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## **Being Chinese or Being Different**

Exploring Chinese Foreign Language (CFL) Teachers' Use of Chineseness in Identity Construction

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# Being Chinese or Being Different:

## On Beginning Chinese Foreign Language (CFL) Teachers' Use of Chinese-ness in Identity

### Construction

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### Abstract

This study reports on a qualitative research that explores how three beginning native CFL teachers in a Danish university use 'Chinese-ness' and how these serve in explaining their own narratives, either through identifying with, or distancing themselves from. Early results show that no matter which way they use 'Chinese-ness', the participants are able to reflect on their experiences and manifest a willingness to adapt to another culture, in which their identity as CFL teachers are constructed. By the end of study, the combination of teaching culture of Chinese and Danish, in which participants are forging new identities for them are discussed.

Key words: CFL teacher, Danish university, teaching culture, Chinese-ness

## 中国式的汉语教师

### 探讨新汉语教师在构建其职业身份中对于中国特色的诠释和理解

#### 中文摘要

在对外汉语教学中，我们常常会听到汉语教师在教学过程中被外国学生冠于'中国式的汉语教师'的头衔，那什么是中国式的教师，对外汉语教师是如何认同或者区分该头衔，以及他们在认同和区分的过程中如何构建他们的职业身份。这些问题是本文所关注的话题。就这些话题，文章通过对于三位在丹麦一所大学任教的新汉语教师的访谈来聆听他们的观点，并探讨他们对于什么是中国式的教学，什么是中国式的教师，以及他们在访谈过程中对于教师身份的困惑和定位做了探讨。

关键词：对外汉语教师，丹麦大学， 教学文化， 中国式的

## 1. Introduction

For a couple of decades, Chinese as foreign language (CFL) research has been learner-focused while research on CFL teacher development has been in a secondary position. Since the 1990s, many applied linguists have started theoretical discussion on language teachers, and the 2000s witnessed more empirical studies (Cummins, 2000; Danielewicz, 2001; Morgan, 2004; Varghese et.al, 2005). As the concern over CFL teachers increased in recent years, CFL teacher identity has been attracting more and more attention from researchers (Gao, F. 2012; Wu, H.P et.al, 2010; Zhang & Jensen, 2013; Zhang, H.S., 2006). Among the various perspectives, a newly emerged perspective is on CFL teachers' personal narratives and identities, which is compatible with the shifting concern to teachers' development in teacher education, caring more about teachers' inner self as a person, as against teachers' training and their teaching practice. Born out of the personal experiences and telling a person's life story within the boundaries of specific situations and contexts, narrative study has become quite widely accepted within language and teacher education. Through narratives, teachers can reflect upon their career development, have a holistic picture of their past and their present so to formulate an orientation for professional development in the future.

In the context of CFL teacher education, language, culture and multiplicity of identity from the perspective of post-structuralism have recently been discussed (Gao, X.P., 2013; Moloney, 2013; Wu et.al., 2014; Zhang, C. 2013). However, the studies on the relationship of the language, culture and identity of beginning CFL teachers' identity construction are rather limited. Beginning CFL teachers refer to native speakers of Chinese who have been educated and trained in China, and who do not have teaching experience overseas, to teach CFL to the speakers of other languages out of China. Indeed, with an increased interest in learning Chinese all over the world, the demand for qualified CFL teachers who are able to work professionally in different educational and cultural contexts has been increased as well (Bianco, 2007; 2011; Orton, 2011; Wang, et al., 2013; Xin X.Q., 2011). To accommodate this demand, many overseas universities recruit CFL teachers to teach Chinese, among them, many of whom are young, newly graduated from a university.

Although some beginning teachers may have taught Chinese to foreigners in China, the majority of the beginning teachers have little teaching experience out of China. For instance, Orton (2011:162) argues that

*'Teachers from China are described as 'lovely' but their lack of familiarity with the English system of discipline, target setting etc. is a problem. They also tend to have different, perhaps unrealistic, expectations of pupils.'*

### 1.1. Narrative study

There are many methods to explore a person's identity. Narrative study is an excellent method in the study of teacher's beliefs and identities (Tsui 2007; Wu et.al., 2014). Clandinin and Connelly (1999) refer to teachers' professional identity in terms of "stories to live by" (p.4). According to them, stories provide a narrative thread that teachers draw on to make sense of their experience and themselves. They placed importance on the understanding that stories are a way to express identity, and the power of teacher narrative to express identity within "a changing professional knowledge landscape" is articulated in important work on teachers' stories, considered indicative of their growing understanding of their professional identities within changing contexts (Connelly & Clandinin 2000:120).

The structure of the paper is as follows. I first present a literature review. Then I outline some key background information of the Chinese language teaching in Denmark and some characteristics of Danish teaching culture. Next I describe the methods used for collecting the data to the present study. The main body of the paper is devoted to discussions of data under three thematic headings: CFL teacher identity defined, CFL teacher identity challenged, and teacher identity redefined. Finally, I conclude the paper with a summary of the key findings of the study and by highlighting the points and directions for future research.

The research question is:

*How are the professional identities of beginning CFL teachers constructed in the narratives?*

## **2. Literature Review**

Recently, some studies on the education of CFL teachers highlight the importance of the

professional identity in teacher development (Gao 2012; Wu, et.al.,2014; Zhang, 2015a, forthcoming; Zhang & Jensen 2013). Clearly, the beginning CFL teachers must undergo a transition in professional identity as they move through programs of teacher education and assume positions as teachers in today's challenging school contexts as well as in changing cultural contexts (Olsen 2008; Zhang 2015a, forthcoming). Studies also show that further identity transition may occur throughout a teacher's career as a result of interactions within schools and in broader communities (Beauchamp & Thomas 2009; Trend 2012). Varghese et.al. (2005:22) state that “identity is not stable or fixed, but rather dynamic, multiple, and in conflict”. This dynamic and multiple quality of teacher identity construction are captured in Britzman's (2003) view of learning to teach as a “process of becoming”. In reviewing research on identity of beginning foreign language teachers, Clarke (2008) points out that the beginning teachers are constantly involved in the construction and reconstruction of their identities. As the concept of “becoming a teacher” highlights the dynamic nature of identity (re)construction, it is reported that some pre-service teacher's thinking can be rigid and dogmatic (Gao, F., 2012; Zhang 2015 a, forthcoming). For example, Gao, F. (2008) reported on a group of Chinese language teachers in Hong Kong and described that teachers from China tend to see themselves not only as linguistic instructors but as culture indoctrinators of Confucian values. Zhang's study (2015a, forthcoming) showed that native CFL teachers in Denmark view themselves as teachers, who are not only able to impart linguistic knowledge, and but also the ones who are transmitters of Chinese teaching and learning method.

Given the nature of teacher identity has been characterized by continuous “shaping and shifting”, what I have found in my study suggest a paradox. On the one hand, the nature of identity is dynamic, multiple, and unstable; and on the other hand, some beginning teachers' views about teaching and learning as well as their roles within it, could imply rigidity in their conception of who they are and who others are. This potential paradox presents challenges for both teachers and schools. Alsup (2006:23) stated that “pre-service teachers who view teacher identity as rigid and unchangeable may face increased tension and unease as they move into full-time teaching positions”. With their expectations possibly unfulfilled, they may not thrive in their teaching and

leave the profession at their early teacher career. This outcome is particularly troubling in the case of CFL teachers overseas, where the demand of qualified teachers increased (Wang & Kirkpatrick 2012) and the supply of them are limited (Orton 2011). Therefore, it is crucial to understand how the beginning CFL construct their teacher identity, particularly at the initial year of their teaching career.

### **3. Background to the Study**

The Chinese Ministry of Education estimated that more than 100 million people globally were learning Chinese as a second, foreign or additional language in 2011 (Chinese Ministry of Education (中国语言生活状况报告, 2006). It has been estimated that there is a demand for four million Chinese foreign language (CFL) teachers (Wang, et.al., 2013). To accommodate the rapidly increasing number of learners of Chinese as a foreign language, many schools overseas recruit CFL teachers from China to teach CFL. Denmark has also experienced the Chinese 'heat' in the past few years. For example, among four Danish universities (University A, B, C & D), which offer degree study in Chinese / China studies, Danish learners of Chinese has increased 30% from 2008 to 2010 (Xinhua News 2010 ). By the end of 2013, the total number of Chinese learners for degree study at four Danish universities was 310 students, given the fact that total Danish population is only 5.4 million. There are 12 tenure-based and 4 non-tenure based teachers teaching Chinese language and/or Chinese-language based subjects at four universities, among them, 8 are non-native Chinese-speaking teachers, and 8 are native Chinese-speaking teachers. In addition, each university recruits newly MA or Ph. D. graduates with a degree in teaching CFL from Chinese universities to teach subjects such as conversation, oral exercises and written Chinese. Compared to Danish CFL teachers, these teachers are often found to work as non-tenured teaching staff.

#### ***3.1. Characteristics of Danish education***

Confucianism is often said to have significant influence on Chinese educational culture (Chou, et.al., 2013). In Denmark, Grundtvigism is often considered to have a great impact on Danish educational culture. There is a saying: you meet Grundtvig at the Danish border (Thaning,

1972:16). This first reflects the reality that it is within Denmark that one most readily encounters Grundtvig, though his influence is discernible across Scandinavia, in places of Danish diaspora, and across Europe and the wider world, often through non-formal and informal adult education movements (Dyce, 2011). It reflects a further reality that, in entering Denmark, one is entering, so to speak, “Grundtvig territory” (ibid.3). Grundtvig (1783-1872) was a clergyman, politician, educator, and poet. He exerted great influence on Danish nationalism, education and culture.

Perhaps most of all, however, in education, Grundtvig came to be known as the founder of 'Danish' pedagogy, which has been characterized as a spirit of freedom, equality, and creativity within all branches of educational life. Grundtvig promoted education values such as wisdom, compassion, identification and equality (Allchin, 1997). He opposed all compulsion, including exams, as deadening to the human soul. Rather than leashing human creativity, Grundtvig adamantly advocated the idea of fostering human creativity. His statement ‘only willing hands make light work’ was well received by Danish schools and educators even up until today (Allchin 1997). Therefore, a spirit of freedom, cooperation and equality were the key characteristics of Danish educational culture (Vind, 1999).

### ***3.2 Characteristics of Chinese education***

Chinese conceptions of education have been much influenced by Confucian thinking (Biggs, 1996b; Scollon, 1999). There are several features worth exploring. First, there is a deep reverence for education. Confucius attached great importance to education and saw it as a means of turning an ordinary person into a superior one and a weak nation into a strong one (Guo, 2011; Zhu, 1992). It is a firm belief in the Confucian tradition that through education, even a person of obscure origin can achieve upward social mobility (Lee, 1996). These perceived functions and benefits of education have provided generations of Chinese with powerful motivating forces to aspire to success in education. They also predispose Chinese teachers and students to regard education as a serious undertaking that is least likely to be associated with light-heartedness but requires deep commitment and painstaking effort.

Second, education does not concern only intellectual development but also the cultivation of moral qualities (Guo, 2001; Scollon, 1999). The notion that education is cultivation necessarily entails the inclusion of moral education as a major component of education. Traditionally, moral education included teaching how to relate to other people in society and cultivating moral virtues such as loyalty, fidelity, altruism, modesty and conformity – that is, how to be a good person (Paine, 1992). This emphasis on moral development is still considered the basis of successful education (Cheng, 1994). It is widely accepted that both knowledge and morality are power. The emphasis on moral education, it would seem, encourages imitation of socially approved models and collective orientations but discourages individuality and fulfillment of personal needs.

Last but not least, a fundamental feature of traditional Chinese education is its emphasis on maintaining a hierarchical but harmonious relation between teacher and student. Students are expected to respect and not to challenge their teachers. The reverence with which a teacher is held is reflected in many popular sayings, one of which goes 'being a teacher for only one day entitles one to lifelong respect from the student that befits his father'(一日为师终身为父). As the following sections will make clear, the characteristics of Grundtvigian and that of Confucian underlies different perceptions and views that CFL teachers strive to cope with.

## **4. Methodology**

### ***4.1. Study Setting***

One Danish university has been involved in this study: University A. University A was founded in 1920s in Jutland. It is the second largest university in Denmark. The first Chinese degree course was established in the late 1960s, and today the department offers Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD programs. At the time of this study, there are 92 students enrolled in the department of China studies. AU offer Bachelor's, Master's and PhD degree programmes in China studies. In the 2012/2013 academic year, there are six tenure CFL teachers at AU. Among them, two are native CFL teachers and four non-native CFL teachers.

### ***4.2 Participants***

The study has been conducted over a period of three years. Three native CFL teachers participated in this study. To protect their identities, each teacher is ascribed a pseudonym. All the personal data and the addresses where the participants lived and studied were deliberately vague. Table 1 summarizes the biographical backgrounds of the participants. The names in the data excerpts quoted in the findings and discussions are the pseudonyms of the participants.

I use three criteria to select native CFL teachers. First, the participants were born in mainland China. Second, they had completed primary, secondary and tertiary education in China. And third, they were novice teacher and did not have teaching experience out of China.

#### *4.1.1. Participant 1: Mary*

Mary was in her late twenties when the study was conducted. She obtained a BA and MA degree in teaching Chinese as a foreign language (TCFL) from one normal university in Shanghai. She had been recruited as a full-time language teacher in the autumn 2012. She taught subjects such as conversation, written Chinese and reading comprehension while she works at University A. When the study had been done, she was at her initial year of teaching in Denmark.

#### *4.1.2. Participant 2: Betty*

Betty had been recruited as a full-time language teacher in the autumn 2013. She is in the middle of twenties when the study has been conducted. She was born in China, and obtained her BA and MA from one Chinese university, majoring TCFL. Before she was recruited by University A, Betty had been working as a student teacher for a couple of months as part of her MA program. She was at her initial year of intern teaching when the study has been done.

#### *4.1.3. Participant 3: Susan*

Susan had been recruited as a part-time lecturer in the spring 2013, teaching conversation and reading comprehension to MA students. At the time of the study, Susan was at the age of 30. She was born in mainland China, and holds a PhD in Chinese literature from one Chinese university. Before she was recruited by University A, she had been working as a pre-service teacher for two months at Beijing Normal University. She was at her first year of teaching practice when the study has been done.

Table 1: Participant profiles

Name	Age	Gender	Educational qualification	Graduation year	Teaching experience in China	Job position in Denmark
Mary	26	Female	M.A.,in TCFL	2012	none	Language teacher assistant
Susan	30	Female	PhD in Chinese literature	2013	Two months summer school	Language teacher assistant
Betty	27	Female	M.A.,in TCFL	2013	none	Language teaching assistant

#### 4.2. Data collection

As a narrative study, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted. Of the characteristics of semi-structured interviews (Flick 2009; Strauss 1987; Strauss & Corbin 1990), no fixed questions were posed to the participants. Instead, open questions about their daily teaching, their view of Danish students, and the reflection upon the interaction with students, were posed. Three semi-structured interviews over a consecutive three-year period have been conducted to each participant in a range of 2012 to 2014 year. Table 2 illustrates the rounds of interviews.

Table 2: Rounds of interviews

Name	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3
Mary	6 September 2012	2 November 2012	28 February 2013
Susan	5 March 2013	18 April 2013	2 June 2013
Betty	22 September 2013	5 December 2013	14 February 2014

The length of each interview ranged from one to one and half hours. The interview was conducted in Chinese, with occasional code-switching into English. Interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed and translated into English by the author. To keep the originality of the language, I illustrate the excerpts in bilinguals – Chinese and English translation.

#### 4.3. Data Analysis

Given the fact that Chinese and English differ greatly linguistically, the data analysis was done on the original language – Chinese. Data analysis started during the data collection process in order to select salient features out of the data and to move from description to interpretation. The first step of data analysis was to ascribe codes to the interview transcriptions in order to identify emergent structure. Upon reading the transcriptions multiple times, I searched for repeating ideas (the same ideas expressed by different participants). This approach to data analysis reflects the use of coding. Codes were assigned to different sized ‘chunks’ of data: words, phrases and sentences (Flick, 2009: 318; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). To ascribe codes to field notes and interview data meant giving the myriads of data materials order and structure. Methods of decoding and recoding were highly necessary to seek for repeating ideas or similar ideas expressed in the ‘chunks’ of data, as well as abstract themes that connected codes. After the coding, I categorized final codes into themes. Below I discuss the findings elicited from the interviews.

## 5. Findings and Discussions

### 5.1. CFL Teacher identity defined

Excerpt 1: 我觉得当一个合格的对外汉语教师得具备，第一，有一定的汉语语言学，中国文学，文化方面的积累。第二，声音响亮，有亲和力，耐心。第三，善表达，解释。第四，能融入当地文化。第五，有想象力,有责任心。(Mary, 1<sup>st</sup> round of interview)

(In my opinion, being good Chinese teachers of TCFL should have *knowledge of Chinese linguistics and understanding of Chinese literature and culture*. Second, good teachers of TCFL are supposed to *speak aloud, be patient* and have a *high degree of empathetic capacity* towards learners. Third, good teachers of TCFL should be *capable of expressing and explaining the aspects of Chinese language clearly and accurately*. Forth, good teachers of TCFL should be *capable of accommodating and acculturating to local culture*. Finally, good teachers of TCFL are supposed to be *imaginative and creative*. In addition, *they should have a high degree of responsibility for the students*.)

From excerpt 1, it can be seen that Mary names the identity category 'being a good CFL teacher' describing her perceptions of what 'a good CFL teacher' meant for her. For example, 'a good CFL teacher' is the one who does not only have knowledge of Chinese linguistics and pedagogy, but also the one who has high degree of responsibility (责任心). This view is echoed by Betty and Susan, as

the following excerpts illustrate:

Excerpt 2: 好的汉语教师应该具备专业知识素养，教师职业道德以及对推广汉语和中国文化事业的热情，当然还要有**自律心**。这儿的学生喜欢多样的教学方式，喜欢能随时发表看法，我认为基本能接受。他们有时有异议，他们会说出来，合理的建议我会采纳。(Betty, 1<sup>st</sup> round of interview)

*(A good CFL teacher is one who has solid foundation of content knowledge, professional morality, and the **passion and commitment** of promoting Chinese language and culture. Being a good CFL teacher also means to have a high degree of **self-discipline**. The students here like to have a diversity of teaching methods. They like to express their opinions. Personally, I don't absolutely oppose to it. Practically, I **can** accept their disagreement. They are sometimes quite critical towards us. But they speak out their minds immediately. As long as they are reasonable, I **can** accept it.)*

Excerpt 3: 优秀的汉语教师应具备好的专业素质，包括好的语言基础，正确的发音、良好的语感、对汉语语法的掌握，和从语言现象中提取出它们并解释，应用的能力。其次，应该更为**耐心**。我们所习以为常的语言现象对学习者来说可能很困难，需要耐心地示范、引导和纠错。再次，具有好的亲和力 (Susan, 1<sup>st</sup> round of interview)

*(Good TCFL teachers should, first, have solid knowledge of pedagogy, including good linguistic competence, correct pronunciation, good understanding of language teaching and learning, knowledge of Chinese grammar, in addition, they are capable of explaining the aspects of Chinese language, generated from language learning and thereupon capable of applying the aspects in the teaching practice. Second, teachers of TCFL **should** to be more patient than non-TCFL teachers. We can't take it for granted that what is easy for teachers are not necessarily easy for learners. Teaching methods, such as, teacher model – student repeat; and constant revision and repetition require teachers' patience. Finally, being good teachers of TCFL demand a high degree of empathetic capacity towards learners and learning.)*

For Betty and Susan, they list the competencies that they associate with their preferred definition of teacher identity. For instance, 'a good CFL teacher' is someone who has 'passion, commitment, professional morality and self-discipline' by making CFL teaching interesting (Betty), and the one who has 'patience' and 'a high degree of empathetic capacity' (Susan) towards students and their learning. It is evident that they place the importance on the pedagogical knowledge as well as on

teachers' personal quality, such as, 'self-discipline 自律心', 'commitment'热情 'patience', 耐心, and 'empathy'亲和力. It makes clear that the nature of Confucian education influence the expression of the teachers. Linguistically, their use of modal verbs, such as, 'should', and 'can' illustrate their adamant desire for becoming good CFL teachers they aspire to. Aside from it, it also illustrates their rigid view towards being CFL teachers.

### **5.2. CFL teacher identity challenged**

According to Gee (2000), identity does not only refer to 'our understanding of who we are', but also to 'what other people think we are'. This view as identity construction reflects our investment in what we do and at the same time we invest ourselves in our relations with other people (Wenger 1998). As we construct our identities through this process, we work out our relations with each other and with the world, gaining “a lived sense of whom we are” (Wenger 1998:192). In the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of interviews, becoming the type of teacher described in extracts 1-3 is built upon a foundation of individual teacher's belief. Given the fact that they aspire to be the type of teacher they defined, Mary, Betty and Susan's views of being good CFL teachers have been opposed by what they experienced while interacting with students and the schools. Thus, their aspiration to becoming good CFL teachers has been challenged, as the following excerpts illustrate.

Excerpt 4: 我确实认为丹麦学生的学习氛围太轻松了，一点竞争压力都没有。他们也不喜欢老师在课堂上创造有压力的学习环境。我曾经让二年级学生在口语课上互相打分，他们事后告诉我，他们不喜欢这种方式，他们认为这是中国式的教学方法。他们既然这么说，那我就接受吧。(Mary, 2<sup>nd</sup> round of interview)

*(I really believe that the learning atmosphere of Danish students is so relaxing that there is definitely no study pressure on them at all. What is more, they hate learning pressure created by teachers in the classrooms. According to my opinion, Danish students are not accustomed to competition and pressure. And they have absolutely no drives for competition. I once asked the students to assess each other by giving scores based on their spoken performance in class. They did not refrain from doing it. But after lecturing, they told me that they did not like assessing each other openly by giving scores. All in all, they loathe this teaching method. They said that it was a Chinese-styled teaching method. Since*

*they told me about it, I think, perhaps, I'd better accept it.)*

Excerpt 5: 这儿上课怎么没有考勤？这让我们很难办，你又不能强迫他们来。上次研究生课问他们应该怎么上，我有什么可以改进，他们都建议了很多，然后还说他们很忙什么的。我想既然他们这么忙，那就少给他们回家作业。怎么没想到他们后来就会向学生会投诉我，说我备课不充分，不给回家作业。(Betty, 2<sup>nd</sup> round of interview)

(Isn't it true that no class attendance is required here? It is totally incredible. Don't you think it is too free! How could we possibly manage the class without this requirement? You *cannot* possibly force them to attend the class. After teaching here for one semester, *I think, perhaps, I should learn to listen to my students' and accommodate to their suggestion and advice* in terms of teaching methods. Can you remember that at the beginning of the semester, I asked advice from my MA students? They were all very eager to express their meanings. They told me that they were busy with other subjects. Well, since they told me about it, I think, *perhaps, I ought not to* burden them too much. Therefore I chose not to give them too much homework. Out of my surprise, they sent complaint to the student council stating that I was not well prepared for the lesson, and did not give them homework. )

Excerpt 6: 他们随意缺席的现象比较普遍，再认真的学生也会不来上课，有的学生甚至为了赶一趟公交车放弃下半节课。赶不上这趟为什么不等下一趟呢。对这些现象我可能必须习以为常。(Susan, 2<sup>nd</sup> round of interview)

(It is quite common that students are absent from class. Even the most diligent students would be absent from class as well. Some of the students would leave the class in the middle of a lesson to catch a bus. Why not wait for the next bus if you can't make it. Perhaps I must persuade myself to get used to it.)

Different from the teacher identity which they defined and which they preferred to during the initial months upon their arrival, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of interview, Mary, Betty and Susan regard some of their Danish students are 'being lack of competition' (excerpt 4), 'being critical towards teachers and teaching' (excerpt 5), and 'being lack of proper classroom manners' (excerpt 6). For example, Mary offers a strong personal statement of assertion (I really believe that...), which details her perceptions of the difference in terms of classroom culture found in Denmark and that of China. For instance, she expresses that *'They said that it was a Chinese-styled teaching method. Since they told me about it, I think, perhaps, I'd better accept it.'* (Mary). These remarks signal that Mary positions herself as negotiating her own meanings and thereupon constructing her own teacher identities to

suite the local settings.

For Susan, she represents her responses to the Danish students and teaching environment in tentative terms and teaching that 'might' or 'perhaps' be realized within her classroom if she accepts what Danish students think is acceptable: '*..Perhaps I must persuade myself to get used to it..*'(Susan);

For Betty, however, she begins to explore possibilities for creating a meaning out of what students request and what extent she is able to accommodate to. Linguistically, the individualized forging of the identity to which the Danish students prefer that 'I should learn to listen to them and to accommodate to their suggestion and advice'. These words, at the first look, seem to be a monologue expressed by Betty. A closer look at what she expressed in the monologue, however suggests subtle tensions. Linguistically, the extensive adverb, such as, '*perhaps*' captures partly the hesitation and uncertainty that she as a beginning CFL teacher had about her desirability to get accepted. It also captures partly the concession that she as a beginning CFL teacher had to make between the teaching culture of what she was used to and the culture of what she learned to adapt to.

In addition, Mary, Betty and Susan's reference to the Danish educational system introduce the possibilities of cultural limits to beginning teacher's identity development. For example, the emphasis within the Danish education on freedom (e.g., no regulation and control on class attendance, leaving the lesson without telling the teacher) and equality (e.g., students don't like teachers to access them openly) is presented as a potential threat to the realization of each participant's identity as a 'good CFL teacher'. This potentiality is signaled by Betty's use of two rhetoric questions, 'Isn't it true...?', and ' Don't you think...?' which differentiates her experiences in China where schools have strict rules about, for example, class attendance, and class behaviors.

### ***5.3. CFL Teacher Identity Redefined***

The tension, uncertainty, and hesitation described above might be conceptualized as the challenge that the participants encounter in term of the teacher identity construction. As beginning CFL teachers teaching Chinese in a different teaching culture, what they experienced and what they

reflect upon are essential for them to redefine teacher's identity. The redefinition of teacher identity is displayed between the types of teachers they want to be and the types of teachers their students expect. The following excerpts illustrate how Mary, Betty and Susan overcome the challenges and redefine their meaning of being CFL teachers in a given context.

Excerpt 7: 在丹麦做中文老师可能更多地聆听学生的意见。他们有时候挺可爱的，真的？他们常常会在下课时鼓励和表扬老师说，'这样的方式真好'。反过来，老师在课堂内要努力避免评判，特别是批评。(Mary, 3<sup>rd</sup> round of interview)

(Being Chinese language teachers in Denmark, we need to develop capabilities to be pervious to students' comments, in a sense, we should learn to receive and accept feedback from students. *Danish students are sometimes quite cute*, aren't they? They are cute, in a sense, they like to encourage teachers and praise teachers. They often evaluate my class after the lesson, saying 'well-done!' Conversely, teachers should refrain from judging students, not to mention discriminating them.)

Contrary to what she is accustomed to, Mary reported that Danish students give feedback and comments on her lessons, '*they said to me after the lesson 'well done!'*'. She asserted that it was somewhat a surprise to her that students commented on teacher's teaching performance so openly that she described them as '*they are sometimes quite cute!*'. This gives rise to an antagonism on Mary when she experienced her attempt to assess students' performance by giving each other scores being unrecognized (excerpt 4). Her description of '*Danish students are cute*' (可爱), in my opinion, expresses a less sanguine emotion towards the prospect of teaching in Denmark, together with positively evaluated chances to establish and extend her teacher identities in Denmark (Zhang 2014a, forthcoming).

Excerpt 8: 还有一点是教师应该更多的表现出自信的一面，但是如果不自信的一面过多表露会对学生产生不利影响，因为教师的自信不管在什么样的教学中都是非常重要的，但是如果身处跨文化交流的情况，我们教师可能对教学内容本身有自信，但在某些非教学内容的事上自己没有明确把握，而产生了不自信可能会不时表现出来。(Betty, 3<sup>rd</sup> interview)

(Additionally, teachers should be confident and show their confidence. If you show your in-confidence in front of the

students, you might send a negative signal to them. No matter you are a CFL teacher or not, teacher's confidence is essential to carry out a successful teaching. It is especially true if you are in cross-cultural settings. In a cross-cultural setting, teachers might be confident in what to teach, but perhaps not so sure about how to teach – the pedagogical knowledge. If you are not confident about pedagogical knowledge, you might show it in front of the students.)

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of interview, Betty appears to have resolved her hesitation and revealed her belief on how a beginning CFL teacher should be and how language should be taught. Her emphasis on teacher's 'confidence'(自信) seems to play an important role of how she redefines teacher's identity. It is also interesting to note the construction of a 'we' and 'they' dichotomy that Betty reveals in excerpt 8. For example, Betty refers to the students in terms of 'they' and 'them', and repeated references to the plural 'we (teachers) 我们教师' to indicate singular form 'I'. The references to plurals indicating singulars can also be found in Mary and Susan's excerpts. Their comfort level of using plurals to indicate singulars indexes the longing to get resonance from their colleagues so to build up a sense of belonging.

Excerpt 9: 在中国社会这么漫长的传统中，老师和学生的关系都已经转化为一种更为牢固的，常常是亲情的关系。'天地君亲师'。而不像这里，老师的角色是为学生服务的，你陪他练习，给他做引导，帮他解答问题，说白了，我们就是服务员，是一种服务的关系，我教了你几年，我们的关系就终止了。(Susan, 3<sup>rd</sup> round of interview)

(Viewing the long history of Chinese society, it is concluded that the relationship between teachers and students are built upon affection. As one saying goes, 'no relationship is more affectionate than the one between teachers and students'. However, teachers play a different role here. They are to serve students, for example, we help them do exercise; we guide them to do it, and help them find answers to questions. Put it blankly, we are servants. Our relation is built upon serving and being served. It is bound by contracts. Once the contract expires, the bond is gone.)

What expressed in the excerpt 9 indicates a drastic shift from what Susan identified as a good teacher upon her arrival and what she identified herself months afterwards. As Wenger (1998:218) puts it, “we have a big picture and we do something about it in concert with other”. This form of alignment plays a role in Susan's experiences of identity construction. For instance, the “big picture” that shaped her identity as new teacher was an attachment to aspects of relationship

between students and teachers. Although she did persuade herself to accept students' classroom behavior (excerpt 6), Susan constantly reflected upon the meaning of being a teacher. To the end, she asserted strongly that CFL teachers in Denmark were '服务员' (servants). This assertion indicated that she had a propensity to subordinate herself to the teaching culture of a host culture in which her students were embedded. On the other hand, the regular use of plurals '我们'(我们是服务员)' to indicate singular and 'we' subordinated with 'I' may suggest that the former is often associated with 'collectivism' – an antonym for 'individualism', which has traditionally not been endorsed in Chinese Confucius culture.

## **6. Summary and Conclusion**

In this paper, I have reported findings from the narrative study with three beginning CFL teachers in Denmark as cases, and discussed their perceptions, attitudes, and reflection upon different aspects of CFL teaching, students and classroom cultures. There seems to be a considerable consistency across the participants in terms of their views on (1) identity defined, i.e., categories and definition of being 'good' Chinese teachers, especially having a strong sense of teachers' 'responsibility' (责任心), 'passion' (热情), 'patience' (耐心), and 'self-discipline' (自律心); (2) identity challenged, i.e., the tension between the types of teachers they prefer to, i.e., good Chinese teachers (中国教师) and the types of teachers their students accept, i.e., non-Chinese-style teachers (非中国式的中文教师); and (3) identity redefined, i.e., the willingness to adjust themselves to the needs of the students, and the willingness to adapt to the local teaching culture. The Confucius value of being a good teacher has a special impact on the formation of Chinese language teachers' view on being teachers, perhaps even more so to the host country as they feel the need to maintain a distinctive national identity. This sense of identity may also have led to their strong belief that there needs to be a good teacher, particularly a good Chinese teacher overseas and what type of teacher they strive to be seen to fulfill that role well. Although they are novice teachers, they seem to show reluctance to

adjust to the host culture at the initial months of teaching. Indeed, they show resistance against the teaching culture of the host country by emphasizing on the virtues of teachers' 'commitment, responsibilities and self-discipline'. The extensive use of modal verbs, such as, 'should', 'be supposed to' and 'ought to' shows a rigid view towards what they identify themselves. In this aspect, they adamantly use 'Chinese-ness' to justify themselves in relation to Danish-ness. With time, as they get familiar to the teaching context, they show a less resistant attitude towards the host culture, instead, they develop a willingness to adjust themselves and adapt to it. In fact, the willingness to adjust and to adapt to manifests their inter-cultural ability to minimize the tensions and challenges they encountered among students, within individual classrooms and at a non-Chinese teaching classroom. Despite the fact that the beginning teachers use 'Chinese-ness' to explain, justify and make sense of themselves in relation to others, they manage not to impose their preferred way of teaching, for example, Chinese way of teaching Chinese, upon their students, but rather to allow the students to have a great say in language classrooms so to create a harmonious environment for the students. In this sense, these beginning teachers do not have intention to be seen as 'being different' in a Danish teaching context.

The most important finding of the present study is the changing views of teachers' roles across time, noting the more behaviorist views and attitudes towards being a teacher and teaching early in their professional development, for example, the extensive use of auxiliary verbs, 'should 应该', 'ought to 得', as opposed to more tentative use of adverbs., such as, 'perhaps 也许', 'possibly 可能' – the constructivist views later in the teaching practice. The shift of the expressions of a CFL teacher's role who is supposed to have 'responsibility', 'patience' and 'discipline' towards teaching and students, to the role of a CFL teacher later in the interview rounds, particularly, the expression of 'teachers are servants' by Susan, indicates that they have the propensity to sacrifice their own meaning to the meaning of the host culture.

From the lens of teacher identity, a more comprehensive understanding of the beginning CFL teacher overseas demands a reconsideration of the role of *time* and *space* in the identity work of

CFL teachers (Zhang & Jensen 2013). The temporal properties of becoming a CFL teacher must be re-understood because the identity work of these beginning teachers implies that the transition from CFL teachers in China to CFL teachers overseas is experienced not only through teaching practices and activities in the here-and-now. Rather, a more complex understanding of this identity construction will acknowledge that an individual's prior experiences, as both a learner and a teacher, join together with their personal understanding shape this transition.

The view of teacher's personal quality as professional identity expressed by Mary, Betty and Susan in the present study is one of the areas worthy of further investigation, as it has implications for the inter-cultural education of CFL teachers, and the cohesion of CFL teacher development (Zhang 2015 c, forthcoming). It would be particularly interesting to examine any changes of CFL teachers' views over a longer time and across different space. What I have found in the present study is that the beginning teachers use 'Chinese-ness' to justify themselves so to construct and express their identities. The use of 'Chinese-ness' does not make themselves different from others; but rather a tool to contest the mono cultural ideology and teaching cultures which they see as being influenced on them by both the Confucius teaching culture and Grundtvig's teaching culture separately.

As a narrative study the analysis is a very complex matter that requires more than three cases. As well, other aspects of identity such as gender and teacher's social/cultural identity remained to be analyzed further even in these three cases. Nonetheless, it is hoped that this narrative study will shed light on the significance of CFL teachers' professional identity study and so contribute to the better education of CFL teachers in China and better understanding of CFL teacher development out of China.

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