999).

Dyson (2004) urged that young children should have a wide version of literacy taught to them in schools with the help of multimodal approaches. As “children today can not only draw, sing, and dance, but also produce their own digital movies, master the intricacies of computer games...” (Siegel, 2006, p. 65). This is in-line with many scholars’ beliefs that children already gain extensive knowledge from multiple channels and forms, thus teachers should realize and fully make use of students’ broad abilities and experiences to provide them with multiple learning resources and experiences (e.g., Dyson, 2003; Jewitt, 2003; Wells, 2001).

Meanwhile, teachers ought to be aware that “multilingual children do not remain in separate language and literacy worlds, but acquire their multilingualism and multiliteracies simultaneously” (Gregory, Long, & Volk, 2004, as cited in Baker, 2006, p. 334). When traditional literacy teaching is “outmoded” (Makin, Diaz, & McLachlan, 2007, p. 9) for its inflexibility in twenty-first century classrooms, the pedagogy of multiliteracies longs to be considered by educators in teaching young children literacy. Multiliteracies capacitates young children to deal with the challenges brought about by diverse cultures and languages and empowers them to design and redesign meanings according to their own interests and purposes (Kress, 2003; NLG, 1996). An example can be found in Meng’s (2016) research, in which a Canadian teacher implemented multiliteracies and creatively designed a “Super Learner Center” (p. 60), which involved reading, games and creation activities for her grade one students. The teacher indicated that multiliteracies enabled her to harness students’

diverse experiences outside school and develop relevant practices by drawing on their learning needs and interests.

There are other benefits for teachers adopting multiliteracies and multimodality for young CLD children that are presented by ongoing research as well. For example, in Silvers, Shorey, and Crafton's (2010) study, young children were able to "ask critical questions" and "explore alternative perspectives" with their "increasing ability to use a range of multimodal tools" (e.g., storybooks, music, and technology) (p. 379). Moreover, with a rich supply of all kinds of multimodal resources and forms (such as drawing and painting) in the classroom, young children were able to fully explore the potentials of meaning-making in the literacy learning process (Marsh, 2004), as well as to improve their "text production" (Bearne, 2003, p. 53). Additionally, young children are able to access and engage with many kinds of "information technology" (such as computers and iPads) (Hill, 2010, p. 314) in and out of school, which enable teachers to create innovative literacy practices based on students' knowledge, experiences, and interests. Also, young children should be encouraged to engage in "playing with technology" as it can support "students' learning in various ways" (Yelland, 2011, p. 4). To better support students in their literacy learning process, teachers should be encouraged to "create the opportunities for greater understanding of all of our needs, concerns, and desires" (William, 2008, p. 686) and this can be fulfilled through the lens of multiliteracies and multimodality.

### **2.3 Teachers' Perceptions of Literacy and Multiliteracies for Young CLD Children's Literacy Development**

Teachers' perceptions of literacy and multiliteracies are widely demonstrated to be able to influence their literacy practices in classrooms (e.g., Alton-Lee, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Rowe, 2003; Saracho, 2001; Spear-Swerling, Brucker, & Alfano, 2005).

Teachers who approach literacy teaching with a traditional perspective may struggle to

provide students with creative ways and sources for literacy learning (Albert, 2011; Li, Corrie, & Wong, 2008). For example, in Li's (2013) study, the dominant Chinese literacy teaching practices used in an early-year classroom in China were Chinese character copying exercises. In this study, these exercises were implemented by Chinese teachers who still held traditional Chinese literacy teaching methods as their standards. While teachers who have been educated on the pedagogy of multiliteracies, which involves adopting innovative ways and multiple resources for literacy teaching, educated students who were able to obtain diverse literacy learning experiences more easily (e.g., the utilization of computers, drawing, and journal writing) and have active engagement in literacy learning (Mackay, 2014; Meng, 2016; Wall, 2014).

Therefore, if teachers have knowledge of the multiliteracies theory and pedagogy, their literacy practices will be enhanced based on their understanding of multiliteracies and multimodality. For example, Ajayi's (2010) research on preservice teachers' perceptions of using multiliteracies in a southern California university revealed that these preservice teachers all had a basic understanding of using multiple ways and resources in literacy teaching, which assisted them in designing innovative literacy practices with multiple resources (e.g., videos, music, and books) for young students. Similarly, in Prestridge's (2009) study, eight Australian primary school teachers demonstrated their understandings and practices of using technology tools in their teaching. The findings revealed that when teachers had a wide perception of technology, their teaching practices would incorporate more technology tools to support students in learning. Upon the realization that teachers' perceptions of multiliteracies impacts their literacy practices, I set out to investigate what perceptions the participant Chinese teachers in my study had about multiliteracies as well as how their perceptions impacted their Chinese literacy practices.

Particularly, for young CLD children, teachers' perceptions of multiliteracies and multimodality are of high importance. When teachers "have a wide understanding of literacy learning in many contexts" (Makin, 2007, p.7), they lead their young CLD children to practice and experience multiple methods and resources in literacy learning. Rather than only reading a written book, students will be presented with other types of literacy experiences, such as watching videos on a computer or role-playing (Marsh, 2004), which makes it possible for them to be "best supported" (Makin, 2007, p. 7) with alternative ways and modes in literacy learning.

Also, when teachers correctly perceive the multiliteracies pedagogy, it guides them to realize and properly handle diversity among young CLD children (NLG, 1996). Children in modern classrooms are known to often "comprise a range of cultures, ethnicities, languages, gender and social class, and they bring these rich characteristics with them into the classroom" (Smolin, 2009, p. 173). Teachers who adopt the multiliteracies theory and pedagogy are capable of fully making use of "students multifaceted personal and cultural assets to maximize learning in the classroom" (Smolin, 2009, p. 173). This view also resonated with Tan and McWilliam's (2009) perspective, that multiliteracies can be regarded as "either useful extensions or helpful interventions for high-performing and at-risk students respectively" (p. 213).

To improve teachers' understanding of multiliteracies, teachers' professional development is necessary and effective (Rowell, Kosnik, & Beck, 2008). For example, in Bull and Anstey's (2010) study, a number of primary and secondary level teachers in Australia attended a multiliteracies development program, which aimed to understand participants' perceptions and practices relating to multiliteracies as well as to develop their abilities and strategies of literacy teaching. After these teachers completed this program, they expressed that they had gained a deeper understanding of multiliteracies and that they knew

better how to implement multiliteracies in their own teaching contexts. The findings of this research showed that after the course, these educators had gone on to promote professional changes in the implementation the multiliteracies pedagogy in their classrooms. Similarly, Gardiner, Cumming-Potvin, and Hesterman (2013) found that after participating in a “multiliteracies book club”, seven primary school teachers from Western Australia had an increased understanding of multiliteracies and multimodality, which further assisted them to “shift towards multiliteracies perspectives” and “support literacy transformation” (p. 357). Regarding teachers’ professional development, I was able to see what suggestions the Chinese teachers I studied could provide for other teachers to improve their understanding and practices of multiliteracies.

Although multiliteracies is still a new concept for many teachers, a great number of teachers in early childhood education have already perceived and tried to utilize multiliteracies and multimodality in their classrooms (e.g., Erstad, Gilje, & de Lange, 2007). For example, in Lahuis’s (2011) study, eight American elementary teachers used music to motivate young students in literacy learning because they had learned that music relates to “Audio Representation” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, pp. 12-13), which was proven to be effective in developing students’ language skills (e.g., "the use of rhythm that adds structure to a spoken text and dictates speech", p. 74). Teachers in Lahuis’s study also suggested that our society and schools should realize the important role of music in education, especially in early childhood education. In addition, Meng’s (2016) research about a grade one teachers’ practices of using multiliteracies in Canada showed that the multiliteracies pedagogy “not only enriched her classroom practices but also transformed her way of teaching” (p. 66). The multiliteracies pedagogy had also encouraged her students to “actively take ownership of their own study” (p. 67). As Binder and Kotsopoulos (2011) suggested “the learning environment must engage children in experiences that empower them to make their thoughts



public and to change how they think, view, and situate themselves in the world” (p. 339) with the help of multiliteracies and multimodality approaches.

Therefore, to provide young culturally and linguistically diverse students with meaningful literacy experiences, it is essential for teachers to be conscious of employing multiliteracies and multimodality pedagogy in classrooms (Borsheim, Merritt, & Reed, 2008). Since multiliteracies enables teachers to cherish students’ diversity in classrooms and provide students with multiple forms and resources to empower them in literacy learning (NLG, 1996), teachers’ perception of multiliteracies will have “a significant influence on students’ access to multiliteracies” (Mills, 2007, p. 230). Consequently, teachers should generate and maintain an interest in new forms of literacy and actively participate in them (Merchant, 2007) because how teachers understand literacy and multiliteracies will determine how they will create literacy learning opportunities for young CLD children (Martello, 2007).

In the existing literature, there is abundant research studying English speaking teachers’ perceptions and experiences of applying multiliteracies (e.g., Burnett, 2010; McDougall, 2010; Miller, 2015; Meng, 2016). However, there is a paucity of studies investigating Chinese teachers’ experiences of implementing multiliteracies in teaching young children Chinese literacy. Therefore, this research will focus on understanding how Chinese teachers in Canada who have experienced multiliteracies perceive and create literacy practices using this pedagogy and multimodality for young culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) children. The results will further provide examples of multiliteracies practices for both Chinese and Canadian teachers working with young CLD children.

## **2.4 Summary**

This chapter presented existing literature regarding multiliteracies theories and pedagogies. It also discussed how the four components of multiliteracies could be applied in teaching contexts and displayed various examples about the wide use and benefits of

multimodality and multiliteracies in supporting students' literacy learning. At last, this chapter presented literature concerning teachers' perceptions of literacy and multiliteracies, as well as professional development which prompts teachers' understanding and experiences of implementing multiliteracies in teaching environments.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology and Methods

#### 3.1 Introduction

This research adopts a qualitative case study methodology (Yin, 2014) to deeply understand how Chinese teachers who have experienced multiliteracies and multimodality perceive and apply a pedagogy of multiliteracies in teaching young CLD children Chinese literacy in Canada. In this chapter, I will explain the reasons why I chose a qualitative case study. Then, I will introduce the research design including research participants, data collection, and data analysis as well as the trustworthiness and ethical considerations of this study.

#### 3.2 A Qualitative Case Study Methodology

In order to understand Chinese teachers' perceptions and experiences of multiliteracies and multimodality, I adopted a qualitative case study methodology. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), "qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 2). Moreover, a qualitative research "involves highly detailed rich descriptions of human behaviors and opinions" (Savenye & Robinson, 1996, p. 1046) which enabled me to understand and interpret Chinese teachers' perceptions and experiences of multiliteracies in teaching young children Chinese literacy in Canada. Also, my intention was not to generate laws of behaviors and phenomenon (McLeod, 2017), thus a qualitative research better fit my purpose.

According to Robson (2002), a case study "is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence" (p. 178). Considering the definition of case study as well as my aim to deeply understand Chinese teachers' perceptions and

implementations of multiliteracies pedagogy in teaching young students Chinese literacy, a case study seemed to best assist me in providing a “unique example of real people in real situations” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013, p. 289). Moreover, a case study normally selects “a very limited number of individuals as the subjects of study” (Zainal, 2007, p. 1), and this helped focus my work on a detailed exploration and analysis of participants’ perceptions and experiences of multiliteracies.

Compared to other research methods, a case study enables a detailed data collection from multiple sources to help understand and analyze individuals’ behaviors (Yin, 2014; Zainal, 2007). In this study, I collected data from the following three sources: interviews, curriculum materials, and reflective writings. These multiple data sources allowed me to understand and analyze the Chinese teachers’ perceptions and implementations of multiliteracies from different perspectives. This comprehensive understanding, according to Cohen et al. (2011) and Creswell (2007) supported me to provide insightful descriptions of participants’ lived experiences in this study.

Another reason for my choice of a case study methodology relates to my research questions. My research questions are mainly explanatory and exploratory questions which seek to understand and explain Chinese teachers’ understanding and practices of multiliteracies in teaching young students Chinese literacy in a Canadian context (e.g., what perceptions do Chinese teachers who have experienced multiliteracies education and practices in Canada have about multiliteracies and how do they apply multiliteracies pedagogy into their practice?). A case study is suitable for answering explanatory and exploratory questions (Yin, 2011; 2014). According to Yin (2014): “the more that your questions seek to explain some present circumstance, the more that case study research will be relevant” (p. 4). Therefore, employing a case study enabled me to perform an in-depth exploration and gain a thorough understanding of Chinese teachers’ particular perceptions

and experiences of multiliteracies and multimodality in a Canadian teaching context.

### 3.3 Research Participants

In order to obtain rich information for the research, purposeful sampling was employed in this case study (Patton, 2002) which calls for the researcher to select participants based on the particular aims of the study (Coyne, 1997). Therefore, according to my research goals of finding Chinese teachers who have experienced multiliteracies education and are teaching young students Chinese in Canada, the following selection criteria were made to look for ideal participants for my research:

- Chinese teachers who are teaching young CLD children Chinese literacy in Canada.
- Chinese teachers who have relevant education or training on multiliteracies theory and pedagogy.
- Chinese teachers who would like to share their experiences and suggestions of applying multiliteracies in literacy teaching.

As soon as I received the ethics approval from Western University, I started to contact Chinese schools in Canada to look for possible Chinese teachers who can fulfill the selection criteria. Finally, two Chinese teachers were found to fulfill the three criteria and also agreed to participate in this research. The two Chinese teachers have both had education on multiliteracies and multimodality in their master programs in Canada, and they have accumulated teaching experience both in China and Canada for over five years. I delivered the Letter of Information and Consent Form (see Appendix B) to both teachers in uncrowded and quiet coffee shops. They signed their names with a clear understanding of this research and selected Emma and Amy as their pseudonyms.

Emma previously taught Chinese students English for more than three years in China. She learned about multiliteracies when she was doing her masters in Canada. Meanwhile, she has been teaching in a local Chinese school for two years. In Emma's class, there are 15

students coming from both Chinese and Canadian families, which comprise her diverse teaching context. Amy had been teaching young Chinese students English and music in China for around three years. She came to learn about multiliteracies during her master's program in Canada. At the same time, she started to teach 9 young students Chinese literacy in an after-class Chinese school, which accommodates students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Both Emma and Amy indicated that in their Chinese literacy teaching, they focus more on designing innovative practices to meet students' various experiences and incorporating multiple modalities and resources to facilitate young students' diverse Chinese literacy abilities (such as creative meaning making, which is not restricted to Chinese language teaching).

### **3.4 Data Collection**

According to Yin (2014), a case study requires multiple sources of data to address a wide range of behavior issues and add trustworthiness to the research. This is also referred to as "data triangulation" (p. 120). To meet the data triangulation qualifications, I utilized three sources to collect data from: interviews, curriculum materials, and reflective writings (see Table 1 for the data collection timeline). Each method of data collection "is useful for providing a different perspective on the topic of interest", and "contributes to a more complete picture of the scene of interest" (Eisenhart, 1988, p. 106). For instance, by conducting interviews with participants and examining their reflective writings, I am able to gather data on how these Chinese teachers who have experienced multiliteracies education in Canada understand and practice multiliteracies and multimodality in teaching young students Chinese literacy. These methods also provide the opportunity for me to obtain their suggestions for other teachers who want to implement multiliteracies pedagogy in their own teaching. Also through collecting "classroom curriculum" (Westbury, 2003, para. 12) materials from participants' real literacy practices (such as lesson plans), it is possible for me

to illustrate how these Chinese teachers incorporate multiliteracies and multimodality into their classes.

Table 1 *Timeline of Data Collection*

Participants	Interview	Curriculum materials		Follow-up interview
		collection	Reflective writing	
Emma	December 5, 2016	Jan 4, 2017	Jan 6, 2017; March 10, 2017; May 12, 2017	May 12, 2017
Amy	December 6, 2016	Jan 10, 2017	Jan 12, 2017; April 2, 2017; May 14, 2017	May 13, 2017

### 3.4.1 Interviews

In consideration of my research questions that mainly emphasize on how Chinese teachers perceive and practice multiliteracies pedagogy in Chinese teaching contexts, semi-structured interviews with participants was a proper choice as it allowed me to obtain useful but not limited information from my participants by maintaining a focus on the research topic (Brikmann, 2014; Yin, 2014). Semi-structured interviews set the interview questions in advance and this guides researchers throughout the process (Edwards & Holland, 2013). An interview is like a “conversation” (Blommaert & Dong, 2010, p. 44) that can help motivate participants to express their own thoughts, views and perceptions deeply and insightfully (Yin, 2014).

Before conducting the interviews, I followed the semi-structured interview guidelines and listed twelve interview questions (see Appendix A) in advance. These interview questions help prepare the researcher and ensure the conversational interviews go smoothly (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2014). The potential interview questions focus on how these Chinese teachers understand multiliteracies and multimodality (e.g., After your professional study on multiliteracies, how do you think of multiliteracies pedagogy in a Canadian teaching

context?) and how they practice multiliteracies pedagogy (e.g., In your classrooms, did you create any literacy practices using multiliteracies and multimodality?). In addition, the Chinese teachers were encouraged to share their suggestions for other Chinese and Canadian teachers (e.g., Would you suggest any materials, tools, or tips regarding using multiliteracies pedagogy for other teachers who are teaching young CLD children literacy?). For the convenience of the participant teachers, all the interviews were conducted in Chinese language. I recorded all the interviews, transcribed and translated them into English written texts. Then, I shared the English transcripts with my participants to ensure their views were not misrepresented.

### **3.4.2 Curriculum materials collection**

According to Pinar (1995), “Curriculum defines the knowledge to be taught” (p. 745). Doyle (1992a) proposed three kinds of curricula: institutional curriculum, programmatic curriculum, and classroom curriculum. Institutional curriculum concerns policies which reflect what is valued by the society, culture, and schooling system (Westbury, 2003). Programmatic curriculum can be regarded as a specific subject, course requirements, or course contents (Westbury, 2003). Classroom curriculum is “a sequence of activities, jointly developed by teachers, students”, and teachers “are active interpreters” (Westbury, 2003, para. 12) of the provided curriculum.

This study aims to discover how Chinese teachers interpret and incorporate multiliteracies from their own viewpoints within Chinese literacy teaching contexts which relate to their classrooms. Therefore, in this study I defined curriculum materials as classroom curriculum materials (Westbury, 2003), more specifically it refers to Chinese teachers’ lesson plans, teaching materials and tools used to assist Chinese literacy teaching. According to Ball and Cohen (1996), curriculum materials “often offer carefully designed lessons, models, activities” (p. 7) which can explicitly display what teachers and students do



in their classrooms. Therefore, collecting curriculum materials from the two Chinese teachers enables me to understand and analyze Chinese teachers' experiences of implementing multiliteracies.

Curriculum materials also provided me with additional data resources that I could not have obtained from interviews. According to Yin (2014), adding this source of data helps enhance the reliability of a study as well. For example, the lesson plan (see Figure 7 for an example of a lesson plan) provided by Emma depicted what teaching activities, materials and tools she chose for teaching young students Chinese literacy. By looking at Emma's lesson plan, I was able to understand how she implemented multiliteracies and multimodality in her teaching context as well as her perceptions of multiliteracies underpinning her teaching practices.

### **3.4.3 Reflective writing**

Reflective writing is regarded as an important data source to enhance data triangulation (Davies, 2008; Yin, 2014), and is used in this research to investigate the participants' perceptions and practices of multiliteracies in their work. Reflective writing is capable of displaying "thoughts, beliefs and attitudes" about "particular topics or experiences" (Prodromou, 2009, p. 293) in a written form. In this study, I asked my participants to write down their understandings and practices of implementing multiliteracies pedagogy and multimodality in a word file at three different times. For example, in Amy's first reflective writing on Jan 12, 2016, she supplemented her understanding of multiliteracies by stating: "I think multiliteracies enable students to communicate with others and express their thoughts through different ways or platforms, which is not only restricted to print or written forms". Through Amy's reflective writing, I was able to understand and include her perception of multiliteracies in this study. Thus, reflective writing supported me in obtaining additional data other than interviews and curriculum materials, which according to Yin

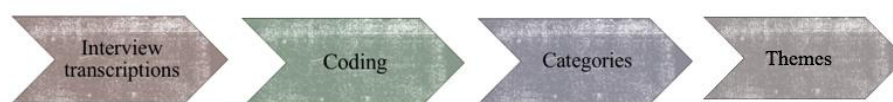
(2014) strengthens the research findings.

Through collected data from interviews, curriculum materials, and reflective writings, I was able to gather information from diverse angles to deeply understand my participants' perceptions and practices of employing multiliteracies pedagogy (e.g., Cohen et al., 2011). Meanwhile, the three different ways of collecting data accomplish the triangulation criterion and allow the findings in this study to be "more convincing and accurate" (Yin, 2014, p. 120). One limitation of this research design was that I did not include classroom observations which according to Yin (2014) provide "additional information about the topic being studied" (p. 114). The main reasons are: first, observation is "time-consuming" (Yin, 2014, p. 106) which given the short timeframe I had for doing this case study, made it an unfavorable option. Second, compared to other data collection methods chosen, it was also less capable of directly answering my research questions regarding teachers' perceptions and suggestions. Third, the other three data collection methods chosen were sufficiently useful since according to Yin (2014) they help "corroborate certain findings" (e.g., Chinese teachers' perceptions of multiliteracies) that the researcher thinks "have been established" (p. 111).

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

In this study, I chose a constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) method to analyze my data collected from multiple sources (such as interviews and reflective writings). A constant comparison analysis is "a method of analyzing qualitative data where the information gathered is coded into emergent themes or codes" (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001, p. 39). In this study, a constant comparison method enabled me to "combine inductive category coding with a simultaneous comparison of all social incidents observed" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1981, p. 58). Moreover, through a constant comparison analysis, I was able to collect further data that is needed to answer questions that arise from analyzing previous data, until no newer information is required. This is also known to "increase the internal validity of

the findings” (Boeije, 2002, p. 393). Figure 1 below displays the process of my data analysis.



*Figure 1. Data analysis process.*

First, for conducting the data analysis, all recorded Chinese interviews were transcribed and translated into English written texts with pseudonyms. Transcription is a vital step which “can provide important detail and an accurate verbatim record of the interview” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 537). To make sure of the translation quality, I shared my English transcripts with my participants to ensure their thoughts are correctly described. Then I started the coding process with open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Open coding is “the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61). In this open coding process, I meticulously looked through all interview transcripts, curriculum materials and participants’ reflective writings with a focus on teachers’ perceptions and experiences of practicing multiliteracies pedagogy. Then, I wrote down the open codes I had found and their definitions according to relevant sentences or pieces of curriculum material. Each code was used to “represent a theme or idea with which each part of the data is associated” (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001, p. 39) (see Figure 2 for an example of the open codes). For example, one code was named “professional study of multiliteracies” with its definition referring to any related professional learning experiences of multiliteracies theory and pedagogy. In the end of the open coding process, I had generated around forty open codes in total from the interviews, curriculum materials, and reflective writings.

Exon a		Date
	Open codes	Definitions
1.	Teaching schedule (Interviews, curriculum materials)	Teaching time, teaching contents, teaching materials and teaching arrangements
2.	Attention to different literacy abilities teaching (Interviews, curriculum materials, reflective writing)	Focus on teaching students' various literacy aspects and skills
3.	Various thoughts of multiliteracies (Interviews, reflective writing)	Teacher's words, opinions, and beliefs about multiliteracies
4.	Professional Study of multiliteracies (Interviews, reflective writing)	Related professional learning experiences of multiliteracies theory and pedagogy

Figure 2. An example of open codes.

Then, I conducted the axial coding process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) in which I compared, sorted out and tried to find connections between the open codes and then generated higher level axial codes. For instance, one axial code was “multiple literacy teaching resources” which consisted of several open codes such as “technology and music to teach Chinese literacy”, “Rope for playing games”, etc. Next, all axial codes were compared with each other and merged to form “literature-based” (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001, p.40) descriptive categories (see Figure 3). For example, a category called “multiliteracies practices in Chinese literacy teaching” used multiliteracies developed by the New London Group (1996) and contained the axial codes of “innovative Chinese literacy teaching methods”, “instructions”, “developing critical thinking abilities” and so on.

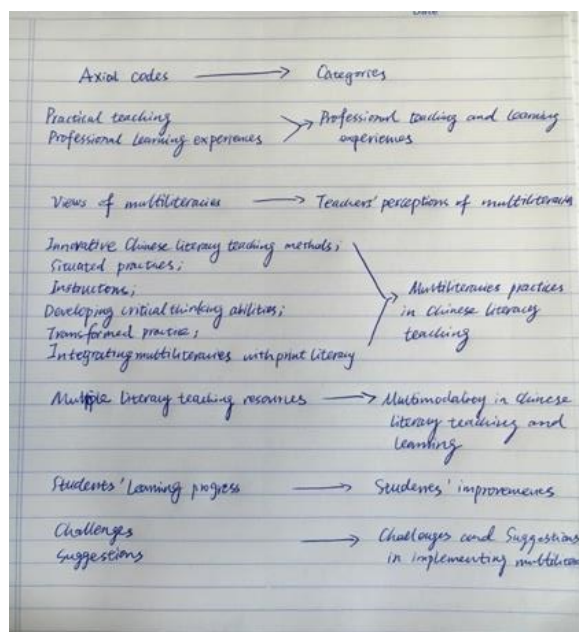


Figure 3. Axial codes to categories.

After I generated all the codes and categories, I conducted three peer debriefings to help me finalize the themes (see Figure 4 for an example of these debriefings). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), peer debriefing “is a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytical session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind” (p. 308). Peer debriefing enables researcher to overcome taken for granted bias and enhance the credibility of the research by providing “an external check on the inquiry process” (Lincoln & Guba, p. 301). The peers invited to my debriefing were all researchers who had knowledge of the same topic (multiliteracies and multimodality), which according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), can help provide the researcher with diverse perspectives in data analysis.

In my first peer debriefing in late April, I shared my data and codes with my peers. After a one-hour discussion of the codes related to teachers’ perceptions of multiliteracies, the first theme “Diverse perceptions of multiliteracies and multimodality” was generated upon consensus. In the second peer debriefing in May, we discussed the codes and categories concerning teachers’ practices of multiliteracies, and generated the second theme as

“Classroom practices/pedagogy, tools and strategies, responding to students’ needs and interests”. In the last peer debriefing in late May, we shared and discussed different thoughts regarding codes relating to challenges and suggestions of implementing multiliteracies, and came to an agreement to finalize the last two themes as “Insufficient technological support and practical instructions for teaching”, and “Teachers’ professional and personal development”.

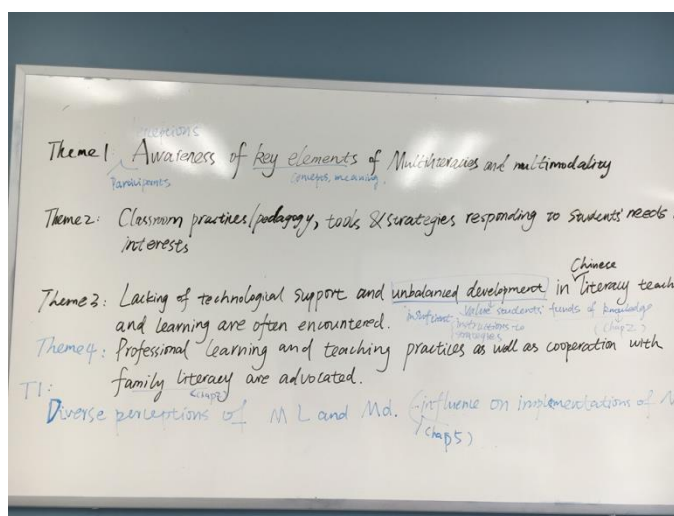


Figure 4. An example of peer debriefing.

To ensure the quality of data analysis, based on Riley’s (1990) work, I repeatedly read all the data and codes to check whether any new information became apparent, until no newer insights emerged. I also maintained flexibility in refining categories to allow “categories to fit the data” (Dye, Schatz, Rosenberg, & Coleman, 2000, p. 10) within the ongoing analysis process. In other words, I attempted to “define and redefine categories by specifying and changing the criteria used for assigning them to the data” (Dye, Schatz, Rosenberg, & Coleman, 2000, p. 3). Also, the three peer debriefing meetings I held helped me finalize the themes and ensure their quality. Member checking also enhanced the data analysis quality as it helped avoid misunderstanding of participants’ experiences and thoughts.

### 3.6 Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), there are four criteria to ensure the

trustworthiness of a qualitative case study which are credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Credibility “refers to the value and believability of the findings” (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013, p. 13). To fulfill this criterion, I transcribed all the interviews, shared open codes with my peers and conducted member checks with my participants to ensure credibility. Transferability calls for the possibility of the findings of this proposed study to be used in other situations (Krefting, 1991). In this study, I recruited participants who have already experienced multiliteracies to provide their practical literacy teaching examples. I also provided a thorough description of the two Chinese teachers’ perceptions and practices of multiliteracies to enhance the transferability of my study (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). The third criterion which is dependability is about whether the outcomes of the study will be similar when the study is replicated. To meet this requirement, I have made available all necessary and raw data collected from interviews, curriculum materials and participants’ reflective writings in this research. A detailed description of the data analysis process has also been presented to provide other scholars or colleagues with the opportunity to read and interpret the data with their own understanding as well. At last, conformability demands the findings of the study should not be influenced by any bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I tried to avoid bias by conducting data triangulation, peer debriefings and member checks to display participants’ own voices as much as possible in this study.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011), the main issues contained in ethics are “informed consent, confidentiality, and the consequences” (p. 442). In conducting my research, I paid attention to the potential risks, confidentiality, and participants’ rights. First, I applied for ethical approval from Western University’s Ethics Research Board. As soon as I received the ethics approval, I started to contact Chinese schools to look for

possible participants who can fulfill the selection criteria (see Section 3.3 for details). When I found ideal participants, I informed each participant of the details of this study with a letter (see Appendix B for related documents) and brought them the consent forms to sign prior to the interviews. All the interviews were conducted in quiet coffee shops upon our consensus and convenience. In order to protect participants' rights and privacy, I avoided asking them private or sensitive questions. The participants had the right to refuse responding to any interview question they were not comfortable with. Furthermore, I used pseudonyms to protect participants from being recognized in this study. I tried to avoid subjective bias by presenting all data obtained from interviews, curriculum materials and reflective journals and also conducting member checks with my research participants to avoid misunderstanding their experiences and thoughts. Meanwhile, all the information collected in this study was used for research purposes only and they are safely kept by the researcher. After a minimal retention period of five years, according to Western University's Office of Research Ethics, all the data will be destroyed by the researchers.

### **3.8 Summary**

This chapter first explained the reasons why a qualitative case study is suitable for this research. Then, it introduced the procedure used to select ideal participants for this study as well as the three data collection sources (interviews, curriculum materials, and reflective writing) chosen which were able to provide data from diverse angles. Next, this chapter presented details on conducting data analysis and different ways considered to ensure the quality of this data analysis. At last, this chapter included approaches to adding trustworthiness and solving ethical considerations in this research.



## Chapter 4

### Findings

#### 4.1 Introduction

Through interpreting and analyzing data collected in Chapter three, there are four main emergent themes, which will help construct this chapter: (1) Diverse perceptions of multiliteracies and multimodality; (2) Classroom practices/pedagogy, tools and strategies, responding to students' needs and interests; (3) Insufficient technological support and practical instructions for teaching; and (4) Teachers' professional and personal development.

#### 4.2 Theme 1: Chinese Teachers' Diverse Perceptions of Multiliteracies and Multimodality

In their interviews, Emma and Amy explained when and how they started to hear about multiliteracies. Emma described in her first interview: "I started to learn about multiliteracies in my graduate studies, in which I had classes that were about multiliteracies theory and pedagogy" (December 5, 2016). Amy also described her learning experiences of multiliteracies: "From my master study in Canada I started to know multiliteracies and multimodality" (first interview, December 6, 2016). From the interviews, it was revealed that the two Chinese teachers were able to access multiliteracies theory and pedagogy because they had courses related to multiliteracies theory and pedagogy in their 2-year professional master's program in Canada.

Emma noted that she was teaching young children Chinese during her master's program: "the classes I had about multiliteracies were mainly in the ECE (early childhood education) area, which was helpful to my practical teaching experiences" (first interview, December 5, 2016). Also, while doing her studies, Amy stated that she obtained the chance to teach young children Chinese in a local Chinese school. She added "I found it benefits me a lot when I can apply what I learned from classes into my teaching environments as I was able

to better understand how I can put multiliteracies theory and pedagogy into my own teaching setting” (reflective writing, January 12, 2017). From Emma’s interview and Amy’s reflective writing, it was acknowledged that learning from the professional master’s program benefited them a lot by promoting their understanding of multiliteracies in Chinese literacy teaching contexts. They were both found to have similar learning and teaching experiences in relation to multiliteracies, as they had both completed a master’s programs which covered multiliteracies, and they were teaching young children Chinese literacy in Canada.

Emma indicated that in her mind, multiliteracies related to diverse aspects which are teachers, students, and the teaching environment. Each element is different and diverse, such that “teachers are from different countries and culture backgrounds, they have different views, teaching methods and teaching goals” (first interview, December 5, 2016). Due to the diverse aspects in her teaching context, Emma defined multiliteracies by saying “All elements are multiple” (first interview, December 5, 2016).

Emma supplemented her views about multiliteracies in her reflective writing by saying “My students came from different culture and language backgrounds, which brought so many differences and challenges in my teaching. Multiliteracies inspired me to come up with diverse ways to catch their different learning interests and needs”. (January 6, 2017)

Emma also stated in her first interview that “multiliteracies are developed to deal with the diversity trend in our society. One important reason is that multiliteracies provides creative ideas to facilitate teacher’s teaching methods and ways in their own classrooms upon students’ needs and interests” (December 5, 2016). This opinion of Emma is in line with literature pointing to the ability of multiliteracies in dealing with students’ diversities (NLG, 1996).

Amy stated that “multiliteracies talk about a wider range of literacy skills, with diverse teaching materials, modes and methods” (first interview, December 6, 2016). She

believed “multiliteracies enable students to communicate with others and express their thoughts through different ways or platforms, which is not only restricted to print or written forms” (reflective writing, January 12, 2017). According to Amy’s understanding of multiliteracies, it was shown that she focused on multiliteracies in providing multiple forms and resources which facilitate students’ diverse literacy abilities (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

Amy mentioned in the first interview that the development of multiliteracies reminded her of the Chinese idiom *YU SHI JU JIN* which means keep pace with the times. This idiom means that along with the development of the era and society, theories and pedagogies also get updated and developed. She supplemented her thoughts in the first interview on December 6, 2016, stating:

From my own development and studying experiences in China, I could always remember that my teachers mainly relied on print-based materials to teach our reading and writing. After I was first exposed to the concepts and theories of multiliteracies and multimodality, the first feeling was that multiliteracies pedagogy could help prepare our students for their daily lives in a changing world, to help them develop practical and necessary literacy skills for their future.

Amy also stated that “the pedagogy of multiliteracies is up-to-date and suitable to deal with the huge changes happening in our society, what’s more, students are able to be assisted by multiliteracies to develop practical and necessary literacy skills to prepare for their future” (first interview, December 6, 2016). From Amy’s understanding of multiliteracies, it was evident that she believed that multiliteracies is an up-to-date pedagogy for teachers and students to prepare them for and adapt them to the ever-changing society (NLG, 1996).

In Emma’s reflective writing, she indicated that “after I learned about multiliteracies, I held the belief that reading and writing should not be regarded as the dominant aspects of literacy teaching, students need to develop other literacy abilities such as comprehension and

expression skills as well” (January 6, 2017). Amy also said in her reflective writing that “Multiliteracies also teach me to realize a wide scope of literacy teaching and learning. Apart from reading the textbooks and writing characters, teachers should pay attention to develop students’ different literacy abilities, such as critical thinking abilities, meaning making and expressing” (January 12, 2017). Both Emma and Amy suggested that teachers should not only focus on teaching students reading and writing skills, but they should also aspire to improve students’ listening, speaking, critical thinking, and other abilities. This revealed that Emma and Amy, similar to what the New London Group (1996) stated, understood that multiliteracies refers to a wide range of literacy teaching and learning concepts (e.g., comprehension and critical thinking abilities). This belief was seen in Emma when she designed a small debate of *The Great Wall* (see section 4.3 for details) to develop her students’ critical framing abilities, and in Amy when she designed a poetic role play practice (see section 4.3 for details) to help her students apply the knowledge they learned to solve new problems in their studies.

Another shared view between Emma and Amy was that multiliteracies was beneficial to help them create diverse and meaningful Chinese literacy teaching practices. Examples can be found in Emma and Amy’s actual teaching practices. For instance, Emma introduced in her interview that she often used online videos to teach Chinese poems. The videos guided her students to watch, listen, comprehend and remember poems, which caught students’ attention as well as promoted their various abilities in Chinese literacy learning. Similarly, Amy played Chinese cartoons to provide her students with an engaging Chinese learning environment through multimodal ways (e.g., visual and audio modes; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Amy also provided a lesson plan on seasons in Beijing (see Figure 5) to demonstrate she created diverse Chinese literacy practices utilizing multiliteracies. In this lesson plan, Amy aimed to teach her students about the four seasons in Beijing. Amy started her class

with an inquiry time to ask students what their favorite seasons were and why. Then Amy utilized an iPad to display pictures and videos about the scenery of four seasons in Beijing. In addition, Amy developed a drawing activity for her students which encouraged them to draw their favorite seasons and the things they like to do during that time. Moreover, Amy designed a speaking activity asking students to introduce their favorite season and the reasons why they chose that season to their peers in order to improve her students' Chinese speaking ability. This lesson plan supported Amy's opinion that multiliteracies enabled her to create diverse literacy practices. By using the iPad and creating drawing and speaking activities, Amy incorporated the visual, audio, and oral modes called for by Cope & Kalantzis (2009) and the New London Group (1996), to design different literacy practices for her students.

《北京的四季》教案  
Lesson Plan for *Four Seasons in Beijing*

教学内容：四季—春夏秋冬  
Teaching Content: Four seasons- Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter

教学目标：  
Teaching Aims:

1. 掌握春夏秋冬的中文名称 Learn how to say four seasons in Chinese
2. 会描述四季特点及应季活动 Able to describe features and activities of each season
3. 分角色读课文 Role-play reading
4. 描述自己喜欢的季节和原因 Describe favorite seasons and reasons

教具：课本，iPad，彩笔，画纸，拼音练习本  
Teaching Materials: Textbook, iPad, color pens, color paper, Pinyin practice notebooks

教学过程：  
Teaching Process:

1. 提问学生喜欢的季节 Ask students' favorite season
2. iPad 展示北京的春夏秋冬照片和视频 Showing pictures and videos of four seasons in Beijing
3. 讲解四季的中文说法 Explaining Chinese expressions of four seasons
4. 提问学生关于每个季节的活动 Asking students what they do in different seasons
5. 让学生画出自己喜欢的季节，活动 Let students draw their favorite season and activities in this season
6. 口头描述自己喜欢的季节和原因 Speaking practice of favorite season and why

*Figure 5.* Lesson plan of four seasons in Beijing.

According to Emma's first interview, she indicated that "students were engaged in different Chinese literacy practices and focused more on my teaching" (December 5, 2016). In a similar manner, Amy also reported in her first interview that through her experiences of implementing multiliteracies in teaching, her students "get motivated and can build

confidence in literacy learning” (December 6, 2016). Emma and Amy’s experiences of multiliteracies revealed that they were able to provide students with diverse learning experiences and engage them actively in Chinese literacy learning.

From Emma and Amy’s interviews, curriculum material and reflective writings, I found that the two Chinese teachers have both similar and different perceptions about multiliteracies. Emma and Amy both expressed the importance and positive outcomes of implementing multiliteracies in their Chinese literacy teaching contexts, but Emma focused more on multiliteracies in dealing with the diversity issue in class, while Amy paid more attention to bringing diverse teaching resources for her students which are both aspects referred to in the literature as well (Cope & Kalantzis, 2014; NLG, 1996).

#### **4.3 Theme 2: Classroom Practices/Pedagogy, Tools and Strategies, Responding to Students’ Needs and Interests**

Through collected interviews and follow-up interviews, curriculum material, and reflective writings from the two Chinese teachers, I obtained accounts of lived experiences from both teachers’ classroom teaching practices which utilized multiliteracies and multimodality. As indicated in Chapter 3 on methodology and data analysis, I transcribed all the interview records and conducted open coding and axial coding, which led to the creation of a category called *multiliteracies practices in Chinese literacy teaching*. This category worked to answer the research question of how Chinese teachers apply multiliteracies in Chinese literacy teaching. In this section, I summarized and concluded the two Chinese teachers’ literacy practices into the four components of multiliteracies as well as multimodality which can reflect the essence of multiliteracies theory and pedagogy (NLG, 1996). I seek to provide a clear understanding of the two participants’ utilization of multiliteracies and multimodality.

##### **Situated Practice**

Situated Practice advocates teachers to design literacy practices drawing on students' experiences and learning interests (NLG, 1996). The first example introduced by Emma, relating to Situated Practice, was her request for students to *write* a composition every week. Here, write did not only mean writing, and composition topics were not merely the homework from their textbooks. Emma explained in her interviews,

I gave my students much freedom to finish their composition works, they can write down Chinese sentences, they can draw out the story or they can even make a song of their story. Besides, the topics of the compositions were not exactly from their textbooks, rather they could pick topics they were interested in to finish the compositions. (December 5, 2016)

Emma emphasized that she cared about her students' lives beyond school, and she tried to connect students' prior experiences and knowledge with Chinese literacy learning. For example, once she assigned students a composition task to describe their hobbies. From the students' turned in compositions, Emma strongly felt that they wanted to tell her about what they liked to do in their leisure time after school. The composition works contained handwriting, drawing and stickers as well as newspaper cutting to help students express themselves. According to Emma, "their compositions really helped me a lot to better understand their lives and thoughts, which facilitated me to draw their real-life experiences into Chinese literacy teaching" (first interview, December 5, 2016). This literacy practice reflected that Emma cherished her students' experiences beyond school and tried to bring them into situated contexts. Moreover, in line with multiliteracies literature (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; NLG, 1996), Emma encouraged her students to utilize different ways and resources, according to their own interests and needs, in their literacy practices.

Similarly, Amy also indicated her focus on learning about students' previous experiences through weekly journals. Amy asked her students to display their weekend lives

or memorable events in the journals through various ways (such as painting and spoken presentation), and many times she was impressed by her students' work. As she stated in her reflective writing,

Some older students chose to write down a short article; some students drew pictures to show their memorable events; some students cut out pictures and words from newspaper to help display their lives; some students gave a short spoken presentation instead of writing on paper; and some students wrote simple words on their iPad or iPod to show to the class. (January 12, 2017)

It always surprised Amy that her students could have so many creative ideas to express themselves. In her reflective writing she stated "I think a possible reason for this creativity was that students were able to touch so many resources in their lives" (January 12, 2017).

In order to design new literacy activities, Amy made many efforts to link her students' daily school lives with their Chinese literacy learning. In her reflective writing, Amy presented such a story:

Once, I taught my students some Chinese expressions describing people's appearance, such as tall, short, black hair or blue eyes. When my students could remember the meanings of these words, I gave them 15 minutes to draw their best friends on paper and asked them to use the new words to describe their best friends' appearance.

(January 12, 2017)

It was a successful class in Amy's eyes when "every student tried to use the new words to introduce their best friends to their classmates and showed their impressive drawings as well" (reflective writing, January 12, 2017). Students were able to understand the meanings of these Chinese words and became active meaning makers by using the Chinese words properly to show their friends' characteristics in their drawings. By incorporating students' lives outside school into literacy learning processes, Amy showed her understanding of Situated Practice



which underpinned her literacy teaching practice. In this learning process, Amy's students increased their Chinese vocabulary, improved their comprehension while they were finishing the task, and promoted their expressing and speaking abilities when they used new words to describe their best friends. Similarly, Amy used the same method to teach her students other new Chinese words and topics as well, such as asking them to draw their homes after they learned the words kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, and basement in Chinese. With such drawings, according to Cope & Kalantzis (2009), students are able to process written knowledge through an image mode.

Another example showing Amy's implementation of multiliteracies was a literacy activity called "word links". The word links game requires students to take turns giving a new word which starts with the ending of the last word given by the previous student. This game can begin with any two letter word and students go on to present new words based on the previous one. Amy indicated in her interview that in doing this literacy practice, "students can review the words they learned and also put the learned knowledge into new situations" (December 6, 2016). As Kalantzis and Cope (2005) also suggested, learners should be familiar with their previous knowledge, thus, teachers should provide opportunities for students to connect their previous knowledge with new knowledge within situated environments. Amy's word links game facilitated her students to review Chinese vocabulary which they have learned and engaged them in learning new vocabulary with peers as well.

In her teaching in Chinese school, besides Chinese literacy skills, Emma also taught students about Chinese culture. In order to improve her students' understanding and experiences of Chinese culture, Emma brought strings into her class to teach folk games. The game she taught her students is called *Cat's Cradle*, which is a popular game aimed towards nurturing young children's creativity in China. To play this game, two children need to cooperate with each other. First, a student needs to tie the string into a circle and use their

hands and fingers to make a particular crisscross shape with the string. Next it is the other student's turn to take the string into their own hands by taking hold of the crisscross sections with their fingers and turning them around the straight parts of the string. Two students take turns doing this until they have exhausted all possible string positions. Emma illustrated the effectiveness of playing this game in her first interview:

The pleasure of this game is that children can always create new kinds of movements using the same string and show their creativity and wisdom. Students can learn much about Chinese culture through this game, at the same time, they can develop their ability to be creative in daily life. (December 5, 2016)

By teaching students the Cat's Cradle game, Emma brought new learning experiences to her students, as Cope & Kalantzis (2009) and the New London Group (1996) suggest. She was able to teach students to collaborate with their peers and look for new solutions to complete a cycle of the game. This can help, as Cope & Kalantzis (2009) put it, take "the learner into new domains of action and meaning" (p. 18).

Similar to the string game, Emma also tried to combine conventional activities with Chinese literacy and culture teaching. For instance, during some important Chinese festivals in the year, Emma would provide various crafts material to teach her students how to do some traditional activities. For example, small lanterns were made for mid-autumn festival and students were encouraged to write their wishes on their lanterns or for spring festival, students were taught to write and draw Chinese written couplets which can stick to the door. Emma reported in her reflective writing that "many students were happily involved in these activities, and many of them made incredible lanterns or created amazing written couplets by themselves." Emma created new learning experiences for her students by having them make crafts for Chinese festivals. In this learning process, Emma served as, what the New London Group referred to as "mentor" (p. 85), to guide her students to design and make new crafts.

With the guidance of Situated Practice, Emma and Amy made efforts to bring their students various learning opportunities and incorporate students' life experiences outside the classroom. Through teaching practices such as various journal tasks and literacy games, it affirmed what the New London Group (1996) suggested that it is important to take students' diverse learning interests (e.g., students liked making crafts) and learning needs (e.g., students need to become active meaning makers) into consideration when teachers design literacy practices. Emma and Amy valued students' diversity and engaged them in different Chinese literacy activities, which made it possible for their students to become, as Kalantzis & Cope (2005) also said, active meaning makers in their literacy learning and create new learning outcomes (such as journals made up of different resources).

### **Overt Instruction**

Overt Instruction advocates teachers to give proper tasks to students and conduct appropriate instructions according to students' tasks (Makino & Hartnell-Young, 2009). As indicated before, Emma and Amy created weekly journal practices for their students. In order to provide sufficient instructions for their students, Emma and Amy both would spend much time carefully checking every student's work. For instance, Emma said in her first interview that "I would review their works, correct their mistakes and write down encouragements to them" (December 5, 2016). Therefore, students were able to receive direct instructions from teachers and as Emma had noted in her first interview, this reduced the students chances of repeating their same mistakes (December 5, 2016).

In addition, Emma and Amy focused on developing students' abilities to solve problems. Conducting collaborative practices with students (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; 2003) was an efficient method used in Amy's teaching. She talked about her way of conducting collaborative activities with students in her reflective writing below.

I like to teach students to make crafts, especially around Chinese or Canadian

holidays, we made crafts together. For example, when it was Mothers' Day, I provided colored papers, cards, glue and other tools to teach students to make cards for their mothers. We discussed the color, design and contents to use for the cards and I taught them to write down difficult Chinese characters. When it was the Chinese Spring Festival, I would also teach them to write Chinese couplets and we do simple paper cuttings for decorating windows together. Once they mastered the basic main points of making cards or paper cuttings, they would supply you with amazing crafts.

(January 12, 2017)

With Amy's support and instructions during the collaborative activities, her students were able to find possible solutions to solve problems in designing crafts (such as to write difficult Chinese characters on cards with their teacher's help) and create new learning outcomes (such as making cards) on their own. Similarly, Kalantzis and Cope (2008) state how Overt Instructions enable students to meaningfully talk about "the processes and patterns of Design" (p. 206).

Another way employed by the participants to develop students' independent problem solving abilities was teaching students to make use of available resources and tools. Both Emma and Amy mentioned their efforts to teach students how to *fish*. By using the word fish, they were referring to the old saying: Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime. In her reflective writing, Emma mentioned her story of teaching students to utilize useful tools in life.

I recommended several apps to help them translate English into Chinese, such as YODAO (a digital dictionary app on smart phones), it can help students translate words and sentences between English and Chinese. Moreover, this app provides standard Chinese pronunciation that students can learn from and practice on their own at home. (March 10, 2017)

Similarly, Amy indicated her way to teach students to overcome Chinese pronunciation problems in her first interview: “Sometimes I would record my voice reading the articles and let students keep the recording. When students are confused about the pronunciations of the Chinese characters, they could play my recordings and study at home” (December 6, 2016).

In her first interview, Emma described a successful teaching story about helping a young student recite a Chinese poem.

Once, one of my students could not remember a poem that other students could recite. I communicated with his parents and told them to help him at home. I sent a video link of the poem to the student’s parents and they displayed the video at home for him. He worked hard to follow the video and recited the poem and finally one day, he offered to recite the poem in front of the class. Of course, he gained lots of applause from his peers. Looking at his smiling and proud face, I felt a strong sense of achievement as well. (December 5, 2016)

By sending the online video to the students’ parents, Emma helped her student obtain useful learning resources at home, which inspired the student to make use of available resources to solve problems as well. This is in line with the New London Group’s (1996) call for the use of various sources for problem solving purposes.

In Amy’s eyes, teaching her students how to use the *XINHUA Dictionary* (see Figure 6) was a successful endeavor to enhance students’ independent problem solving abilities. The *XINHUA Dictionary* is an essential dictionary for each Chinese student to learn Chinese characters from when they are young. With this dictionary, students are able to check the pronunciations and meanings of every new character using two methods: pronunciation check and partial components of Chinese characters check. Amy strongly believed that teaching students to use the *XINGHUA Dictionary* would benefit them a lot in the future.

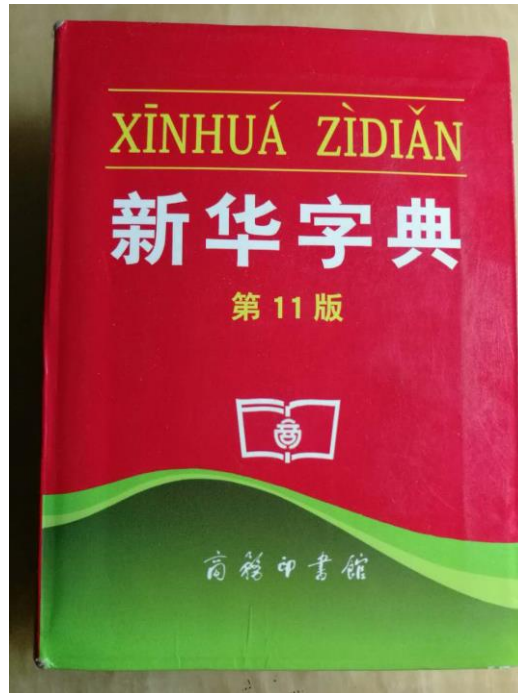


Figure 6. XINHUA Dictionary.

Amy expressed the benefits of her teaching students to use the *XINHUA Dictionary* in her reflective writing,

When students are able to master the use of this dictionary, their independent learning abilities could be highly improved. Since students are able to look for the pronunciations and meanings of new words at anytime if they have dictionaries in hand, meanwhile it can save lots of time by eliminating the need to ask teachers or parents for help when they meet problems in doing their homework. Furthermore, with more practice of using the *XINHUA Dictionary*, students would become more skillful and quick to find solutions for their questions in studying by themselves, which would be beneficial for their future studies and lives. (January 12, 2017)

Amy also added that one of her students especially enjoyed checking the *XINHUA Dictionary* and the student expressed that it was really interesting to check Chinese characters in this dictionary. Amy felt motivated when her students showed interest in making use of available tools and resources to study Chinese. This way, she believed, her students would be more

involved in the learning process and could make much more progress by themselves.

Due to the different systems of Chinese characters and pronunciations, learning to write Chinese characters is the basic requirement to master Chinese literacy (Norman, 1988). Therefore, Emma and Amy both designed writing practices for their students in class. Every time students learned a new text, Emma and Amy would select important Chinese words from the text and teach students to practice writing the Chinese words. To improve students' memory and understanding of the Chinese words, Emma and Amy sometimes found and displayed interesting videos online introducing the origins and meanings of Chinese words, as they found that students were able to focus more on videos and attain knowledge quickly.

Both Emma and Amy paid attention to provide Overt Instructions for their students' literacy learning and develop students' independent learning and problem solving abilities as mentioned by Mills (2009) and the New London Group (1996). They also integrated Overt Instructions within the situated learning environments to facilitate students' learning scaffolding process as well (e.g., Amy instructed students to make Chinese festival crafts) which is also suggested in Mills (2006) paper. This integration showed that Emma and Amy avoided what the New London Group (1996) referred to as a "replication of the generalities of Overt Instruction" (p. 86) that normally exists in traditional literacy teaching. In line with existing literature in this regard (Ajayi, 2011; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; NLG, 1996), by introducing useful learning tools to their students, Emma and Amy enabled them to explore more possibilities in Chinese literacy learning and make various meanings.

### **Critical Framing**

In this study, Critical Framing refers to cultivating students' critical thinking abilities, which enable them to critically analyze, interpret and express their own thoughts regarding particular social and cultural contexts (Mills, 2006). In their interviews and reflective writings, Amy and Emma noted the importance of developing critical abilities for young

students in literacy learning. Emma explained in her reflective writing about the reasons why she cherished the critical abilities of students.

When I was a young student in China, my class had many students. Teachers didn't have enough time to listen to each student's thoughts and they would not be happy if students came up with different opinions than their teachers. Under that kind of teaching environment, every student behaved like factory products, as everyone was equipped with the same knowledge and expressed the same thoughts in the same way. When I grew up, I realized how important it is for a child to have the rights and abilities to speak their own thoughts and show different opinions. Therefore, in my teaching, I gave my students enough time and opportunities to let them voice their own opinions. (January 6, 2017)

Emma also added that designing small debates was helpful to nurture students' critical abilities.

For example, after I taught them about the Great Wall, I designed a small debate about the Great Wall for them. I encouraged them to express their various thoughts about this large construction in China. This debate was successful as it encouraged students to bravely express their different opinions about the Great Wall. Some students thought it was important to defend the motherland while other students argued the Great Wall wasted lots of money collected from poor people and many families were separated due to its time-consuming construction. I cherished all their views and encouraged them to continually question and think critically about their lives and the world. (reflective writing, January 6, 2017)

On her views regarding her students' debate about the Great Wall she continues,

My students would analyze the Great Wall from its historical, cultural, and social aspects before expressing their thoughts. For students who agreed with building the



Great Wall, they believed China needed to defend itself at that war period; while students who didn't agree with the big construction thought people living in that time period were poor and many families were separated due to the time-consuming construction. (reflective writing, January 6, 2017)

From Emma's reflective writing, I can see the debate she designed facilitated her students to take into consideration political, social, cultural, and historical factors when processing social practice and knowledge, which the New London Group (1996) suggests as well. In their debating process, Emma's students were able to develop their diverse literacy abilities, as Cope & Kalantzis (2009) said, by carefully thinking, interpreting, analyzing, and speaking critically about a topic. Also, by interacting with their peers, students were inspired by each other and became what existing literature states as meaning designers and makers (New London Group, 1996; Mills, 2006).

In Amy's teaching, reading a series of stories was a good way to help students systematically develop their critical thinking abilities. In the curriculum material collected, Amy provided a series of eight story books about a group of rats living in a beautiful village. The stories were connected with each other and were gradually developed, which in Amy's mind showed that "they were good teaching materials to develop students' critical thinking abilities". Figure 7 shows two stories from this series, which talked about a mysterious staircase and an adventure at a mountain.

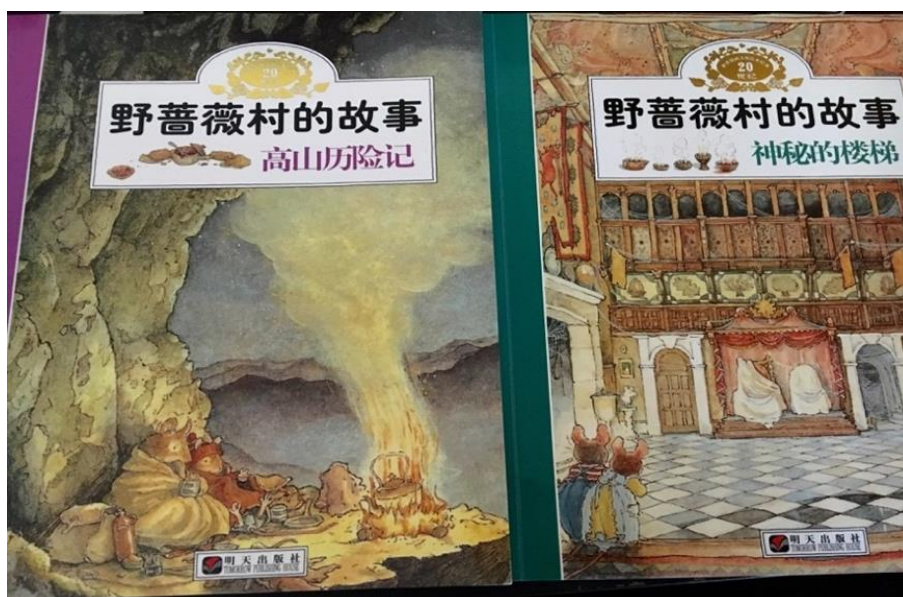


Figure 7. Two story books.

In her reflective writing, Amy explained how she used these storybooks:

I started to read them the first two books two months ago, and after they learned the basic background of the story, such as who the main characters were, what had already happened and so on. Then, I would read half of the third book and let them predict what would happen. Based on their memories and understandings of the past story, they can carefully think about the trend of the story and express their own thoughts. (January 12, 2017)

Amy indicated that all the different perspectives from her students were valuable for her to adjust her reading strategy. She added in her reflective writing,

Normally, I was able to tell my students paid attention while listening to the stories and analyzing the contents carefully. As some of them could give pretty reasonable guesses about the trend of the story, which reflected that they can comprehend stories and were thinking critically about them. But sometimes, students may feel confused too and they needed hints to predict the development of the stories. At that time, I would show them the books which contained beautiful pictures and Chinese characters with pinyin (pronunciations) and let them interpret and analyze about the

pictures. Then they can continue to come up with their different thoughts with the help of pictures from story books. (January 12, 2017)

Figure 8 showed a photo from the story book that Amy showed to her students, which could support students to guess the possible stories in the next pages. By reading students the first three books, Emma enabled her students to, as the New London Group stated, “gain the necessary personal and theoretical distance from what they have learned” (p. 87). Then, by showing students the pictures in the story books, Emma facilitated her students to “constructively critique it, account for its cultural location, creatively extend and apply it”, and “eventually innovate on their own” (NLG, 1996, p. 87) by coming up with their different thoughts on predicting the story development.

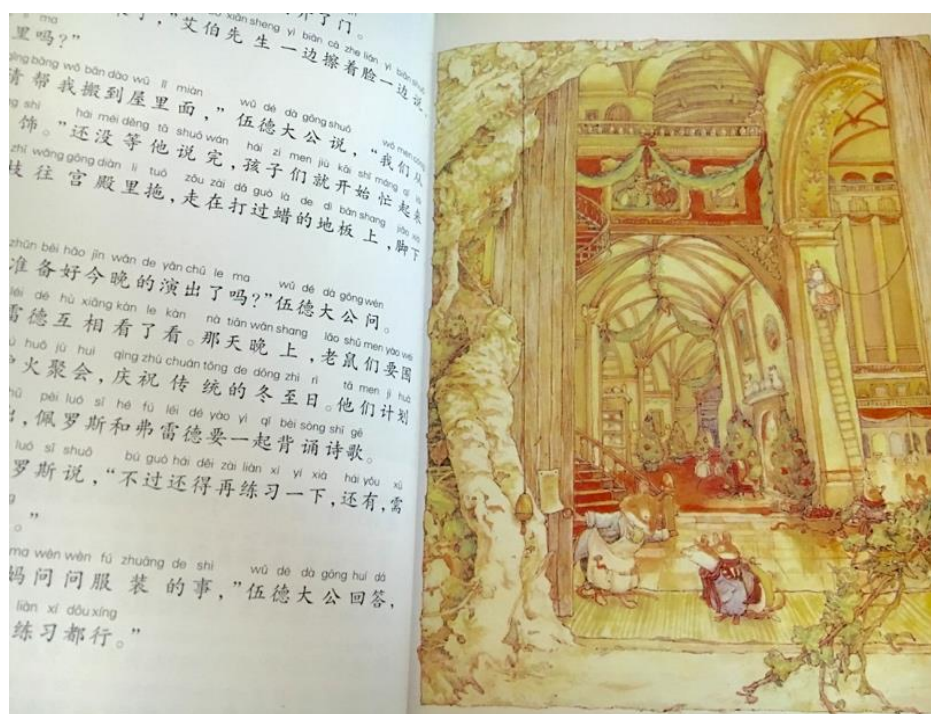


Figure 8. A photo from the story book.

Emma’s small debates and Amy’s story book reading both acknowledged their intentions to cultivate students’ abilities of what is known as Critical Framing (Kalantzis & Cope, 2002; NLG, 1996). When students were able to come up with their opinions and guesses upon existing information and knowledge (e.g., Amy’s students predicted the story),

the abilities of comprehension, conceptualizing, connecting, analyzing, critically thinking as well as meaning expressing which were listed by the New London Group (1996) were developed. Meanwhile, by creating these meaningful literacy activities (e.g., Emma designed the Great Wall debate), it revealed that the Chinese teachers, similar to evidence from literature on the benefits of multiliteracies for multimodality (Flicker et. al., 2014), both had a good perception of multiliteracies' effectiveness in assisting teachers and students to access various modes to facilitate critical thinking in literacy learning.

### **Transformed Practice**

Transformed Practice refers to students' abilities to apply what they have learned into different situations (NLG, 1996). More specifically, through Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, and Critical Framing, students are able to transfer what they have learned into new situations and solve new problems (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; NLG, 1996). From interviews and reflective writings, both Emma and Amy claimed that they provided different opportunities for students to revise and apply what they have learned into new contexts.

Amy focused on training her students' abilities to transform knowledge. The first example was the successful instance mentioned before, about her effective teaching regarding the use of the *XINHUA Dictionary*, that helped her students master the skills of pronunciation check and partial components of Chinese characters check, to learn the pronunciation and meanings when encountering new Chinese characters in their studies. The second example is a poem play, described below, which provided strong proof to show her innovative implementation of multiliteracies.

In writing and performing a new play based on a poem learned (see Figure 9 for a sample poem) in the textbook, Amy's students were encouraged to put what they have learned into new situations and practices. In this poem, the spring rain started to come to the world. Seeds under the ground said: "Let it rain! Let it rain! I want to come up!" Grain

seedling said: “Let it rain! Let it rain! I want to grow up”. In order to make every student get involved in the play, Amy asked every student to pick one thing that they wanted to represent and create a sentence to express the reasons why they want the rain. After ten minutes, each student chose a thing that they wanted and gave their particular reasons for wanting the rain. Amy described her students’ amazing performances and creativity in her reflective writing.

Some students borrowed the knowledge from the previous classes (such as the grass wants to keep green), and some students came up with ideas from their daily lives (such as the car needs to be washed). Every student got a chance to display their special roles and expressed their views. It was indeed a long play, but everyone enjoyed the roles they created on their own and made the play a big success together.  
(January 12, 2017)

This poetic role play demonstrated that Amy provided an opportunity for her students to show “how they can design and carry out, in a reflective manner, new practices embedded in their own goals and values” (NLG, 1996, p. 87). From Amy’s reflective writing, it was proven that her students have successfully mastered the skills to apply what they have learned into new situations. When facing the challenge of coming up with a new role to play, Amy’s students showed their abilities to connect with their lives outside school and use them as Cope and Kalantzis (2009) say, to solve challenges and new problems.



Figure 9. The poem of Spring Rain.

Emma's way of checking her students' knowledge application and information searching skills was to assign Grade 9 students to do a presentation at the end of each semester. She illustrated one example of such presentation tasks in her first interview.

One typical example was that I told my students to pick one Chinese song and give a presentation about it, they can introduce the meaning of the lyrics, the background of the song as well as the reasons why they picked this song and so forth. It is like doing a mind map and the core of the map is the song. Then students were free to collect any information that was related to this song. For finishing this task, students would need to search for large quantities of information and learn to recognize and keep useful information for their presentation. Furthermore, students would need to spend much time practicing speaking to reach a good presentation result. I remembered one of my students even sang the song in front of us and it was indeed an impressive way

of doing the presentation. (December 5, 2016)

In this Chinese song presentation practice, Emma's students needed to apply multiple skills to finish the presentation task. Searching abundant information online, analyzing and recording key contents in the presentation, and coming up with a creative form to present the presentations all work together to promote students' diverse literacy skills.

According to Cope and Kalantzis (2009), Transformed Practice refers to "applying appropriately" (p. 18) and "applying creatively" (p. 19). Applying appropriately can be found in Emma's Chinese song presentation practice. This practice provides an opportunity for her students to apply "knowledge and understanding to the complex diversity of real world situations" (e.g., students searched for diverse information on a Chinese song and prepared different ways to complete the presentation; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 18). Applying creatively can be discovered in Amy's poem play which helped encourage her students to make "the world anew with fresh and creative forms of action and perception" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 19) by using their experiences and interests (e.g., some students created poem verses based on their daily life experiences).

### **Multimodality in teaching**

Both Emma and Amy provided examples of their utilization of diverse resources in classrooms to engage young students in learning Chinese literacy. Through analyzing the data collected from interviews and curriculum material, it was clear that the two Chinese teachers had many similar teaching experiences using multimodality for their young students. This was also because they both completed professional master's degrees covering the multiliteracies theory and pedagogy, which guides teachers to import creative ideas and resources for Chinese literacy teaching (e.g., Marsh, 2004; Wall, 2014).

Among different technology tools, the iPad was these two Chinese teachers' favorite tool to help students properly learn Chinese. Normally, Emma and Amy took an iPad to the

classroom to play Chinese songs for their students. Emma even created a special literacy exercise based on different Chinese songs for her students. First, Emma printed out the lyrics of the Chinese songs and omitted some key words in the lyrics, then when the songs were played, her students needed to listen to the music carefully in order to find the omitted words and write them down on the paper. The positive outcomes of this literacy activity were described by Emma in her interview:

When the music is played, students will focus on the music and write down the omitted words in the lyrics, which helps to facilitate their listening, reading and writing abilities as well as expand their Chinese vocabulary. Furthermore, they would learn (Chinese literacy) more gradually and unconsciously. (December 5, 2016)

Emma creatively designed this literacy practice which integrated multimodality (e.g., iPad and Chinese music) within literacy practice (e.g., Chinese listening and Chinese characters writing), which according to existing literature (e.g., Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Jewitt, 2008; Murray, 2013) effectively supports students' literacy learning in the classroom.

Another important way Emma and Amy efficiently utilized the iPad was to find visual resources online when teaching Chinese culture. For instance, Emma indicated in her first interview that

I use my iPad to find some pictures in advance and display them to students in class. For example, this week I'm going to talk about some scenic locations and historic sites in China such as the Great Wall, I will find some pictures or documentaries online to show to them. Through images and videos, students will have a deeper impression of these scenic locations and historic sites in China. (December 5, 2016)

Similarly, Amy stated in her reflective writing, that

I searched for interesting and impressive pictures or short videos that were related to my teaching topic on my iPad, and students would pay more attention when I showed



them in class, because all my students were interested in the iPad, thus they would pay attention to the 'iPad teaching. (April 2, 2017)

Amy believed that the iPad was helpful because it can capture student' learning interests, while Emma appreciated that the images shown on her iPad could deepen students' impression and understanding of Chinese culture. This resonated with Stokes's (2002) study, which indicated that a visual mode in teaching can help students achieve better learning outcomes.

Apart from the iPad, Amy also liked to bring her laptop to class and set each Wednesday as their Chinese Cartoon day. On that day, Amy would play a famous Chinese cartoon called *XI YANG YANG YU HUI TAI LANG* meaning Sheep Xi with Wolf Grey, which had over five hundred episodes dealing with funny stories happening between a group of sheep and wolves. There were three main reasons why Amy chose this cartoon,

Firstly, it was a popular and attractive cartoon which was created particularly for young children in China. Secondly, this cartoon talked about daily life between sheep and wolves, students could learn simple Chinese conversations that were used a lot in daily life. Thirdly, this cartoon had many episodes and it was a consistent story, which could help students develop their critical thinking as the story kept developing.

(reflective writing, January 12, 2017)

Amy picked this Chinese cartoon with the concern of her students' interests and learning needs, which would create a positive Chinese learning environment for her students and involve students in Chinese literacy learning (e.g., Goodman, 2003; Yelland, 2011).

Another tool that Amy utilized and also taught her students to make use of was an online translation services, such as *Google Translate* (See Figure 10 for a screenshot of Google Translate). This was an accessible and convenient technological tool to help Amy's students translate English words to Chinese at home. It also provides standard Chinese

pronunciations as well as the definitions and explanations of the words. Also students in their daily lives already had access to technology resources and according to literature, this enables them to master the skills required to use technological tools quickly (Levy, 2009; Sandholtz, 1997; Wang, 2009).

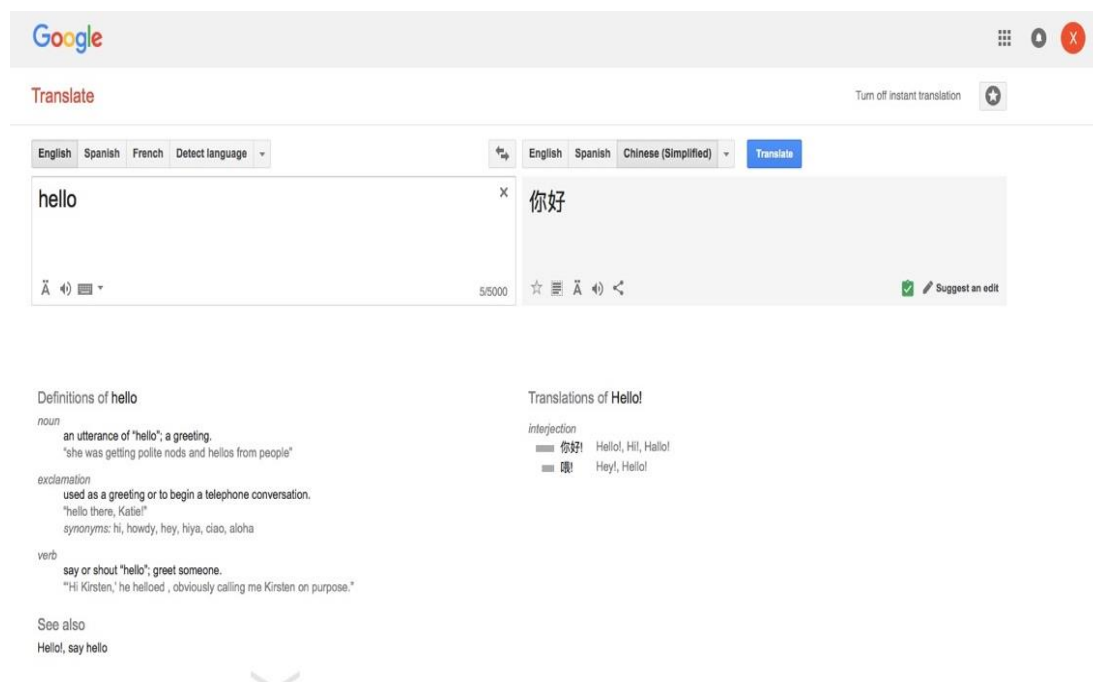


Figure 10. A screenshot of Google Translate.

To attract her students' attention to reading, Emma would provide colorful pens to help students highlight the key words in an article. Meanwhile, she developed a clapping strategy to deepen students' memory of the keywords. Every time when Emma and her students read the article together, students would clap their hands when they encountered the keywords in the article. Sometimes, Emma would write the keywords on the board and draw two small hands beside the key words to notify students when to clap their hands. Emma added in the interview that "students will find it interesting to read the article, because they use clapping every now and then in the process of reading the article. This teaching method can also strengthen their memory of these key words" (December 5, 2016).

Another technique that Emma and Amy both utilized to help students recognize and remember Chinese characters was colorful cards. Compared to the English alphabet that help

people directly pronounce English words, Chinese characters require students to remember separate pinyin (pronunciations) to read them and four tones to specify different meanings in sentences. The colorful cards that Emma and Amy used had two sides. On the one side was the characters with pinyin above the characters, and on the other side was the picture of the character's meaning. For example, the word "fire", on the card showed the character with pinyin and the image of fire on the reverse side. Emma reported that these colorful cards were very helpful in her reflective writing as she found they "worked well in helping students easily remember different Chinese words when they saw the images" (March 10, 2017)

In order to display her literacy teaching using multiliteracies and multimodality more generally and systematically, Emma provided one of her lesson plans as an example. Figure 11 below displayed this lesson plan from Emma, which verified her integration of multiliteracies with her practical Chinese literacy teaching situations. This plan was about teaching a lessons that related to Chinese Kung Fu. First of all, Emma listed clear teaching goals to teach this lesson (such as to learn other names of China and introduce Chinese Kung Fu). Second, she showed the material that she prepared for her class, such as additional articles, colorful cards of the new Chinese characters and her iPad. Next, she wrote three ways to teach: expository, demonstration and game methods. The last part of her lesson plan described a detailed teaching procedure to guide her teaching order.

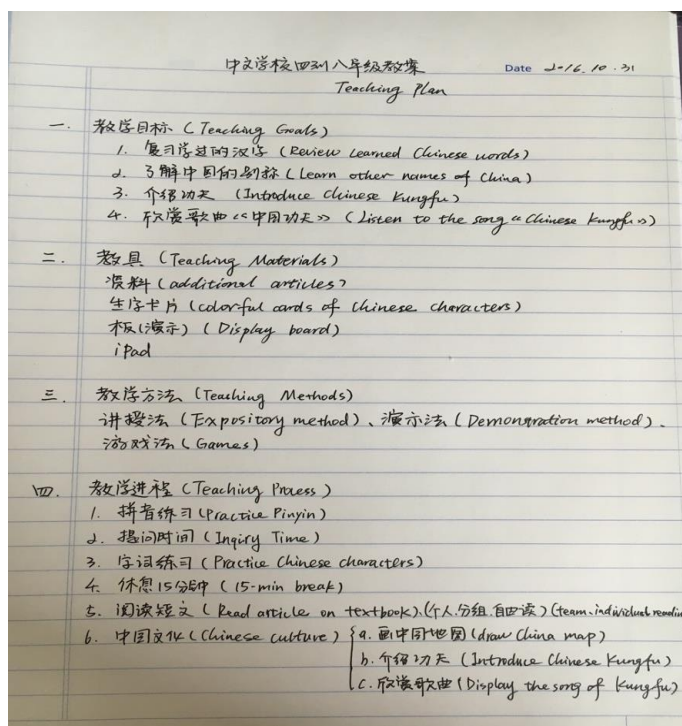


Figure 11. Lesson plan of Chinese Kung Fu.

Emma's lesson plan indicated her clear understanding of implementing multiliteracies and multimodality in practical teaching situations. By playing games and displaying colorful cards, her students were able to apply body gestures and use visual, and oral modes which are all known to be parts of literacy learning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Also by utilizing the iPad to appreciate a Chinese Kung Fu song, an attractive learning resource was added which according to Eshet-Alkalai (2004), created an engaging learning environment for students. Moreover, Emma created different literacy practices for her students to develop different literacy abilities. For example, a practice named Practice Pinyin helped her students review the pronunciation and tones of Chinese characters which they had learned; inquiry Time practice provided an opportunity for Emma's students to "interrogate the interests behind a meaning or an action, and their own processes of thinking" (e.g., students may question why Chinese Kung Fu is great and popular; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 18).

All these Chinese literacy practices from Emma and Amy reflected the value and effectiveness of implementing multiliteracies in Chinese literacy teaching. When Emma used

her iPad to display interesting pictures to students and Amy played a Chinese cartoon that her students liked to watch, it showed that multiliteracies assisted the two Chinese teachers to capture their students' learning interests and provided diverse learning resources for them. By creating the poem role play practice, Amy supported every student to get involved in the learning process and helped them to become active meaning designers. Moreover, Emma created small debates and Amy read a series of Chinese story books, which provided multiple forms to facilitate their students' critical thinking abilities.

Emma and Amy both showed their strong grasp of multiliteracies pedagogy through their practical teaching experiences. They were able to cherish and make use of students' diverse experiences, create innovative Chinese literacy practices, and supply multiple resources for assisting their students with meaning-making. With the implementation of multiliteracies in Chinese literacy teaching, Emma indicated that "students focus more on my teaching" (first interview, December 5, 2016). Similarly, Amy indicated that "the most improved aspects among students' literacy abilities are listening and speaking, students get motivated and can build confidence in literacy learning" (first interview, December 6, 2016).

#### **4.4 Theme 3: Insufficient Technological Support and Practical Instructions for Teaching**

Emma and Amy were willing to talk about the challenges encountered and share their suggestions with other teachers who also wish to integrate multiliteracies into their own teaching situations. The first challenge that Emma and Amy both encountered was the technology issue in their teaching environments. In Emma's school, Wi-Fi sometimes did not work well, which occasionally hindered her normal teaching procedures. Especially when she and her students wanted to find online resources in class, it may be very time-consuming to get the useful information. As a result, when Emma was preparing her lesson plan, she searched for enough information online in advance, which was an efficient way to save class time. In Amy's school, she was facing a similar problem about acquiring a stable

technological teaching environment. Thus, she would spend a lot of time finding enough teaching material for her students before the classes as well.

Amy also talked about teachers' abilities and skills to use technology in teaching. In her first interview, Amy expressed that "for some older Chinese teachers, they even don't know how to turn on the computers, let alone to use iPads in classrooms, which could hinder the adoption of technology in teaching environments" (December 6, 2016). Amy also mentioned her struggle of utilizing technology,

For me, although I can easily download some study apps on the iPad for students, and display Chinese music and videos for students, but I still feel that I have limited knowledge about using technology very week in class. Sometimes I could not figure out which study app or materials can best serve students, there are not a lot professional programs or trainings to teach teachers how to choose technology and use it well in teaching. (first interview, December 6, 2016)

Both of the Chinese teachers also presented the same challenge that was the lack of enough technology tools such as smart boards to use in class. Emma talked about this issue in her follow-up interview, "But as for technological tools such as smart boards, the school could not provide them due to financial reasons" (May 12, 2017). Amy also pointed out the similar challenge in her follow-up interview on May 13, 2017.

The school didn't have technological tools for me to use, such as the computer or smart board. From what I learned in multiliteracies, technology tools play an important role in literacy teaching. Thus, I feel this is a big challenge for me.

Sometimes if I want to do tasks with technology tools, for instance, teaching students to practice typing pinyin on keyboards, I couldn't. Because we don't have technology support.

Although facing the challenges of lacking enough technology tools, Emma and Amy both

presented their opinion that technology was not everything. In this regard, Emma added in her follow-up interview:

Teachers should always try to find good ways to teach, such as to find various teaching materials, and create some meaningful teaching activities. The technological tools are assistants, they are not the most important factors in teaching, the teacher should be the one who knows how to use these tools to provide meaningful learning opportunities for students” (May 12, 2017).

The last common challenge that emerged from Emma and Amy’ experiences was a lack of sufficient practical guidance, both in the professional master’s programs that they studied, and as professional development offered by the schools where they taught. Emma described her thoughts of the professional master’s degree in her follow-up interview:

I learned multiliteracies in my master program. From a theoretical aspect, it taught me much useful and detailed knowledge about multiliteracies and multimodality, and also discussions with my peers about different ideas regarding multiliteracies also benefited me a lot. However, for my practical teaching, I still sort of feel the program didn't provide me with sufficient guidance and support, which made me feel a duty and responsibility to learn more about multiliteracies in practical use. (May 12, 2017)

Similarly, Amy expressed her thoughts on her professional master’s study in a follow-up interview:

Firstly, I really appreciate this program, because it helped me to have access to multiliteracies and multimodality, and I was equipped with a fundamental knowledge of the theories and pedagogies of multiliteracies and multimodality. Also due to the assignments and lots of scholarly paper reading as well as discussions with my peers, I gained lots of ideas of diverse aspects of multiliteracies. Still, I feel this program could provide more sufficient support for in-service teachers’ practical teaching.

Learning theory from textbooks and practicing what we learned in real situations is the most effective way for teachers in my mind. (May 13, 2017)

Emma and Amy both studied multiliteracies and multimodality during their master programs, and they affirmed the benefits these professional learning experiences provided for them in learning multiliteracies theories and pedagogies. Still, Emma and Amy felt that the professional programs could not supply them with sufficient guidance and support for teachers in diverse teaching environments.

The second insufficient support was from Emma and Amy's Chinese schools. Emma indicated in her reflective writing that: "my school board did not provide professional training opportunities for teachers to develop themselves, which is another challenge" (May 12, 2017). Amy also pointed to a similar challenge in her reflective writing: "I also want to say that in the Chinese school where I am teaching, there are not professional workshops or training opportunities for our teachers to improve our teaching strategies or methods. Like I said in the interview, I could not get help from professional programs to know what technology tools can best serve my students" (May 14, 2017). The challenges of insufficient support came from both Emma and Amy's Professional master's studies and their own schools, which motivated the two Chinese teachers to continue studying more about multiliteracies in practical use on their own.

#### **4.5 Theme 4: Teachers' Development**

To provide suggestions for applying multiliteracies in teaching, Emma and Amy both suggested to first attend professional programs. They gave a strong recommendation for teachers who were able to have a chance to study in a professional program on multiliteracies pedagogy. As Emma suggested in her reflective writing,

For teachers who want to implement multiliteracies, attending a professional program on multiliteracies is a good start for them, as they can build a systematic knowledge



of multiliteracies and multimodality. Meanwhile, learning from professors and peers in the professional programs can also inspire and facilitate teachers' teaching in practical teaching contexts. (May 12, 2017)

Besides, Amy also expressed in her reflective writing that if school boards could organize teachers to attend professional workshops or training programs to help them learn more about the implementations of multiliteracies and multimodality, that would benefit teachers and their students a lot as well.

Another suggestion from Emma and Amy was to value personal development in teaching contexts. Emma suggested in her follow-up interview that "teachers themselves can also search for some scholarly papers or watch some practical teaching videos online to facilitate their own teaching and development" (May 12, 2017). Similarly, Amy provided advice stating,

Teachers should always keep studying in my opinion. No matter whether attending professional training programs, or learning from other teachers, there are always many ways to develop ourselves. Sometimes I would borrow some books from the library to study about education. Meanwhile, I try to make myself keep pace with the development of the world, such as I always go to learn new technologies and try to combine them with my Chinese teaching. (follow-up interview, May 13, 2017).

Emma and Amy both suggested that teachers should attend professional programs on multiliteracies. They held the shared belief that professional programs on multiliteracies could facilitate teachers' understanding of multiliteracies theory and pedagogy which is what literature has concluded as well (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Rowsell, Kosnik, & Beck, 2008).

Additionally, Emma and Amy proposed that there are many ways to work on themselves (e.g., reading scholar papers about multiliteracies), and they advocated, as Meng (2016) also mentioned, for teachers to value personal development by learning up-to-date knowledge of

multiliteracies.

#### 4.6 Summary

This chapter summarized four emergent themes that responded to my research questions. The first theme *Diverse perceptions of multiliteracies and multimodality* replied to my first research question regarding Chinese teachers' perceptions of multiliteracies. The second theme *Classroom practices/pedagogy, tools and strategies, responding to students' needs and interests* responded to my second research question about how Chinese teachers implement multiliteracies in Chinese literacy teaching contexts. The third theme *Insufficient technological support and practical instructions for teaching* answered my third research question concerning the challenges encountered in applying multiliteracies. The last theme *Teachers' professional and personal development* provided solutions in relation to the last research question about what suggestions can be provided for other teachers who want to implement multiliteracies.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion and Implications

#### 5.1 Introduction

This study explored two Chinese teachers' experiences of implementing multiliteracies pedagogy in teaching young children Chinese literacy in Canada. Through interviews, collecting curriculum material (such as lesson plans) and reflective writings from Emma and Amy, this study revealed two Chinese teachers' perceptions and experiences of multiliteracies and multimodality. In this chapter, four main findings will be discussed, and I will examine how the findings relate to the existing literature with a focus on multiliteracies pedagogy (NLG, 1996) and teachers' perceptions of multiliteracies. Then, I will talk about the implications and provide suggestions for future research. The significance of the study will be highlighted at the end of this chapter.

#### 5.2 Diverse Perceptions of Multiliteracies and Multimodality

The finding related to the first theme *Diverse Perceptions of Multiliteracies and Multimodality* was concluded that both participants acknowledged the importance and effectiveness of multiliteracies. While Emma focused more on multiliteracies being present in diverse aspects of the environment, Amy saw it more as providing multiple modes to facilitate students' practical literacy abilities which are both concepts found throughout the multiliteracies literature (e.g., Lewis, 2008; Mackay, 2014). As Emma indicated in her first interview, she believed that multiliteracies existed in diverse aspects of teaching environments, like teachers and students being from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. All the diverse elements in teaching environments (such as teachers' diverse cultural backgrounds and students' different learning interests) influenced the application of multiliteracies in the classroom. For instance, students' different learning interests prompted teachers to design different literacy practices to engage students in literacy learning. Emma

realized that diversity played an important role in multiliteracies, thus she concluded her definition of multiliteracies in her teaching context as “All elements are multiple” (first interview, December 5, 2016). According to Amy’s interviews and reflective writing, she held the belief that multiliteracies assists teachers and students to communicate and express themselves through various forms, which enabled students’ development of diverse literacy abilities. For example, Amy illustrated in her first interview that “multiliteracies talk about wider range of literacy skills, with diverse teaching material, modes and methods” (December 6, 2016).

Although the two Chinese teachers defined multiliteracies with different focuses, they still held a similar view that multiliteracies is important and effective in teaching young students Chinese literacy skills. For example, Emma illustrated in the interviews that multiliteracies opened up her mind to new teaching methods and material, and also facilitated her to come up with new ideas to engage her students in learning Chinese literacy. In a similar manner, Amy expressed that with the implementation of multiliteracies pedagogy in her teaching, she was able to cherish her students’ diverse learning needs and interests, and bring in new teaching resources such as an iPad to teach her students. In line with this resource addition of Amy’s, Walsh (2010) emphasized that multimodality is needed to support children’s diverse literacy learning needs. This finding also resonated with Lewis’s (2008) work, in which Lewis investigated secondary English teachers’ perceptions of new literacies. The results revealed that the participants had various definitions of new literacies, such that some participants believed that new literacy practices are related to different teachers and students in different environments, and some participants regarded using technology tools as new literacies. However, Lewis reported that all of the participants acknowledged the importance and necessity of new literacies in their teaching environments.

As demonstrated in existing literature, teachers' perceptions of multiliteracies have a big influence on their teaching practices (Alton-Lee, 2003; Rowe, 2003; Saracho, 2001). Therefore, it is important for teachers to be equipped with a knowledge of multiliteracies theories and pedagogies if they expect to engage students in diverse literacy learning experiences (Mackey, 2014; Wall, 2014). In this research, Emma and Amy both indicated their professional master's studies which included courses on multiliteracies, facilitated their understanding and practices of multiliteracies pedagogies in teaching young students Chinese literacy and further enabled them to create innovative teaching practices for students.

For instance, Emma described that she had realized the importance of technology tools in multiliteracies teaching and this inspired her to utilize an iPad to accommodate her students' learning interests by displaying Chinese music and videos to help them engage in Chinese culture. Amy also emphasized her students' previous knowledge and accordingly designed the "word links" game based on her students' learning needs to familiarize her students with their previous knowledge. These instances all reflected that multiliteracies facilitated Emma and Amy to better cherish their students' diverse learning interests and needs, such as students' interest in teaching via technological tools. Also, it revealed that Emma and Amy were able to add various learning resources (such as the iPad and game) for their young students which is highly encouraged in multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Meng 2016; NLG, 1996).

The previous studies also proved that if teachers are familiar with multiliteracies and multimodality, their perceptions of multiliteracies can facilitate their literacy practices in the classroom (e.g., Lewis, 2008; Mackay, 2014; Meng, 2016). For instance, Makin (2007) examined influential literacy theories that impact teachers' literacy teaching, and proposed that "with increased immigration and global communication technologies, children are best supported when their teachers have a wide understanding of literacy learning in many

contexts” (p. 7). Emma and Amy expressed in the interviews that they cared about their students’ diverse interests and needs. Thus, they gave their students freedom to choose and use different ways and tools that they liked to write a journal. In this regard, Amy stated in her reflective writing that her students “chose to write down a short article”, “drew pictures” or “gave a short spoken presentation” (Jan 12, 2017) to display their weekend lives in their journals.

The reason why the two Chinese teachers had a deep understanding of multiliteracies was because of their professional learning programs on multiliteracies in their master’s program. In their interviews, Emma and Amy both emphasised the importance and benefits of their professional master’s degrees. For instance, Amy described in her follow-up interviews that she “was equipped with a fundamental knowledge of the theories and pedagogies of multiliteracies and multimodality” due to her education (May 13, 2017). On account of their systematic studies on multiliteracies and multimodality, Emma and Amy were able to understand multiliteracies theories and pedagogies and this understanding facilitated their Chinese literacy teaching. The benefits of attending professional training on multiliteracies were also demonstrated in Bull and Anstey’s (2010) study, in which the researchers found some Australian teachers from elementary schools had better understandings of multiliteracies after attending a professional training program which was based on multiliteracies theories and pedagogies.

### **5.3 Classroom Practices/Pedagogy, Tools and Strategies, Responding to Students’ Needs and Interests**

The second finding of this study was that with the help of multiliteracies, the two Chinese teachers designed innovative Chinese literacy activities and brought diverse resources into Chinese literacy teaching based on their students’ learning needs and interests. Using various resources to enable their students to become multiliterate, Emma and Amy

focused on how to attract their students' learning interests, and designed attractive literacy practices (such as the word links game created by Amy and the clapping strategy designed by Emma to help students remember key words). According to Cope and Kalantzis (2000), the "scope of literacy pedagogy" (p. 9) should be expanded with the development of our society, therefore, teachers should realize the importance of bringing a wide range of teaching resources and methods into their classrooms (NLG, 1996). In this study, Emma presented in the interviews and reflective writing that she focused on developing her students' diverse Chinese literacy abilities because she understood that reading and writing should not be regarded as the most important training aspects in literacy teaching and learning. Students also need to have critical abilities, meaning-making and meaning-expressing abilities, and so forth (e.g., Emma designed small debates to develop students' critical thinking abilities). Comber (2001) investigated two Australian primary school teachers' practices to help students become critical readers and thinkers, and suggested that beside reading and writing abilities, educators should pay attention to young students' critical literacy development as well.

In addition to critical thinking abilities, Amy also stated that she tried to develop her students' abilities of solving problems independently by making use of available tools and resources (e.g., Amy taught students to use the *XINHUA Dictionary*). This is important to Amy because she believed it was important for her students to become independent learners for their future lives. This view was also indicated in Claxton's (2007) research "that being an effective, powerful real-life learner is a useful thing to be; and that twenty-first century education should be aiming to help young people develop this generic capacity to learn" (p. 2).

With the four guiding components of multiliteracies pedagogy which are Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, Critical Framing, and Transformed Practice (Jewitt, 2003; Li,

2006; NLG, 1996), Emma and Amy designed innovative literacy practices to engage their students in Chinese literacy learning. For instance, in order to understand students' lives beyond school and bring them into Chinese literacy teaching, Emma and Amy designed relevant journal writing tasks for their students. In the process of utilizing various tools and methods to finish journals, their students had the chance to connect with their lives outside school and transfer them to "multimodal designs" (Mills, 2006, p. 28) in new contexts. To cultivate students' abilities of solving problems independently, Emma and Amy taught students to conduct collaborative activities (e.g., making Mothers' Day cards together) and to make use of available tools and resources (e.g., online Chinese videos and *XINHUA Dictionary*) in life. Furthermore, they tried to facilitate their students' critical learning abilities by means of holding small debates and reading a series of story books, which can enable students to become, as Mills (2009) and the New London Group (1996) have stated, active critical thinkers and meaning makers.

In their interviews, Emma and Amy also indicated that their students were able to apply what they had learned into new situations after they implemented multiliteracies in Chinese literacy teaching, which is what Cope & Kalantzis (2009) and the New London Group (1996) called for. With the examples of creating a new Spring Rain poem play and giving a Chinese song presentation, as Cope & Kalantzis (2009), Mills (2008) and the New London Group (1996) promote, Amy and Emma's students showed their strong abilities to apply previous knowledge to solve new problems and become creative meaning designers. Amy's students created sentences for the poem play based on their learned knowledge (e.g., grass wants the rain to fall so it can stay green) and life experiences (e.g., cars need rain so they can be washed). Emma's students showed the ability to search for information online and provide different ways to do their presentations (e.g., singing the song). Emma and Amy's practical utilization of multiliteracies in creating innovative Chinese literacy practices



(e.g., Amy read a series of story books to develop students' critical thinking abilities; Emma used an iPad to play music) was also confirmed by the findings from existing literature that multiliteracies enables teachers to create diverse meaningful literacy activities in situated teaching environments (e.g., Anstey & Bull, 2006; Cole & Pullen, 2009; Mills, 2006; Unsworth, 2001).

Findings also revealed that the two Chinese teachers creatively integrated multimodality into their Chinese literacy teaching. In addition to the diverse modes seen in literature (e.g., Jinming, 2008; Murray, 2013; Norris, 2012; Siegel, 2006) and used by the teachers, such as writing Chinese characters, listening to Chinese music, doing Chinese games, and making Chinese festival crafts, Emma and Amy also brought technological tools in to provide students with "new dimensions" (Wolfe & Flewitt, 2010, p. 387) in Chinese literacy learning. For instance, Emma and Amy brought iPads to display videos and pictures related to their teaching contents. Compared to print-based literacy practices that mainly rely on the use of textbooks, these new technological tools provided students with different learning experiences. Students are able to access visual and audio modes (pictures and online videos) besides written modes in learning Chinese literacy. According to existing literature, these various literacy experiences also enabled teachers and students to communicate with each other in alternative ways from diverse dimensions (Jewitt, 2008; Lotherington & Jenson, 2011; Pahl & Rowsell, 2006).

The findings also acknowledged that the literacy practices created by Emma and Amy captured and responded to students' learning interests and needs. For example, Amy set each Wednesday as their Chinese cartoon day as she knew her students liked Chinese cartoons and she believed her students could gradually improve Chinese listening, speaking and comprehension abilities by watching Chinese cartoons. From Emma's lesson plan, it was also revealed that she incorporated multiple learning resources (such as colorful cards,

display boards and the iPad) and designed various literacy practices (such as practicing pinyin, inquiry time, and drawing maps of China) to help students achieve different learning goals (such as reviewing learned Chinese words and learning other names of China). Emma and Amy designed these various literacy practices, as Schwab (1973) suggested, with a concern for students' learning interests and learning outcomes as well as their teaching situations, which revealed that they are innovative implementers of multiliteracies in their own teaching contexts. Thus, with the successful capture of students' learning interests and needs, Emma and Amy were also able to see students' improvements in their learning process. For instance, Emma indicated in her first interview that "the students focus more on my teaching" (December 5, 2016); Amy stated that "students get motivated and can build confidence in literacy learning" (first interview, December 6, 2016).

Multiliteracies and multimodality enhanced Emma and Amy's Chinese literacy teaching, and constructed optimal learning environments for their young students which Bai (2003) and Bin & Freebody (2009) also wrote about. In their interviews and reflective writings, Emma and Amy emphasized their attempts to capture students' learning interests and fulfill their needs. For instance, Amy illustrated in her reflective writing that she often used an iPad to search for interesting videos and showed them to her students as "all my students were interested in the iPad, thus they would pay attention to the 'iPad teaching'." Besides, Emma and Amy also appreciated that multiliteracies helped them better cherish students' diversities and make use of them in Chinese literacy teaching which is in line with how multiliteracies literature emphasizes the concept of diversity (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; NLG, 1996). Moreover, Emma and Amy were able to supply their students with multiple teaching resources (e.g., colorful cards, story books, and iPads) which enabled young children to better explore the potentials of meaning-making and meaning-expressing in Chinese literacy learning. The benefits of using various teaching resources for creating and

expressing meaning have been well mentioned in existing literature (e.g., Bearne, 2003; Marsh, 2004; Yelland, 2011).

#### **5.4 Insufficient Technological Support and Practical Instructions for Teaching**

The third finding of this research was that a lack of technology assistance as well as insufficient practical support from professional programs and school boards can affect Chinese teachers' literacy teaching. The negative effects and hindrance in teaching, caused by a paucity of technological support, has been found to be a common challenge for other teachers as well (e.g., Chien & Hui, 2010; Lin, Huang & Chen, 2014). During the follow-up interviews, Emma and Amy talked about their concerns in this regard, such as the unavailability of smart boards or unreliability of existing internet connections at their school, which to some degree limited their teaching abilities in class. This challenge was also raised in Wall's (2014) and Mackay's (2014) studies, in which the researchers both talked about the lack of sufficient technological tools in educators' teaching environments. Participants in Mackay's research reported limited computer resources and problems with software; participants in Wall's research specified the lack of a consistent internet connection in their school. Therefore, both Mackay and Wall suggested that technological support should be a concern for teachers, school boards and our society.

Another challenge that was encountered was insufficient practical instructions from Emma and Amy's professional master's studies. They appreciated that the courses helped them learn about multiliteracies theory and pedagogy, but they also pointed out that there weren't sufficient practical instructions in the program to support them in their Chinese literacy teaching. For instance, when talking about her master's studies, Emma said "I still sort of feel the program didn't provide me with sufficient guidance and support" (follow-up interview, May 12, 2017); Amy stated a similar opinion: "I feel this program could provide more sufficient support for in-service teachers' practical teaching" (follow-up interview, May

13, 2017). In Willis Allen and Paesani's (2010) research, one challenge for implementing multiliteracies to teach a Foreign Language (FL) was "the professional development of FL instructors" (p. 125). This research pointed out that "to instantiate a pedagogy of multiliteracies, ongoing professional development should include varied opportunities for FL instructors' engagement with and appropriation of related concepts and pedagogical strategies" (p. 126).

In addition to the insufficient support from their professional master's studies, Emma and Amy also indicated that their Chinese schools could not provide professional development opportunities for them either. For instance, Amy illustrated in her interview that her school did not provide training to teach her how to effectively utilize technology in practical teaching. From existing literature, this challenge is often highlighted as well. For example, Wall (2014) specified in her study that participants stated there was no professional development provided in their schools for teachers to learn how to use technology tools. Similarly, Spires, Morris, and Zhang (2012) investigated Chinese and American middle grades teachers' perceptions of new literacies and found that teachers lacked professional learning opportunities to develop themselves.

### **5.5 Teachers' Professional and Personal Development**

While facing different challenges in Chinese literacy teaching, Emma and Amy gave their suggestions for other teachers to use when implementing multiliteracies. Their suggestions were that teachers need to both have personal development by studying updated information on literacy teaching and professional development by attending training programs on multiliteracies which are both well suggested in the existing literature (e.g., Bull & Anstey, 2010; Meng, 2016; Rowsell, Kosnik, & Beck, 2008). According to the findings in chapter four, attending a professional training program was a beneficial start for the teachers to learn about multiliteracies theories and pedagogies. As Emma indicated in her reflective

writing: “for teachers who want to implement multiliteracies, attending a professional program on multiliteracies is a good start for them, as they can build a systematic knowledge of multiliteracies and multimodality.” The benefits of attending a professional program were also emphasised in Meng’s (2016) research, when stating that a professional program of multiliteracies facilitated the in-service grade one teachers’ understanding of multimodality and improved their literacy teaching. Therefore, it would be valuable for teachers to seek professional opportunities for learning multiliteracies theories and pedagogies.

To facilitate personal development, Emma and Amy provided their own examples as suggestions. Such as reading scholarly works or watching online videos about practical implementations of multiliteracies. Additionally, Amy suggested in her follow-up interview that “teachers should always keep studying in my opinion. No matter whether attending professional training programs, or learning from other teachers, there are always many ways to develop ourselves.” (May 13, 2017). If the first suggestion of attending classes and professional training programs can be regarded as “formal learning” (Cross, 2003, p. 2), then the second suggestion regarding teachers’ personal development can be regarded as “informal learning” (Cross, 2003, p. 2). According to Cross (2003), “we discover how to do our jobs through informal learning -- observing others, asking the person in the next cubicle, calling the help desk, trial-and-error, and simply working with people in the know” (p. 2). Informal learning is important in teachers’ professional development. As Stevens (2006) suggested in his study, teachers can always find different informal learning opportunities in real life to help them apply multiliteracies, such as “listening to podcasts or meeting online for discussion and discovery with like-minded peers” (p. 2). He adds that informal learning opportunities are flexible choices for teachers who have no time or opportunities for professional development.

## **5.6 Implications for Practice and Recommendations for Future Research**

This study revealed two Chinese teachers' experiences of implementing multiliteracies in teaching young children Chinese literacy in Canada. Through the collection of interviews, curriculum material, and reflective writings from Emma and Amy, this study acknowledged Chinese teachers' perceptions of multiliteracies, presented their Chinese literacy teaching practices which utilized multiliteracies pedagogy, explored their challenges in teaching contexts, and listed their suggestions for other teachers. According to the discussions above, I will provide some implications for teachers who want to implement multiliteracies in diverse teaching environments, and some suggestions for future research as well.

The two Chinese teachers both acknowledged the importance and effectiveness of multiliteracies to assist their literacy teaching. They had learned from their professional master's studies that multiliteracies was developed by the New London Group in 1996 to deal with the diversity trend in our society and suggests teachers to incorporate diverse learning resources and activities for their students (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Emma and Amy in this research shared their different views of multiliteracies and confirmed that multiliteracies pedagogy supported them in creating innovative Chinese literacy practices and bringing in diverse learning sources for their young students. The literacy experiences described in chapter four provide clear examples of what multiliteracies and multimodality are and how they can be implemented in teaching contexts.

Teachers who are looking to implement multiliteracies should value students' diversities and design literacy practices upon students' learning interests and needs (e.g., Kaur, Ganapathy, & Sidhu, 2012). The four guiding components of multiliteracies (Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, Critical Framing, and Transformed Practice) can be helpful to guide teachers to utilize students' previous knowledge, and design creative literacy activities in their own teaching contexts (NLG, 1996). Besides these, multimodality should be

embraced by teachers as well (e.g., Jewitt, 2008; Li, Corrie, & Wong, 2008; Wolfe & Flewitt, 2010). In this study, Emma and Amy provided various teaching examples on how to integrate diverse resources with their Chinese literacy teaching, such as using iPads to play Chinese music, bringing a laptop to play Chinese cartoons, making crafts for Chinese festivals and so forth. It is important for teachers to cherish the available tools and resources around them and create an optimal learning environment for their students because teachers' perceptions of literacy influence their teaching practices, which further impacts students' learning achievements (e.g., Albert, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Wall, 2014).

In order to have a correct perception of multiliteracies, attending professional programs is a good start for teachers. Emma and Amy both advised that their professional master's programs helped them learn a good introduction to multiliteracies theories and pedagogies. Professional training has also proven to be effective in existing literature (e.g., Bull & Anstey, 2010; Cloonan, 2007; Prestridge, 2009; Rowsell, Kosnik, & Beck, 2008). For teachers who can not access professional training programs on multiliteracies, searching for different informal learning opportunities such as joining online discussion groups can be an alternative way to develop their knowledge of multiliteracies.

This research revealed two Chinese teachers' experiences of implementing multiliteracies in Chinese literacy teaching backgrounds. It did not go into detail to investigate students' learning achievements with the implementation of multiliteracies and multimodality, thus it would be a potential research direction to investigate students' learning outcomes with the use of multiliteracies involving classroom observation. Observations are able to provide valuable dimensions to better understand the particular context that is being studied (Yin, 2014). Moreover, this research explored Chinese teachers' lived experiences of multiliteracies in a Chinese literacy context. It would be beneficial to study teachers' from

other cultural backgrounds and their particular experiences of multiliteracies in other own contexts as well to contribute to the relevant growing body of work.

At last, one limitation of this study was that there were only two Chinese teachers who participated in this research. It was not my intention to generalize the findings of this study, although I purposefully selected participants who have experienced multiliteracies to promote transferability. Through presenting the two Chinese teachers stories of implementing multiliteracies, I hope this study can contribute some insights for research on Chinese teachers' diverse perceptions of multiliteracies, as well as to add to the pool of innovative Chinese literacy practices created by multiliteracies and multimodality for young children. Further research questions on the different perceptions Chinese teachers have on multiliteracies or how multiliteracies can improve students' Chinese literacy learning outcomes can be investigated as well in the future.

### **5.7 Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study can be found at both theoretical and practical levels. From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this study corresponded to and extended existing literature regarding multiliteracies ability to enable teachers to deal with diversity in classrooms and create innovative literacy practices for students (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; NLG, 1996). Particularly, this study responded to the research problems that Chinese teachers have less experience with and limited perceptions of multiliteracies. Therefore, the findings of this study contributed some insights to the existing literature investigating Chinese teachers' perceptions and experiences of multiliteracies within a Chinese literacy teaching context.

From a practical perspective, the results of this study are significant for society by enhancing Chinese teachers' understanding and utilization of multiliteracies, as teachers' perceptions and applications of multiliteracies play an important role in their students'



learning experiences (Albert, 2011; Makin, 2007). By presenting Chinese teachers' diverse perceptions of multiliteracies, this study helps promote Chinese teachers' understandings of multiliteracies theory and pedagogy (NLG, 1996). Moreover, this study provided Chinese teachers' innovative teaching practices and various suggestions of implementing multiliteracies, which would benefit and inspire other Chinese teachers who are looking to incorporate multiliteracies into their teaching contexts.

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## **Appendix A: Interview Questions**

**1. How do Chinese teachers who have experienced multiliteracies education and practices in Canada understand multiliteracies and multimodality in teaching young students Chinese literacy?**

1. When and how did you start to know the concepts of multiliteracies and multimodality?

2. After your professional study on multiliteracies, how do you think of it in a Canadian teaching context?

3. In your previous teaching careers, do you think you adopted some teaching methods from the pedagogy of multiliteracies? Can you provide me with some examples?

4. Can you talk about your present teaching situation? Like what are you teaching in your class? What kinds of students do you have? What kinds of teaching environments are you in?

**2. How do they apply their learning experiences on multiliteracies into their practice in teaching young students Chinese literacy?**

1. What do you think of using multiliteracies and multimodality in Canadian's diverse environment?

2. In your classrooms, did you create any literacy practices using multiliteracies and multimodality?

3. What kinds of teaching practices that you are currently using in teaching Chinese literacy can reflect the pedagogy of multiliteracies and multimodality?

4. What kinds of materials and tools that you often use in your teaching based on your perceptions of multiliteracies and multimodality?

5. What kinds of outcomes on students' literacy learning do you receive after you use multiliteracies and multimodality?

**3. What challenges did the Chinese teachers experience in the process of adopting multiliteracies into their own teaching practices for young children? And what kinds of**

**suggestions do they have for other teachers who want to apply multiliteracies in teaching young students literacy?**

1. what kinds of difficulties and challenges did you meet in using multiliteracies?
2. How do you try to solve the problems you answered in last question?
3. Do you suggest any materials or tools or tips for other teachers who are teaching young CLD children literacy?

## **Appendix B: A Letter of Information**

A Case Study of Chinese Teachers' Experiences of Multiliteracies  
and Multimodality in Teaching Young Students Chinese Literacy in Canada

Xiaotong Xing, University of Western Ontario

Professor: Mi Song Kim, University of Western Ontario

Dear Participants,

I am writing this letter to invite you to attend my research on investigating Chinese teachers' perceptions and experiences of multiliteracies and multimodality in teaching Chinese literacy contexts.

My name is Xiaotong Xing, and I am doing my master study on multiliteracies in the Faculty of Education in Western University. This research mainly wants to study how Chinese teachers think of and use multiliteracies and multimodality in teaching Chinese literacy environments, particularly those Chinese teachers who are teaching Chinese literacy in Canadian's diverse context.

Through doing this study, I want to figure out how Chinese teachers understand multiliteracies pedagogy, and what literacy experiences have they created using this pedagogy, as well as what challenges and suggestions can be provided in this study.

My ideal participants for my study would be:

- Chinese teachers who are teaching young CLD children Chinese literacy in Canada.
- Chinese teachers who have relevant education or training on multiliteracies theory and pedagogy.
- Chinese teachers who would like to share their experiences and suggestions of applying multiliteracies in literacy teaching.

If you agree to attend this research, you will receive my two interviews (Chinese) with each one lasts for around one hour, and you may need to write an short reflective story on your own which the length of your story may be one page. The interview questions will mainly focus on how do you understand the concepts of multiliteracies and multimodality, how do you create literacy practices based on your perceptions of multiliteracies and multimodality pedagogy, as well as your suggestions for employing this pedagogy in a

diverse teaching surrounding.

The interviews will be held in a quiet environment upon your suggestions or requests, and all the interviews will be recorded by a cell phone which only has my fingerprint to get access to. All recorded interviews will be transcribed on my laptop which will not be seen by other people, and the transcripts will be sent to you to make sure their accuracy. Besides, if it is possible, I will ask for and photocopy your curriculum materials from your classrooms that could reflect your teaching practices using the pedagogy of multiliteracies and multimodality, and there is a possibility that they will be showed up in the research paper. You can decide what kinds of classroom curriculum materials do you want to share, such as your lesson plans, materials and tools used in your teaching.

In order to protect your privacy, all the information that you will provide will be only used for research purpose. And in the research paper, I will choose pseudonyms to avoid your real identity being recognised by people. All the audio recordings will be sealed for five years according to the requirement from Office of Research Ethics of Western University.

Your participation will help this study to reveal how Chinese teachers perceive and adopt multiliteracies and multimodality in a real literacy teaching situation in Canada, and help to provide some practical examples and precious suggestions for other Chinese and Canadian teachers who are also teaching literacy and want to motivate students on literacy learning under diverse environments.

It is voluntary for you to attend this research, and you own the right to not continue this study or avoid answering some certain interview questions. If you want to withdraw this study, all the information that I have attained from you will not be showed up in this research.

After the interview, a thank you card will be given to you for appreciating your participation in the study.

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me, and my email is [REDACTED]. Also, you could contact my professor Mi Song Kim, and her email is [REDACTED].

This letter is for you to keep for future reference.



## Curriculum Vitae

**Name:** Xiaotong Xing

**Post-secondary** Tianjin University of Technology

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**Degrees:** 2011-2015 B.A.

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