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Ruan, Youjin

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WHY DOES TEACHING AND LEARNING METHOD MATTER?

BY
YOUJIN RUAN

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AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK

LEARNER MOTIVATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

WHY DOES TEACHING AND LEARNING METHOD MATTER?

by

Youjin Ruan (阮幼津)

AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK

Dissertation submitted

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Youjin Ruan is currently a Chinese language and culture teacher at the Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning, Department of Learning and Philosophy, Aalborg University. Before undertaking her PhD studies, she taught Chinese as a foreign language and Chinese culture at both secondary schools in Denmark and Aalborg University for one year. Before coming to Denmark, she received her master's degree in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics, specializing in Teaching Chinese as A Second Language, from Beijing Normal University, and earned her bachelor's degree in Chinese Language and Literature from Beijing International Studies University. While earning her master's degree, she taught Chinese as a second language for two years (as a student-teacher), doing so at Beijing Normal University and other universities and institutions (as a part-time teacher) in Beijing.

ENGLISH SUMMARY

In this globalised age, many people are beginning to acquire Chinese (Mandarin) as a foreign language (CFL), doing so for different reasons and at different levels, with their number rising along with China's rapid economic growth and increasing international influence. This process is actively promoted by the Chinese government via the establishment of Confucius Institutes all over the world. Despite the increasing number of CFL learners, the teaching and learning of CFL are facing challenges such as difficulty in sustaining learner motivation and low student retention/high attrition rates. As discussed in related literature, these challenges may be related to Chinese being a less commonly taught language, the difficulties of learning the Chinese language (for speakers of Indo-European languages), and the comparatively underdeveloped pedagogy for Chinese. In this study, another problem is found: if the teaching methods used by a Chinese teacher (i.e., me) do not match the methods in use in the local context (i.e., the Danish context), students[1] may not feel properly motivated, especially in elective courses and at the beginning level of language learning. To support learner motivation in this situation, it is important to explore and develop culturally attuned/accepted teaching methods for the teaching and learning of Chinese language and culture in intercultural contexts.

The above background knowledge has led me to focus on learner motivation and the methods used in teaching and learning CFL. Following the development of Chinese teaching and learning within the Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning at Aalborg University in Northern Denmark, this study aims to explore the influence of student-centred methods (i.e., task-based teaching and learning (TBTL) and a problem based learning (PBL) inspired method) on learner motivation in Chinese teaching and learning, and understand how students are motivated to learn Chinese language and culture via TBTL in a student-centred learning environment (if TBTL, as one of the explored student-centred methods, has been proved to be effective and motivating in the context). These aims serve as the points of departure in this exploratory study and lead to two research questions:

1. Can a student-centred approach (i.e., TBTL or a PBL-inspired method) be used to motivate students to learn Chinese language and culture in an intercultural (or Danish) context?

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[1] Following the definition on Merriam-Webster: Dictionary and Thesaurus (available online at http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/student, 28 April 2015), the term *student* in this study refers to all learners attending Chinese language and culture courses at both secondary schools and Aalborg University.

2. If yes, how are students motivated to learn Chinese language and culture via TBTL in a student-centred learning environment?

Furthermore, two sub-questions related to Research Question 2 have been explored:

2.1 To what degree can tasks make students feel motivated to learn Chinese language and culture, and what characteristics do the students associate with the motivating tasks?

2.2 How do students' motivational orientations change in a Chinese language and culture course using a TBTL method?

To answer the above questions, empirical data was collected from three elective Chinese courses: 1) a Chinese language and culture course at a local school; 2) a Chinese culture course (within Chinese Area Studies) at AAU; and 3) an institution-wide Chinese language and culture course at AAU. Multiple methods, including qualitative questionnaires, participant observation, individual interviews, group interviews and quantitative surveys, were employed in data collection.

Research findings can briefly be summarised in the following:

1. In general, a student-centred method, such as TBTL or a PBL-inspired method, can be employed as a motivating methodology to provide a supportive environment for language and culture learning (i.e., Chinese language and culture learning), particularly in an intercultural (or Danish) context. It is observed that learner motivation and engagement are enhanced and increased when more tasks and projects are introduced. This is closely related to factors that both TBTL and PBL-inspired methods emphasise, such as student-centeredness, learners' active participation, real-life connection and collaborative learning, etc. Meaningful culture learning is found as another motivating factor in the foreign language (FL) learning process.

2. The selected tasks in the study are perceived as being very motivating by students. According to the students, the motivating tasks share the following characteristics: providing the students enjoyment, a sense of challenge and satisfaction; supporting learner autonomy; increasing learner self-efficacy; promoting social interaction among the students; promoting cooperative learning through group work; and integrating cultural elements into language tasks. These positive characteristics are strongly related to learner motivation, especially intrinsic motivation in the learning process. The findings indicate that when designing a task for beginner learners, it is important to consider the learners' affective factors and learning situation factors, which can boost learners' intrinsic motivation, and to integrate cultural elements into tasks as an added incentive to motivate students. The challenges identified in the implementation of TBTL in the study suggest

that motivating students to continue learning the language and encouraging active participation may be more important than developing their linguistic accuracy and fluency in the given context.

3. In general, learner orientations can be enhanced in a TBTL learning environment. Furthermore, the integrative orientation (including knowledge, sociocultural and friendship orientations) played a more essential role in the learning process than did the instrumental orientation, which may have been related to the elective nature of the course. The increased learner orientations are mainly related to the increased learner self-efficacy and satisfaction and the motivating course design (the TBTL method and the content integrated with cultural elements). These factors have also been correlated to each other.

Based on the findings of the research, several pedagogical or theoretical implications can be summarised in the following:

1. More attention should be paid to the students who learn FLs in elective courses, in relation to their motivation and learning process.
2. Learners' intrinsic and integrative orientations (compared with extrinsic and instrumental orientations) may play more important roles in their learning process in elective FL (i.e., Chinese) courses.
3. The methods of teaching and learning FLs should be integrated with the cultural backgrounds and educational traditions of certain contexts.
4. Culture should be integrated into or combined with language teaching and learning since it is an efficient way to support learner motivation, especially at the beginner level of FL (i.e., Chinese) learning.

This study therefore contributes to a new perspective on learner motivation in a student-centred learning environment as seen in FL education in an intercultural context. It raises awareness of the need to foster learner motivation in FL elective courses, and to implement culturally attuned methods for FL teaching and learning in certain contexts, doing so with the aim of supporting learner motivation. Furthermore, it shows diverse methods for investigating learner motivation, offers insights into CFL learners, and presents the actual learning of and about culture in FL education, in addition to bringing about new prospects for future studies.

DANSK RESUME

I den globaliserede verden er flere og flere begyndt at lære kinesisk (mandarin) som fremmedsprog af forskellige årsager og på forskellige niveauer. Antallet er stigende som følge af Kinas rivende økonomiske og politiske udvikling. Denne proces støttes aktivt af den kinesiske regering gennem etableringen af Konfucius Institutter over hele verden. På trods af en vækst inden for kinesisk som fremmedsprog er der mange udfordringer, såsom opretholdelse af motivation og fastholdelse af de lærende. Disse udfordringer kan skyldes forskellige årsager. Som det diskuteres inden for relevante forskningsområder, kan det skyldes, at undervisningen af kinesisk er mindre udbredt, hvorfor få har erfaringer med dette sprog. Dette forbindes til sværhedsgraden i at lære kinesisk, som vurderes til at værre større for folk fra lande, hvor der tales indoeuropæiske sprog. Dertil skal tilføjes den relativt underudviklede pædagogik inden for kinesisk som fremmedsprog. I denne undersøgelse identificeres endnu en udfordring: hvis de brugte undervisningsmetoder som anvendes af underviseren ikke matcher de brugte undervisningsmetoder, som er mest udbredt i den lokale kontekst (dvs. den danske kontekst), vil dette have indflydelse på motivationsniveauet. Dette er specielt gældende for begyndere. For at understøtte motivationen til læring er det derfor vigtigt at udforske og udvikle kulturelt afstemte undervisningsmetoder i undervisningen og indlæringen af kinesisk sprog og kultur i interkulturelle kontekster.

Ovenstående har ledt mig til at fokusere på den lærendes motivation, og undervisningsmetoder inden for undervisning og læring af kinesisk som fremmedsprog. Ved at følge forløbet af undervisning og læring af kinesisk ved Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning at Aalborg University i Norddanmark sigter dette studium efter at undersøge elevcentreret undervisningsmetoders (dvs. task-based teaching and learning (TBTL), og en tilgang inspireret af Problembaseret læring (PBL)) indflydelse på den lærendes motivation inden for undervisning og læring af kinesisk som fremmedsprog, og derved forstå hvordan den lærende motiveres til at lære kinesisk sprog og kultur via TBTL i et elevcentreret læringsmiljø (i de tilfælde hvor den TBTL-elevcentreret metode allerede har vist sig at være effektiv og motiverende inden for en bestemt kontekst). Disse mål danner udgangspunktet for denne eksplorative undersøgelse og de følgende to problemformuleringer:

1. Kan en elevcentreret undervisningsmetode (dvs. TBTL eller en tilgang inspireret af PBL) bruges til at motivere den lærende til at lære kinesisk sprog og kultur i en interkulturel (eller dansk) kontekst?
2. Hvis ja, hvordan motiveres den lærende til at lære kinesisk sprog og kultur via TBTL i et elevcentreret læringsmiljø?

Derudover undersøges to underspørgsmål i forhold til problemformulering 2:

2.1 I hvilken grad kan tasks motivere den lærende til at lære kinesisk sprog og kultur, og hvilke karakteristika associerer den lærende med motiverende tasks?

2.2 Hvordan ændres motivationsorientering i et kinesisk sprog- og kulturkursus, hvor der bruges TBTL?

For at svare på ovenstående blev data indsamlet fra tre kinesiske valgfagskurser: 1) et kinesisk sprog- og kulturkursus på en lokal skole; 2) et kinesisk kulturkursus (på Kinesiske Områdestudier) på Aalborg Universitet; og 3) et kinesisk sprog- og kulturkursus udbudt til alle studerende også på Aalborg Universitet. Forskellige metoder, heriblandt kvalitative og kvantitative spørgeskemaer, deltagende observation, individuelle interviews, og gruppeinterviews blev brugt til dataindsamling.

Resultaterne af undersøgelsen beskrives kort i det efterfølgende:

1. Generelt kan elevcentrerede metoder, såsom TBTL eller PBL-inspireret metoder, bruges som en motiverende tilgang, der tilbyder et understøttende miljø for sprog- og kulturundervisning (dvs. kinesisk sprog- og kulturundervisning). Dette er særligt gældende i en interkulturel (eller dansk) kontekst. Observationer viser, at den lærendes motivation forstærkes og forhøjes ved introduktionen af flere tasks og projekter. Disse er tæt relaterede til elementer, som både TBTL og PBL-inspireret metoder lægger vægt på, såsom elevcentreret undervisning, den lærendes aktive deltagelse, overførbarhed til virkelige kontekster, og kollaborativ læring m.m. Meningsfuld læring om kultur viser sig også at være et motiverende element i læringsprocessen.

2. De udvalgte tasks i denne undersøgelse opfattes som meget motiverende af de lærende. Ifølge de lærende deler de motiverende tasks alle de følgende karakteristika: de giver den lærende en følelse af fornøjelse, at blive udfordret og tilfredshed, understøtter elevautonomi, øger den lærendes tiltro på egne evner, fremmer social interaktion mellem de lærende, fremmer kooperativ læring gennem gruppearbejde, og integrerer kulturelle elementer i sprogtasks. Disse positive karakteristika er stærkt forbundne til den lærendes motivation, især den indre motivation i forhold til læreprocessen. Konklusionerne i denne undersøgelse peger på, at det er vigtigt, at tage den lærendes affektive forhold og læringssituationens forhold i betragtning i designprocessen af en task til begyndere, da disse kan forstærke den lærendes indre motivation, og at integrere kulturelle elementer i tasks for at føje ekstra læringsværdi til for at motivere den lærende. De identificerede udfordringer i forhold til at implementere TBTL i denne undersøgelse indikerer, at det er vigtigere i denne kontekst

at motivere den lærende til fortsat læring af sproget og fremme aktiv deltagelse end selve udviklingen af lingvistisk nøjagtighed og talefærdighed.

3. Overordnet set kan den lærendes motivationsorientering styrkes i et TBTL læringsmiljø. Yderligere spiller de indre orienteringer en vigtigere rolle end de instrumentelle orienteringer i forhold til læringsprocessen, hvilket hænger sammen med den undersøgte kontekst, hvor kurset ikke var obligatorisk. De lærendes øgede motivationsorienteringer er primært forbundet til den lærendes øgede tiltro på egne evner og tilfredshedsfølelse, og kursets motiverende design (TBTL metoden og kursusindholdet kombineret med kulturelle elementer). Disse faktorer er også blevet korreleret med hinanden.

Baseret på undersøgelsens konklusioner kan følgende pædagogiske og teoretiske konsekvenser præsenteres:

1. Der skal være større opmærksomhed omkring de lærendes motivation for læring og læringsproces inden for undervisningen af fremmedsprog som valgfag.
2. Den lærendes indre og integrative orienteringer (i modsætning til ydre og intrumentelle orienteringer) spiller en vigtigere rolle for læringsprocessen i ikke obligatoriske fremmedsprogskurser (såsom kinesisk).
3. Undervisnings- og læringsmetoderne inden for fremmedsprog bør være integreret med de specifikke konteksters kulturelle baggrunde og uddannelsestraditioner.
4. Kultur bør integreres i eller kombineres med sprogundervisningen, især på begynderniveau inden for fremmedsprogsundervisning (såsom kinesisk).

Denne undersøgelse bidrager således med nye perspektiver på den lærendes motivation i elevcentrerede læringsmiljøer, som de tager sig ud inden for fremmedsprogsundervisning i interkulturelle kontekster. Yderligere sættes der fokus på nødvendigheden af at støtte den lærendes motivation inden for fremmedsprogsundervisning som valgfag, og vigtigheden af at implementere kulturelt afstemte metoder i undervisningen og indlæringen af fremmedsprog i specifikke kontekster for at støtte den lærendes motivation. Derudover bydes der på forskellige måder at undersøge de lærendes motivation, samt indsigt i de som studerer kinesisk som fremmedsprog. Undervisningen af kultur inden for fremmedsprogsundervisning præsenteres også sammen med forslag til fremtidige studier.

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MY JOURNEY FROM CHINA TO DENMARK

"It is often said that teachers teach the way their teachers taught them and their teachers' teachers taught them. But teachers who emigrate from the intellectual culture of their teachers have to reinvent themselves. What I learned to become a teacher of German language and literature in France, I had to rediscover, when I came to the U.S, to teach German to American students. My field of research, Applied Linguistics, captures the paradox of language learning and language use in various social contexts."

- by Claire Kramsch[2]

Much like Claire Kramsch, I have taught language (Chinese, or Mandarin more specifically) and culture in different social contexts. I received my education in China and had two years' experience teaching Chinese language and culture as a student-teacher in Beijing. Later, I came to Northern Denmark, where I continued to teach Chinese language and culture. In the new context, I faced some challenges which required me to "reinvent" myself. During the process of reinventing myself, my role changed from that of a teacher to that of a teacher-researcher (as a PhD fellow). The journey detailed in this study began there.

Teaching Chinese as a second language in China

I started to teach Chinese as a second language during the second year of my master's programme while studying Linguistics and Applied Linguistics (specialising in Teaching Chinese as A Second Language) at Beijing Normal University, China. There I learned different teaching methods and the concept of student-centeredness. However, in my teaching practice, I followed a more traditional, teacher-centred way of teaching.

The first year of my theory studies included a brief history of language teaching and learning (in the field of English teaching), from traditional grammar translation to current communicative approaches. However, I seldom had the opportunity to practice those current communicative approaches in teaching. In practice, I was trained to use a situational language teaching method in my classrooms. One key feature of the method is "new language points are introduced and practiced situationally" (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 47). The meaning of words or

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[2] Available online at: http://teaching.berkeley.edu/dta-recipient/claire-kramsch. 28 April 2015.

structures is not given through explanation, but inferred based on context. This method, similar to the grammar-translation method my own English teachers used in the schools, focuses on the structures of the language. Both of these are teacher-centred methods and are related to the PPP approach (presentation, practice and production: see details in section 3.3.2.). Within the teaching model, PowerPoint was an important tool used to show the language points, cultural elements and specific situations (mostly with pictures) in the classroom. In general, culture was a minor part of the teaching, while language forms made up the core components. Sometimes, I was also asked to introduce cultural topics (about the country or traditional Chinese culture like festivals, music, cities, etc.) in some summer schools. I generally did these using lectures with PowerPoint presentations, techniques which I learned from my own teachers in both schools and universities. The students in the classrooms were often very interested in learning about the language points or cultural topics. They practiced the language points actively, engaged in the classroom discussions and gave positive feedback at the end of each course.

The students I met in those years came from many different countries, including Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, America and Britain, among others. They mostly had high levels of enthusiasm and motivation for learning Chinese, and made an effort to reach their goals. They could all communicate with me in Chinese. Most of them attended classes regularly (6 hours per day in regular courses, and more than 10 hours per day in some two-month-long summer schools), and would also practice the language with local people outside the classroom. They came to China primarily for the purpose of learning Chinese. They expected to reach a higher level of competence and use the language in future study or jobs. These highly self-motivated students would often make satisfactory progress in the courses regardless of which teaching methods were used.

Though the situational language teaching method I practiced during that time was not student-centred, the concept of student-centeredness was emphasised from different angles by my teachers. According to them, one aspect of student-centeredness was that the foreign students' feedback should be highly respected. For example, students could evaluate and score the teachers' teaching practice, which could influence the amount of allowance the teachers would receive. They could also write complaints about the teachers speaking too much English in the classroom or treating students unequally. This was something I had not experienced in my own education. The pedagogical aspect of student-centeredness was also mentioned, but was not introduced well. Therefore, my understanding of *student-centeredness* was limited to the aspect of respecting the students' needs and feedback.

My main challenges at that time concerned deciding what content needed to be included in the teaching, along with considering how to design a situation that allowed for the students to produce the target language as naturally as possible.

However, the students I later met in Denmark and the challenges I encountered in the Danish educational context were very different from what I had experienced in China.

Teaching Chinese language and culture in Denmark: Problem and solution

"Why didn't we do group projects to learn about Chinese history, as we did in the European history class?"

- by students from School A

After my graduation from my master's programme, I applied for a job as a Chinese teacher at the Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning (CI) at Aalborg University (AAU). The year after that, I came to Denmark to teach Chinese language and culture. Aalborg city is located in Northern Denmark, where many local people have a limited knowledge of China and Chinese language and culture. I perceived several contextual differences in teaching Chinese here when I began, mainly related to the courses and the students: 1) there was a limited number of Chinese courses with limited hours (normally 16-20 hours total for a course lasting the whole academic semester); 2) the Chinese courses were normally placed after school time and offered as elective courses; 3) Chinese culture, instead of Chinese language, was often expected to be prioritised in the Chinese courses; 4) the students were mainly beginners without prior knowledge of Chinese language and culture, and English was used as the primary language of communication between students and teachers, as the students did not speak Chinese and I did not speak Danish; 5) the students did not have high expectations or clear goals for learning Chinese language and culture; and 6) the students had few opportunities to hear, use and practice Chinese in sufficient communicative situations, and their language skills could hardly be maintained and improved in the limited hours of the classes. These contextual differences made it challenging for me to maintain both the students' language level and their motivation to learn Chinese.

I was assigned to teach different courses according to the demand of local institutions and the development of CI AAU. My first semester-long course (20 hours in the whole academic semester) was a Chinese language and culture course at a local school—School A (see details in Paper 1). That was the first teaching experience that made me realise I could not use the methods I learned/ practiced in China to teach Chinese language and culture here in Denmark, and that I had to "reinvent" myself to adapt to the local context. The course was designed as an introduction to China, Chinese culture and some basic Chinese language. I worked collaboratively with a colleague, who taught the same content in the other class. Influenced by our previous teaching and learning experiences, we naturally decided to give lectures on the cultural topics and use PowerPoint to present the related content. A lesson focusing on Chinese history ultimately left a negative impression

on both me and the students. In the lesson, I was excited to give a lecture on my home country's history using interesting stories and pictures. However, I noticed that the students were sitting and listening with confused facial expressions, and it was hard to invite them to join the discussion. Even worse, they did not try to ask questions to further understand the topic, and kept looking at the clock in the classroom. I could understand exactly how the students felt since I had also once been a bored student sitting in similar classrooms in China. I was disappointed after finishing that lesson. I did not know how to solve the problem until I heard feedback from the students: "Why didn't we do group projects to learn about Chinese history, as we did in the European history class?" Originally, I thought the reasons were related to the difficult English presentation for the students, the irrelevant content, and their limited prior knowledge of Chinese history. After hearing this feedback, I finally realised that the lecture-based method I had used might have been the most negative factor, possibly even leading to the students' inactive participation and low motivation in the classroom. I started to reflect on my own understanding of teaching and learning, the teacher-centred methods I had used in my previous teaching and the need to explore student-centred methods, such as using tasks or group projects to facilitate learning in this new context.

I also began to reflect on my mission of teaching Chinese language and culture in a foreign context. As a teacher with a linguistic background, I took it for granted that I had come to Denmark mainly to teach the Chinese language. I assumed that the students who showed up in the courses would want to learn Chinese, just like the students I had met in China. However, the reality was different from what I imagined. The students in Denmark might have felt interested in the newly-offered foreign language course due to its novelty, but their initial level of motivation was not high and was easily influenced by the teaching and learning environment. Furthermore, they might not put effort into learning when they did not have clear goals or when they encountered the difficulties of learning the language. It was therefore important to generate and maintain the students' motivation to learn Chinese before introducing intensive Chinese language courses. Apparently, many local educational institutions (e.g. School A) were aware of these issues from the beginning; before offering an intensive Chinese language course, they would expect the course to first focus on the country and the culture in order to generate students' interest in learning Chinese. This was something I had not considered before teaching the course.

In other courses, both in local schools and AAU, my colleagues and I were facing similar challenges related to the learner demotivation resulting from the use of inappropriate teaching and learning methods. I became more and more curious about what alternative methods might motivate the students, and how to improve my own teaching as well as the general teaching of Chinese language and culture in the Danish context. In order to reinvent my teaching practice and my understanding of teaching and learning, I looked into the literature concerning the Danish context,

foreign language education, learner motivation and the student-centred approach. I expected to use the knowledge to explore alternative methods for motivating the students to learn Chinese language and culture in this context. To conceptualise my exploratory practice, I recognised the importance of conducting research in relation to my teaching practice. Supported by the senior researchers at CI AAU, I applied for a position as a PhD fellow at AAU, and from there I began a new journey from teacher to teacher-researcher.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will introduce the theoretical background of the study, the research purposes and research questions, and the organisation of the report.

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This section focuses on the theoretical background of this study and discusses three points: 1) globalisation and the significance of foreign language (FL) teaching and learning; 2) the global spread of Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) and the challenges thereof; 3) learner motivation and the teaching and learning method.

1.1.1. GLOBALISATION AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

FL teaching and learning has new meaning and significance in this globalised age. In our current era, increasing globalisation is changing the world by shrinking space and time and eliminating borders (The United Nations Development Programme, 1999). The economic and cultural lives of people from all over the world are more intensely and more instantly linked than ever before. This has created a significant need for intercultural communication in multiple languages (Kumaravadivelu, 2008). As a result, the uses of common languages has become more and more important in areas such as international trade, tourism, international relations, technology, media and science.

Consequently, more and more people have perceived the need to learn FLs for work/study purposes, international communication in different areas, integrating oneself into a new culture, strengthening one's own cultural identity or simply for self-improvement. Additionally, many regions or countries have also realised the significance of FL education and have thus developed FL teaching and learning for social, economic and political purposes (Kramsch, 1991; Byram, 2008). In Europe, the European Commission has recommended that European citizens communicate in at least two other languages (mother tongue plus two FLs) used by countries in the European Union in order to guarantee social cohesion and integration among its members (Council of Europe, 1982, 1998, 2006). In Denmark, where this study was conducted, the role of FL is highlighted as a key factor for becoming more international and producing globally competent professionals (The Taskforce for Foreign Languages, 2011). In the US, FL skills are considered a critical need for national security and competitiveness in the globalised world (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). In Asia, FL learning, especially English as FL teaching and learning, has been promoted with great effort by Japan, China, South Korea, etc., in order to ensure that their people can take part in international communities and in

the economic activities of an increasingly globalised world (Chan, Chin, & Suthiwan, 2011). Thus, there are now more and more opportunities for people to learn FLs in formal education than ever.

1.1.2. THE GLOBAL SPREAD OF CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND THE CHALLENGES THEREOF

Globalisation has also influenced the way FLs are viewed and valued by learners or institutions. There is no denying that English is the single most important FL in many countries today. Six other languages (English, German, French, Chinese, Japanese and Spanish) are often ranked among the top languages according to their relative economic strength (Graddol, 2000). Along with China's rapid economic growth and increasing international influence, Chinese, as one of these languages, is assuming an increasingly powerful role in the world (Svartvik & Leech, 2006). A growing number of people around the world are beginning to acquire CFL (Wang, 2014), and the teaching of Chinese has been rapidly expanded and promoted in many countries (Tsung & Cruickshank, 2011). The process of CFL teaching and learning has also been actively promoted by the Chinese government via the establishment of Confucius Institutes all over the world, the primary objective of which is to teach CFL and promote Chinese culture.

Despite the increasing number of CFL students and curricula, the teaching and learning of CFL faces challenges such as difficulty in sustaining learner motivation (Du & Kirkebæk, 2012) and low student retention or high attrition rates (Wen, 1997; Orton, 2011). These challenges may be related to the fact that Chinese is a less commonly taught language (Wen, 1997), to the difficulties of learning the Chinese language for speakers of Indo-European languages (Wen, 1997; Wang, 2014) or to the comparatively underdeveloped pedagogy for Chinese (Orton, 2011). First, Chinese has been regarded as a less commonly taught language in the United States and many other Indo-European language countries (e.g., Denmark) compared to widely taught FLs like English, French and Spanish (Wen, 1997; Wang, 2014). According to Samimy and Tabuse (1992), learning such a language can produce strong negative affective reactions from students, which may hinder their learning motivation. Second, the difficulty level of learning the Chinese language may decrease learner motivation, thus leading to low student retention in institutions. This is mainly because students have to face new challenges in mastering the four tones, the complicated scripts and the different syntactic structure when learning Chinese (Wen, 1997; Wang, 2014). Thirdly, the comparatively underdeveloped pedagogy for Chinese has become one of the main factors relating to high attrition rates (Orton, 2008, 2011). According to Orton, theoretically sound and innovative approaches are still not available, particularly for the learning challenges of the Chinese language and culture for the speakers of Indo-European languages. Without the support of sound pedagogy, students may be discouraged by their lack of progress and decide to quit.

Orton has mainly used the word *pedagogy* to refer to the detailed techniques teachers use to teach specific Chinese language elements, such as tones or Chinese characters (scripts). However, in my understanding, pedagogy can also refer to general teaching approaches. I agree with Orton's assertion that it is important to promote "concerted, sound and innovative development in pedagogy for Chinese and in education of teachers of Chinese" (Orton, 2008, p. 6). Besides this, I also consider it important to explore and develop culturally attuned/accepted teaching methods for the teaching and learning of the Chinese language and culture in various contexts, especially when more and more Chinese teachers are beginning to teach Chinese in various foreign (i.e., Western) contexts, and when the prevalent style in the field of CFL teaching and learning remains conservative (teacher-centred and grammar-oriented) (Ning, 2001; Zhao, 2010) in spite of student-centred approaches being more commonly used in Western contexts. All of these challenges have strengthened the call for a research agenda focused on learner motivation and pedagogy development in CFL teaching and learning.

1.1.3. LEARNER MOTIVATION AND THE TEACHING AND LEARNING METHOD

In the studies by Orton (2011), learner motivation is not directly related to the pedagogical weakness in Chinese teaching and learning. However, through the descriptions of student dissatisfaction with their progress/achievement, and their subsequent decisions to quit Chinese learning, it can be easily observed that there is a connection between pedagogical weakness and decreased learner motivation. In practice, teachers seldom directly relate learners' lack of motivation to their teaching methods/styles (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011), but they should, as it has been demonstrated that teaching and learning methods can indeed influence learner motivation in a classroom setting (Gardner, 2010; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011), and learner motivation may be negatively impacted when teachers' teaching methods/styles are different from learners' preferred learning methods/styles (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Kirkebæk, 2012; Paper 1, 2012, see Appendix A). Highlighting the context issue, Lu and Zhao (2011) suggest developing appropriate pedagogies, curricula and assessments for the range of contexts in which the teaching occurs. In a Danish context, where group and project work are widely used in the educational system (Egekvist, 2012), Kirkebæk (2012) and I (Paper 1, 2012) have each found that the uses of a traditional PPP approach (presentation, practice, production: see details in section 3.3.2.) coupled with lectures may have lowered students' motivation to learn Chinese language and culture in some teaching units. Thus, it is important to look into how teaching methods influence learner motivation and how we can use that knowledge to motivate the students to learn, especially in a context where motivating students is of paramount importance, as is the case in this study.

It has been widely acknowledged that learner motivation plays an important role in FL teaching, and in learning in general. Research on learner motivation has mainly focused on second language acquisition in the teaching and learning of Western languages. Only recently has the range of research broadened to the teaching and learning of non-Western languages as FLs, including CFL (Wen, 1997; Yu & Watkins, 2008; Cai & Zhu, 2012). Through the process of investigating learner motivation, several researchers have studied the connection between teaching activities (e.g., an online learning project, learning tasks or the use of motivational strategies) and learner motivation (Cai & Zhu, 2012; Julkunen, 2001; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007). However, only a limited number of studies have addressed the issue of the influence of specific teaching and learning methods (e.g., student-centred methods) on learner motivation in an intercultural context (the teacher and the students are from different cultures), and how students are motivated by course designs that use these methods. This is what this study will explore.

1.2. RESEARCH PURPOSES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research purpose statements and research questions in this section will serve as two signposts to help readers understand this study. The purpose statements have established the central intent of the study, while the research questions narrow the purpose statements to predictions about what will be learned (Creswell, 2014).

1.2.1. RESEARCH PURPOSES

In this study, learner motivation is seen as an important factor for learning, and teaching and learning methods are influential factors in learner motivation. This study views learner motivation not as a static mental status, but a dynamic concept that can be affected by instructional context (e.g., course design, group structures, etc.) and social and cultural influences (e.g., the teacher, the institution, peer groups, etc.) on the learning process (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). When exploring the alternative methods for teaching and learning Chinese in a Danish context, this study focuses on two student-centred methods derived from the constructivism paradigm: task-based teaching and learning (TBTL) and problem-based learning (PBL), which both stress learner motivation and active participation as important elements of learning.

Relating the above points to learner motivation and teaching and learning methods in CFL, the purposes of this study are to:

1) Explore the influence of student-centred methods (i.e., TBTL and a PBL-inspired method) on learner motivation in Chinese teaching and learning;
2) Understand how students are motivated to learn Chinese language and culture via TBTL in a student-centred learning environment (if TBTL, as

one of the explored student-centred methods, has been proved to be effective and motivating in the context).

During the research process, it became clear that I needed to include the concept of *orientation* (a motivational variable presenting reasons/goals for learning) instead of focusing on the whole picture of learner motivation. This was related to the characteristics of the course and the students, which are discussed in section 4.2.1.2.

1.2.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The above aims serve as points of departure in this study and lead to the two main research questions. Research Question 1 is explorative, and presents the first stage of exploring alternative and motivating methods for Chinese teaching and learning in this study. Research Question 2 was generated after seeing the positive findings that resulted from the first question. The two main research questions are:

1. Can a student-centred approach (i.e., TBTL or a PBL-inspired method) be used to motivate students to learn Chinese language and culture in an intercultural (or Danish) context?
2. If yes, how are students motivated to learn Chinese language and culture via TBTL in a student-centred learning environment?

Furthermore, two sub-questions related to Research Question 2 have been explored:

2.1 To what degree can tasks make students feel motivated to learn Chinese language and culture, and what characteristics do the students associate with the motivating tasks?
2.2 How do students' motivational orientations change in a Chinese language and culture course using a TBTL method?

This study makes three basic assumptions in asking these questions: 1) language and culture are connected in the teaching and learning of CFL in an intercultural context, particularly at the beginner level; 2) the teaching and learning method plays an important role in learner motivation in the teaching and learning of Chinese language and culture; 3) increased learner motivation can be captured from the learners' perspective.

The research questions, along with the purposes of this study, were developed and revised during the research process. The theoretical framework, the development of Chinese teaching and learning within the institutions and the insights that emerged from data analysis have all contributed to the final versions of the research questions. However, my desire to explore the connection between learner motivation and teaching and learning methods in a Danish context, which was my original interest, has remained unchanged.

1.3. ORGANISATION OF THE PHD THESIS

This study is conducted based on a series of peer-reviewed papers (three published and one in press). Hence, this thesis consists of two main parts:

1. A report that provides an overview of this PhD study and includes the following chapters:
   (1) Introduction;
   (2) Research context;
   (3) Theories;
   (4) Research methodology and process;
   (5) Discussion of findings and implications; and,
   (6) Contributions and limitations.
2. Appendices which provide:
   (1) Four papers included in this study;
   (2) Questionnarie for course evaluation used in Paper 1; and
   (3) Interview guidelines used in Paper 2.

1.3.1. THE ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT

Chapter 2 introduces the Danish educational context in general and the research sites in the four papers in this study specifically. This chapter is expected to not only show where this study was conducted, but also explains the reasoning behind the decisions that were made in the process of conducting this study.

Chapter 3 starts from the theoretical background of believing that the integration of language and culture can provide a solid motivation for beginner learners. It discusses theories about learner motivation as an important factor for learning, as well as those concerning teaching and learning methods as influential factors in learner motivation. The understandings of some core concepts in this study, such as learner motivation, the role of teaching and learning methods and student-centred methods (i.e., TBTL and PBL) have been provided in this chapter. The theories and hypotheses have guided the research methodology and process and provided a foundation for the discussions in this study.

Chapter 4 reports the methodology and process of this research by discussing the characteristics of the study, presenting the explorative research process, justifying the employment of multiple approaches and showing the procedures of data collection and data analysis. Methodological reflections are also included in this chapter to show how strategies were developed when confronting incongruities between assumptions in the theories of methodology and the research context of my study.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings and implications of this study. It clarifies and discusses these findings in relation to Research Question 1 and the two sub-questions of Research Question 2.

Chapter 6 discusses the main contributions and limitations of this study.

1.3.2. THE PAPERS INCLUDED IN THIS PHD THESIS

Four papers are included in this thesis. They are:

1) Ruan, Y. (2012). Can tasks be used to teach Chinese culture at the beginner level? In X. Y. Du, & M. J. Kirkebæk (Eds.), Exploring task-based PBL in Chinese teaching and learning (pp.78-98). Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press.
2) Ruan, Y. & Du, X. Y. (2013). A PBL-inspired method for facilitating culture learning. In M. J. Kirkebæk, X. Y. Du, & A. A. Jensen (Eds.), Teaching and learning culture: Negotiating the Context (pp.43-60). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
3) Ruan, Y., Duan, X., & Du, X. Y. (2015). Tasks and learner motivation in learning Chinese as a foreign language. Language, Culture and Curriculum. In press. Estimated publication date: 06 May 2015.
4) Ruan, Y., Duan, X., & Du, X. Y. (2015). Using tasks to enhance beginners' orientations for learning Chinese as a foreign language. International Journal of Research Studies in Language Learning, 4(4), 41-45.

Paper 1 focuses on a Chinese language and culture course (in which culture was a focus) at a local school. It aims to illustrate the importance of exploring alternative teaching and learning methods for Chinese teaching and learning in order to enhance learner motivation in a Danish context. The paper presents the process of teaching and learning in the course, including the successful examples of using tasks to teach Chinese language and culture, and a problem that occurred in a Chinese history lesson due to the use of lectures. It is suggested that tasks can be used as an alternative method to teach not only the Chinese language, but also Chinese culture. The teacher's (also the author's) participant observation and a qualitative questionnaire for course evaluation are used to generate data among 18 participants in the course.

Paper 2 is based on a pilot study of a course reform—a Chinese culture course using a PBL-inspired method instead of a lecture-based method at Aalborg University (AAU), Denmark. The course design does not only include knowledge-based aspects of Chinese culture, but more importantly, it also gives priority to real-life experience-related content, team-based activities and diverse learning methods that emphasise student-centred learning. Multiple data generation methods are used

in this paper, including participant observation, a qualitative questionnaire for evaluating selected activities, an official evaluation form with space for qualitative comments and interviews with five students and two members of the teaching staff.

Paper 3 focuses on how beginner-level learners in a TBTL environment perceive what motivates them in the process of learning CFL at AAU, Denmark. Drawing upon empirical data from post-course surveys (153 participants), group interviews (with 36 participants) and participant observation, this study explores which kinds of tasks are seen as motivating from students' perspective and which characteristics students associate with motivating tasks. The study indicates that it is important to consider the learners' affective and learning situation factors, which can boost learners' intrinsic motivation, when designing a task, especially in the beginning stages of FL learning, and to integrate cultural elements into tasks as an added incentive to motivate learners. Finally, this study identifies challenges and barriers related to TBL that beginner-level students may find discouraging.

Paper 4 explores learners' orientations in an elective CFL course at AAU, Denmark. Drawing upon empirical data from both pre- and post-course surveys (from 129 participants) and group interviews (with 25 participants), this study examines in what aspects and to what extent these orientations change, and what factors have been related to these changes, in an institution-wide CFL course using TBTL. The results show that several external and internal factors, such as the motivating course design (especially the TBTL method) and the learners' increased self-efficacy and satisfaction, contributed to positive changes in learners' orientations. It is suggested that a communicative approach (e.g., TBL method) can be used to promote positive orientation changes and enhance learner motivation.

CHAPTER 2. RESEARCH CONTEXT

In this chapter, two research contexts (the national context and the institutional context) will be introduced. The national context gives a background to the Danish context for foreign language (FL) teaching and learning, while the institutional context illustrates the research sites of this study.

2.1. THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

This section will introduce FL education and Chinese teaching and learning in Denmark, along with the teaching philosophy of the Danish education system and the characteristics of students there. It is closely related to the reasoning behind the decisions that were made in the process of conducting this study.

2.1.1. FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND CHINESE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN DENMARK

The development of FL teaching and learning in Denmark is closely related to the internationalisation strategies of the Danish education system. The teaching of FL has been stressed at different educational levels. This study focuses on school and university levels. In the latest public school reform[3], agreements were made to begin the teaching of English and a second FL in elementary schools two years earlier than previously: English from grade 1 instead of grade 3; German or French from grade 5 instead of grade 7. English is considered the most important language to master at an earlier age due to increasing internationalisation. Both a 2011 report titled *Language is the key to the world* (The Taskforce for Foreign Languages, 2011) and the 2013 agreements underlined the importance of offering a third FL, which could eiher be German, French, Spanish or another language (e.g., Chinese) that schools choose to offer.

At the higher education level, an example of this can be found at AAU, with its effort to promote institution-wide FL teaching and learning. In 2010, the president of AAU called for an improvement of the global competencies of students of all levels and disciplines within the university. One key strategy was to encourage all students, especially students from non-language and culture disciplines, to learn one FL (in addition to English) that represented a potentially unfamiliar culture, such as Chinese. The ultimate goal was to enable all students to communicate with people

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[3] Information about 2013 School Reform in Denmark available online at: http://www.kl.dk/ImageVaultFiles/id_62379/cf_202/Klik_her_for_at_l-se_fakta_om_folkeskolereformen.PDF. 28 April 2015.

of diverse backgrounds and allow them to function as future professionals in a global context.

As discussed in Chapter 1, an increasing number of people around the world are beginning to acquire Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) due to China's rapid economic growth and increasing international influence. The process has been promoted by Confucius Institutes all over the world, including in Denmark. With the establishment of Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning (CI) at Aalborg University (AAU) in 2009, where I work and where this study was conducted, the number of local CFL students has seen yearly increases of roughly 20 percent since 2012 (limited numbers in 2009, 856 students in 2011, 1766 students in 2012; only counting the number of students who were taught by CI teachers). The teaching activities within CI include: 1) courses in Chinese language and culture at elementary and secondary schools in Northern Denmark; 2) courses in Chinese language, culture, and society at AAU; and 3) courses in Chinese language and culture and business Chinese at Open University Aalborg. These courses share some common features: 1) Chinese language and culture are always connected in the teaching practice; 2) the majority of the students are beginners without prior knowledge or experience of learning Chinese; and 3) the courses are all supplementary or interest-oriented courses with limited hours, and the students have their own regular learning subjects, study programmes or work. Though the number of CFL students and curricula are increasing, Chinese has not been and still is not highly ranked amongst commonly studied languages in a Danish context (Egekvist, 2012).

2.1.2. THE TEACHING PHILOSOPHY AND THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDENTS IN DENMARK

The Danish education system is characterised by preferences of certain teaching philosophies/methods. According to Egekvist (2012), group and project work are the widespread and commonly used teaching methods in the Danish education system, and students' active participation and innovative thinking are rewarded within that system. In addition, equality is a stressed value in terms of grades in school and school life; the average sets the standard, and every student has equal opportunities and is treated equally (Egekvist, 2012). In Danish schools, there is a focus on participatory democracy and lessons in citizenship (Jensen, Nielsen, & Stenstrup, 1992; Kryger & Reisby, 1998), and students are encouraged to make decisions about the direction of lessons jointly with teachers (Osborn, 2001).

The emphases on collaboration and equality, and the concern for citizenship and democracy, have created a remarkable school system, which has been endorsed with high public satisfaction. However, international comparisons have shown disappointing academic results for Danish students (Egelund, 2005). This is probably a result of a weak evaluation culture and the downplaying of academic

objectives in the education system. In this situation, compared with students from other countries, Danish students "were in general the most positive towards schooling, learning and teachers. They saw school as helping them to fit into a group situation rather than emphasising the development of the individual" (Osborn, 2001, p. 274). Also, they "were less likely to see doing good work as making them popular with their friends" (Osborn, 1999, p. 295). Personal interest/motivation in learning therefore plays an important role in their learning process, and they often prefer group/project work in teaching and learning.

2.2. THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

This section introduces the research sites of the four papers included in this study. The Chinese language and culture courses in this study were all delivered by teachers from CI AAU, Denmark. I was the teacher for most of the courses in this study, and I also served as one of the teachers in a teaching team for a Chinese culture course at AAU.

2.2.1. SCHOOL A AND ITS INTERNATIONAL STUDY PROGRAMME

School A is one of the largest elementary and lower secondary schools in the Aalborg municipality, with around 800 students from grades 0-9. It was the first local school engaged in the collaboration with CI at AAU during winter 2010. The collaboration (at the initial stage) included a *China week* (one week with 25 hours) and a Chinese language and culture course (ten weeks with ten teaching units of two hours each, see Paper 1). Based on the 2011/2012 school plan, internationalisation and globalisation are integrated as parts of daily school life (Egekvist, 2012).

In August 2011, School A initiated four different study programmes from grade 7, one of which was the *International Study Programme*. The aims of the programme are to prepare students for an international community by giving them an international and cultural perspective on the world, and strengthening their FL skills. The aforementioned Chinese language and culture course was offered as an obligatory part of the international study programme for grade 7 (age 13-14). The course was designed to introduce the country and culture (as a focus), and to provide some language teaching, mainly according to the school representatives' expectations. Lectures, tasks, games and other cultural activities were used to teach the culture and language in the course. The 43 students were divided into two classes (A and B). Class A (6 boys, 15 girls) was taught by me (see Paper 1). None of the students had prior experience in learning Chinese.

2.2.2. AALBORG UNVERSITY AND ITS PBL MODEL

AAU, where this study was conducted, is a Danish university which was established in 1974 and is located mainly in Aalborg, Northern Denmark. It has four faculties: Humanities, Social Sciences, Engineering and Science and Medicine. It is one of the pioneer universities for implementing PBL at an institutional level in the Scandinavian region. The project-organised and problem-based learning approach has been well employed in all disciplines since it was first implemented. Students of AAU normally work in groups on common projects based on real-life problems, and they have grown accustomed to this teaching and learning model. In an AAU-PBL model, a problem is the starting point of the learning process. It can be "theoretical, practical, social, technical, symbolic-cultural and/or scientific and grows out of students' wondering within different disciplines and professional environments" (Barge, 2010, p. 7). A project is normally an investigation into the real world outside (empirical investigation) according to certain principles, which are based on students choosing relevant theories and methods for empirical work (Cancino, 2004). More discussion of PBL can be found in Chapter 3.

Du (2012) summarises four fundamental elements of the AAU-PBL model:

> "1) The semester theme that can describe certain problems and cover relevant subjects, 2) The problem as a starting point for a project that can vary among professional areas, 3) The choice of projects (which last approximately 5 months) that can be based on open or rather controlled discipline formulations depending on the educational objectives, 4) The team work (with approximately 3-7 students in one team) that will encourage students to develop process skills, such as collaboration, management of learning and peer learning." (p. 45)

In this model, students need to conduct a project and earn 30 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) points to pass each semester. Normally, half of the time is spent on project work in teams (which takes up 15 ECTS), and the other half is spent on traditional lectures.

This study focuses on two courses offered at AAU: a Chinese culture course in Chinese Area Studies (an elective programme in the study of International Business Communication) and a Chinese language and culture elective course offered to all students at AAU (see Papers 2, 3 and 4).

2.2.2.1 Chinese culture course in Chinese Area Studies of Aalborg University

All disciplines and programmes at AAU are expected to follow the general principles of the AAU-PBL model (Barge, 2010), though the practice at the micro-

level varies from programme to programme. FL study programmes at AAU are often interdisciplinary, as are most study programmes. They are combined into different study programmes; for example, English, Spanish and German are combined with International Business Communication study[4]. In the programmes, students learn the FL, culture, business understanding and market communications. They can also choose several elective programmes, one of which is Chinese Area Studies. Each elective programme counts as 45 ECTS credits (out of 180 ECTS in the three-year degree seeking programmes) and is normally placed in the last year (the 5th and 6th semester).

Within Chinese Area Studies, students learn Chinese civics, Chinese culture and Chinese written and oral language, which are divided into four courses. The four courses are well connected and offered to the same group of students, who have no prior experience learning Chinese. A project is conducted in the Chinese culture course in the 5th semester. In addition to the project work, the students also attend regular lecture-based lessons. In the 6th semester, the students attend regular lessons without doing any project, but they do finish with a two-day written exam. In autumn 2011, a CI AAU teacher delivered the course following the existing objectives and previously used teaching methods. During the course, the teacher observed a lack of learner motivation and interest in the class and assumed it was mainly due to the theory-focused, context-independent and lecture-based teaching method. Additionally, having a philosophical disagreement with the previous teaching team, a CI teaching team (with me as one of the teachers) decided to reform the course in terms of both content and teaching method (using a problem based learning (PBL) inspired method instead of a lecture-based method) in spring 2012 (see Paper 2). Eight students (3 male) and four CI teachers were involved in the course in spring 2012 (the 6th semester for the students).

2.2.2.2 Chinese language and culture elective course at Aalborg University

As mentioned earlier, as an internationalisation strategy, AAU encourages all students to learn one FL (in addition to English) that represents a potentially unfamiliar culture (e.g., Chinese). An institution-wide Chinese language course (divided into two levels: beginner and intermediate) was offered as an elective during after-school time (from 16:30-18:15) by the Faculty of Humanities in 2011. Among all the FL elective courses (others are French, Spanish and German), this course became the most popular course in general, with 165 students registering in

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[4]   The study programme syllabus is available online at: http://www.fak.hum.aau.dk/digitalAssets/84/84640_studieordning_ba_siv_2012_hum_aau.p df. 28 April 2015.

the autumn of 2012 and 210 in the spring of 2013. CI teachers were invited to deliver the course in 2011. This study focuses on the beginner level course I taught first in autumn 2012 and spring 2013 (see Paper 3), then again in autumn 2013 and spring 2014 (see Paper 4). The beginner-level course was designed to focus on oral language proficiency and introduce basic Chinese characters and cultural elements. It consists of eight teaching units (90 minutes per unit, and one unit each week). Based on the previous experience, and also considering the PBL model at AAU, a task-based teaching and learning method was used starting in autumn 2012. Since there was no published textbook suitable for such a course, the teachers involved in the course cooperatively designed the course content. Below are the details of the courses presented in Paper 3 and 4, focusing on the differences:

1) The courses in autumn 2012 and spring 2013 (see Paper 3):

Students can pass the course with 80% attendance without taking an exam. The enrolled students were only informed of course credit being offered after completing the course due to policy changes that took place during the semester. I taught seven classes during this period: there were 66 participants from three classes in 2012 and 87 participants from four classes in 2013, totalling 153 participants from all four faculties. Most of the participants were Danish (86.9%). More details about participants and task design are shown in Paper 3.

2) The courses in autumn 2013 and spring 2014 (see Paper 4):

Students knew they could gain course credits with 80% attendance and no exam before the courses started. In this period, I taught four classes: there were 82 participants from three classes in 2013 and 47 participants from one class in 2014, totalling 129 participants from three faculties. Most of the participants were Danish (79.1%). More details about participants and task design are shown in Paper 4.

2.3. SUMMARY

This chapter has introduced the Danish educational context in general and the research sites used in the four papers in this study. In a Danish context, FL education is closely related to the internationalisation strategies of the Danish education system at both the school and university levels. English is the most commonly taught language, while Chinese is taught infrequently. Despite the increasing number of CFL students in Northern Denmark, which is promoted by the internationalisation process and the contribution of CI AAU, Chinese is not yet ranked highly in the Danish educational system. In a Danish context, group and project work are the widespread and commonly used teaching methods, and the students' active participation and innovative thinking are encouraged. These characteristics of the Danish educational context are expected to provide inspiration for developing Chinese teaching and learning in Denmark.

The research sites for the papers are in three Chinese courses: one at local school and two at AAU. All courses were offered as supplemental/elective, and the students were all beginners without prior knowledge/experience in learning Chinese language and culture. Culture was integrated or even prioritised as an important element in all the courses. This chapter is expected to not only show where this study was conducted, but also explains the reasoning behind the decisions that were made in the process of conducting this study.

CHAPTER 3. THEORIES

As discussed earlier, with China's rapid economic growth and increasing international influence, and the establishment of Confucius Institutes worldwide, the number of Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) learners and programmes has been increasing rapidly (Svartvik & Leech, 2006; Tsung & Cruickshank, 2011; Wang, 2014). All of these are also happening in Northern Denmark, where this study was conducted. Despite these positive developments, CFL teaching and learning are facing challenges, such as the difficulty of maintaining learner motivation due to the mismatch between the traditional methods of teaching Chinese and the teaching and learning methods in use in Denmark found in this study. This chapter discusses the relevant theories which are closely related to the teaching practice and research by addressing three points: 1) a theoretical background encompassing the integration of language and culture; 2) motivation as an important factor for learning; and 3) teaching and learning methods as influential factors in learner motivation.

3.1. A THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: THE INTEGRATION OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Integrating culture into FL learning has been under debate in the literature. Many researchers claim that language and culture are inseparable, and that culture is the essential part of language teaching and learning (Byram, 1989; Kramch, 1993; Lange & Paige, 2003). However, there are a few researchers who argue that the two can be separated in certain respects (Risager, 2005, 2006). Personally, I hold the view that it is helpful to integrate them both into teaching and learning, particularly for the beginning level of learners in this study.

In the field of CFL teaching and learning, it is also often recommended that teachers integrate culture into their curricula. This is related to the recognition of the significance of cultural competence in effective intercultural communication, which occurred in the 1980s (Dong, 1995; Lin, 1996), and to the aim of promoting Chinese culture to the world through language teaching in the new age (Li, 2007). In addition to these benefits, this study suggests that integrating language and culture can be a good motivation for learners, especially the learners who study Chinese at the beginning stage. In this study, most of the students were beginner learners who had no prior knowledge of the language and culture, and there was no direct connection between Chinese and their major studies. Ryan and Deci (2000) suggest that people are normally motivated only when they value an activity or when there is strong external coercion. In this context, there is no strong requirement for the students' participation, and it is therefore important to help the learners to gain familiarity with and develop their attitudes toward the target

culture, making the teaching and learning more interesting and motivating in order to help students find the value of learning the Chinese language. It is believed that integrating culture into CFL learning can help students reach these goals.

3.2. MOTIVATION AS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR FOR LEARNING

It has been widely acknowledged that motivation plays a key role in learning. Motivation is the energy of learning, the feeling that mediates learning and the attitude that is a consequence of learning. Motivated people will work longer and more intensely in the learning process. They are more cooperative and open to what they are experiencing, and the time they spend actively involving themselves in learning is positively related to their sense of achievement, memory and recall (Zull, 2002; Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009). In relation to language learning, Dörnyei (2001) pointed out that without sufficient motivation, even the brightest learners are unlikely to persist long enough for the learning process to be successful. In the classroom context, learner motivation is naturally related to learners' desire to participate in the learning process, and also concerns the reasons or goals that underlie their involvement or non-involvement in academic activities. Wentzel and Brophy (2014) argue that teachers should focus on encouraging students to engage in activities with motivation to learn. When teachers say students lack motivation, it normally means that the students are not motivated to do what the teacher desires (Woolfolk, 1987). In this study, what I (and the institutions) desired was not only that the students acquire knowledge about Chinese language and culture, but also that they be actively involved and motivated to learn more. Since most of the students in these programmes do not have clear goals for their learning, it becomes even more important to support their motivation. In this study, I argue that awareness of how learner motivation develops and what facilitates learning for its own sake can be used to assist Chinese teachers in reducing student apathy. In the following sections, the concepts and theories of motivation will be discussed.

3.2.1. THE CONCEPT OF MOTIVATION

Motivation is a multifaceted and complex concept that has been defined in many different ways by different researchers in psychology and other disciplines. Kleinginna and Kleinginna (1981) present 102 statements defining the concept from a variety of sources. Researchers are inevitably selective in their focus since it seems impossible to capture the whole picture of motivation. In this study, motivation is a term for general learning. However, the following discussion of learner motivation is more related to language education since this study focuses on CFL teaching and learning. Within the language education field, there are also different ways to approach motivation. For example, Gardner (1985, 2010), a pioneer of the field, has provided a classic understanding of motivation comprised

of three components: the desire to learn the language, attitude toward learning the language and motivational intensity (i.e., the effort extended to learn the language). However, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) propose an understanding of motivation on which most researchers may agree: it

"concerns the direction and magnitude of human behaviour, that is:

- the *choice* of a particular action,
- the *persistence* with it,
- the *effort* expended on it.

In other words, motivation is responsible for

- *why* people decide to do something,
- *how long* they are willing to sustain the activity,
- *how hard* they are going to pursue it." (p. 4)

This understanding has defined motivation in a broad sense, which is needed and adopted in this report. However, my understanding of motivation was not related to these theories at the beginning stage of this study, but was rather gradually developed in the research process. In Papers 1 and 2, I naturally understood motivation as the students' persistence with Chinese learning (a student's plan to continue learning Chinese) and their effort expended on it (a student's participation in the classroom) without relating it to the motivation theories. In Papers 3 and 4, I looked into theories and was aware of different understandings of motivation. Based on the knowledge, I redeveloped my original static view of motivation (motivation as a static mental status) to a dynamic view of motivation (motivation may change due to certain forces throughout the learning process), and included more and more motivational variables (e.g., orientation, self-efficacy) based on the context.

Gardner's theories on orientation are still gaining attention today. The distinction of motivation and orientation (or goal) is the key issue in Garden's motivation theories. In his view, orientation is "the overall aim, purpose, direction and/or goal of the activity" (2010, p. 16). It is not equivalent to motivation, since learners might profess a particular orientation while still failing to be highly motivated to learn the language (Gardner, 1985). However, researchers (including Gardner) also argue that orientations are related to motivation, and that they function as predictors/influential factors of motivation (Gardner & Tremblay, 1994; Belmechri & Hummel, 1998; Noels & Clément, 1989). For example, Belmechri and Hummel (1998) have indicated that five orientations (travel, understanding/school, friendship, understanding and career) best predicted motivation for the language learning in their context. In this study, the Chinese language and culture courses are offered as a supplement/elective. The reasons (or aims, goals) for learning Chinese are important factors influencing the students' participation, persistence and effort.

Therefore, I find the concept of orientation useful, and have used four orientations to investigate learner motivation in this study. These orientations are integrative and instrumental orientations, and intrinsic and extrinsic orientations.

Integrative and instrumental orientations, deriving from Gardner's work, have been the most widely known concepts in the field. The integrative orientation refers to a positive disposition toward the target language group and the desire to interact with and even "to be like valued members of the language community" (Gardner & Lambert, 1959, p. 271). They are associated with attitudes toward learning the target language, the learning situation and the target language community and components such as interest in foreign languages and a desire to learn the target language and interact with the target language community (Gardner, 1982). The instrumental orientation pertains to the potential pragmatic gains of language proficiency, such as job advancement or course credit. These two orientations are mainly used in the second language setting. Dörnyei (1990) argues that the nature and effect of certain motivational components may vary in different environments where the learning takes place, and the learning tasks/ results obtained from second language acquisition context are not directly applicable to a foreign language (FL) learning situation. After all, in an FL learning situation, the learners seldom have the opportunity to contact the target culture or people. Thus, Dörnyei proposes a broadly conceived Integrative Motivational Subsystem, consisting of three dimensions, particularly for the FL setting: 1) interest in FLs, cultures and people; 2) desire to broaden one's view and avoid provincialism; and 3) desire for new stimuli and challenges. Each of the dimensions can be associated with orientations other researchers identified (Clément & Kruidenier, 1983; Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994). In this study, the CFL students learn Chinese in Denmark, where they seldom meet Chinese-speaking people, and thus, the subsystem becomes useful (see Paper 4).

Intrinsic and extrinsic orientations are two more well-known orientations in light of Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory. They are also called intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in many studies (Deci & Ryan, 1985, Vallerand, Pelletier, Blais, Briere, Senecal, & Vallieres, 1992, Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, Paper 3). According to Deci and Ryan (1985), intrinsic motivation (IM) "is in evidence whenever students' natural curiosity and interest energise their learning. When the educational environment provides optimal challenges, rich sources of stimulation, and a context of autonomy, this motivational wellspring in learning is likely to flourish" (p. 245). That is, the students do an activity for the pleasure and satisfaction derived from it. In contrast, extrinsically motivated students often undertake a task because of external pressures or rewards (e.g., good grades), not out of intrinsic interest. Deci and Ryan (1985) suggest that IM leads to more effective learning in general, but that extrinsic incentives are more necessary in the education of children. In this study, most of the curricula used in supplemental

Chinese courses do not require any exams. It is assumed that IM would play a more important role in CFL students' learning processes.

It should be noted that more and more scholars are coming to believe that motivation is a dynamic process, and that it may change due to certain forces in the learning process (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Dörnyei, 1998; Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998; Dörnyei, 2002). As Ellis and Larsen-Freeman (2006) describe, "motivation is less a trait than fluid play, an ever-changing one that emerges from the processes of interaction of many agents, internal and external, in the ever-changing complex world of the learner" (p. 563). Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) also acknowledge that "motivation itself is dynamic. The old characterisation of motivation in terms of integrative vs. instrumental orientation is too static and restricted" (p.4). Oxford and Shearin (1994) suggest allowing for complicated changes over time in a student's reasons for learning a language (orientations) since initial participation leads to interest, and interest may lead to further involvement and changes in the reasons for language learning. This view of dynamic motivation/orientation is becoming increasing influential in motivation research. In this study, many students had initial motivation for learning Chinese in most of the courses. However, it was expected that their motivation might change due to factors such as the teaching and learning method and the nature of the language, among others. This inspired me to investigate the changes of learner orientation/motivation in learning Chinese language and culture (see Paper 4).

3.2.2. HOW LEARNER MOTIVATION IS STUDIED

Integrating with mainstream theoretical perspectives and developments, the study of motivation in language learning has evolved as a largely independent research field in last five decades, and has gone through three theoretical phases: (Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011):

1. "The social psychological period (1959-1990)—characterised by the work of Robert Gardner and his associates in Canada.
2. The cognitive-situated period (during the 1990s)—characterised by work drawing on cognitive theories in educational psychology.
3. The process-oriented period (the turn of the century)—characterised by an interest in motivational change." (p. 39-40)

The major studies on learner motivation in language learning were initiated by Gardner and Lambert, two psychologists from Canada, in the late 1950s. Their work plays a dominant role in the social psychological period and highlights a cluster of social psychological variables/components, such as the aforementioned integrative and instrumental orientations and attitudes toward target language speakers and the target culture.

The cognitive-situated period expanded (not discarded) the existing theoretical motivation framework through integrating cognitive theories and other perspectives, such as expectancy-value theories, goal theories, self-efficacy theory, cognitive developmental theory and sociocultural theory (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995; Dörnyei, 1994; Williams & Burden, 1997). Prior to this, researchers had paid more attention to the strong impact of learners' immediate learning environment on learner motivation. For example, Dörnyei (1994) includes a learning situation level component (the course, the teacher and the group) in his framework, and Williams and Burden's (1997) social constructivist model emphasises that an individual's motivation is subject to social and contextual influences, including culture, context, social situation, other people and the individual's interactions with those people. Furthermore, focusing on the task (from task-based teaching and learning) as the unit of analysis, researchers started to investigate task motivation in this period (Julkunen, 1989, 2001; Dörnyei, 2002). Dörnyei (2002) offers a more complex view of task motivation by emphasising the dynamic nature of motivation in the task engagement process. The dynamic view of motivation has since led the research into the process-oriented period.

In the process-oriented period, researchers made an effort to analyse the dynamics of motivation change at either the micro level (e.g., task motivation) or the more macro level (e.g., during a course of study over a person's learning history or lifespan) (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). By focusing on time, Ushioda (1998) develops a theoretical framework of motivation from a temporal perspective, which shows that a learner at a beginning stage is motivated by positive experiences more than goals, while a learner at a potential later stage is more goal-directed. Others focus on motivational changes, action sequences or motivational influences (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002; Gardner, Masgoret, Tennant, & Mihic, 2004).

This study has benefitted from the results found in these three periods, especially the second and third. Results from the first social psychological period not only provided a foundation for the field, but also influenced the ways in which one conducts research in the motivation field. Within the first period, motivation was conceptualised as an affective variable implicated in language learning achievement (Ushioda, 1994). To test and verify the contributory role of motivation in language learning, learner motivation has been expressed as a mathematical index, numerically compatible in correlational and multivariate statistical analyses with other variable indices (e.g., achievement, classroom participation, persistence in learning and use of strategies, etc.) (Ushioda, 1994, 2001). For a long time, the study of learner motivation for language learning evolved in a quantitative research paradigm, and the learners' voices were silenced in statistical analyses. Nevertheless, researchers have also explored a more qualitative approach to motivation to complement the longstanding quantitative tradition of research, and

learners' voices now receive more attention (Ushioda, 1994, 2001; Paper 3 in this study). Furthermore, a longitudinal mixed methods approach has been explored in various studies (Cai & Zhu, 2012; Busse & Walter, 2013; Paper 4, 2015) as the researchers sought to address the time- and context-sensitive nature of motivational attributes.

In general, the research on motivation is shifting focus more and more to the complex dynamic approaches, the immediate classroom setting and the actual learning situation, even as the methodology used to study motivation develops from a quantitative paradigm to a more qualitative or mixed-method approach. These motivation-focused researchers have focused primarily on the teaching and learning of English as a second language. Only recently, has the topic of learner motivation in CFL started to gain attention among educators and researchers (Wen, 1997; Cai & Zhu, 2012; this study). It is believed that the increasing understanding of learner motivation can improve classroom pedagogy and support the learning of Chinese language and culture, and in return classroom pedagogy (i.e., teaching and learning methods) can influence learner motivation in the learning process (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009; Dörnyei, 1998; Ushioda, 1998; Kikuchi, 2009).

3.3. TEACHING AND LEARNING METHOD AS AN INFLUENCIAL FACTOR FOR LEARNER MOTIVATION

It is argued that learner motivation can be affected by contextual influences, such as instructional context (e.g., task and materials design, evaluation practices, grouping structures) and social and cultural influences (e.g., teachers, peer group, school, family, culture and society) (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). As an important part of classroom practice, the teaching and learning method are closely related to some elements of the aforementioned contextual influences on learner motivation, such as task and materials design, grouping structures, the teacher and the peer group. Furthermore, researchers also find that the teaching and learning method is one of the main factors that relates to learners' lack of motivation (Dörnyei, 1998; Ushioda, 1998; Kikuchi, 2009; Falout, Elwood, & Hood, 2009). Both Kikuchi (2009) and Falout, Elwood and Hood's (2009) studies directly point out that the traditional teacher-fronted grammar-translation approach has lain at the root of motivational problems in their contexts, which is similar to the problem identified at the beginning of this study (see the opening section *My journey from China to Denmark*). When the use of an inappropriate teaching and learning method becomes an issue for learner motivation, how can one change the unsatisfactory situation and support learner motivation? One of the possibilities may be to explore alternative methods that are motivating and context-appropriate.

In relation to designing motivating methods for everyday teaching in the classroom, motivation researchers have suggested many motivational strategies/techniques for practitioners (Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Williams & Burden, 1997; Dörnyei &

Csizér, 1998; Dörnyei, 1994, 2001). For example, Dörnyei (2001) lists 35 key strategies to make the teaching motivating, such as finding ways to raise the learner's intrinsic interest in the learning process, presenting and administering tasks in a motivating way, promoting cooperation among the learners, actively promoting learner autonomy and so on. Each of these strategies includes more specific sub-strategies. To assist teachers in developing a motivation-conscious teaching approach, Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) propose a set of "Ten Commandments" as core strategies:

1. "Set a personal example with your own behaviour.
2. Create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.
3. Present the tasks properly.
4. Develop a good relationship with the learners.
5. Increase the learners' linguistic self-confidence.
6. Make the language classes interesting.
7. Promote learner autonomy.
8. Personalise the learning process.
9. Increase the learners' goal-orientedness.
10. Familiarise learners with the target language culture." (p. 215)

Other researchers propose other strategies, which have provided practitioners (including me) rich ideas of how to motivate learners in the classroom. However, these strategies all focus on a particular technical level, which has made it difficult to incorporate as many of them as possible into the practice. There exists a need to find a general idea to guide the teaching practice, such as deciding which approach (teacher-centred approach or student-centred approach) to use in the teaching and learning.

3.3.1. SUPPORTING LEARNER MOTIVATION: FROM A TEACHER-CENTRED TO A STUDENT-CENTRED APPROACH

One of the important trends in education is the shift in focus from teaching to learning, with the pedagogical approach moving from the traditional teacher-centred approach to one that is student-centred (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Du & Kirkebæk, 2012). Some of the aforementioned teaching methods, such as the lecture-based method, the situational language teaching method and the grammar-translation method, serve as examples for the teacher-centred approach, in which the teacher controls what is taught in the classroom. This approach is based on the positivist assumption that knowledge obtained from the observation of an unchanging world is stable and can be passed on from one to another (Duffy & Jonassen, 1992; Jonassen, 1992). In a teacher-centred classroom, the teacher teaches when they tell students what they know, and the students learn when they remember the knowledge they have been told (Yuen & Hau, 2006). In this way, the teacher plays a more active role while the students play a more passive one.

Research and my personal experience have shown that teacher-centred teaching methods can lead to motivational problems (or learner demotivation) (Kikuchi, 2009; Falout, Elwood, & Hood, 2009).

In contrast to a teacher-centred approach, a student-centred approach situates the student as the primary actor and encourages the student to take a certain degree of responsibility for what is taught and how it is learned. Student-centred approaches can be seen in teaching and learning methods such as task-based teaching and learning (TBTL) and problem-based learning (PBL). The student-centred approach has been informed by constructivist learning theory, which emphasises the students' active participation in constructing meaning from new information and prior experience.

Constructivist learning theory has had a powerful impact on education and on theories of language learning. It is built upon the later work of Jean Piaget and on the work of John Dewey and Lev Vygotsky. The constructivist approach is based on the assumption that meaning is imposed on the world by us, rather than existing in the world independently of us (Duffy & Jonassen, 1992). Instead of viewing learning as a passive process of transmission, learning is seen as something that results from the learners' internal construction of meaning (Williams & Burden, 1997). In this scenario, knowledge is constructed from experience by the learner or community of learners. Constructivists suggest that learners must be actively involved in their own learning process because only they can select and interpret information from the environment. Thus, constructivism posits that understanding comes from interactions with others and the environment, and that cognitive conflict stimulates learning.

The student-centred approach is generally regarded as a more adapted and motivating approach for teaching and learning. In the aforementioned *Ten Commandments* (of motivational strategies) proposed by Dörnyei and Csizér (1998), it is suggested that the teacher develop a good relationship with the students to support learner motivation. Essentially, "a good rapport between the teacher and the students is a basic requirement in any modern, student-centred approach to education" (p. 216). Many scholars have provided evidence for the superiority of the student-centred approach by comparing it to the teacher-centred approach (Lord, 1997; Yuen & Hau, 2006). However, despite the efforts made to promote student-centred learning (such as communicative language teaching), the prevalent teaching and learning style in China remains teacher-centred and grammar-focused due to the Chinese culture of learning (Yu, 2001; Hu, 2002). Similarly, the field of Chinese language and culture teaching and learning has seen considerable growth worldwide, but also tends to remain conservative (teacher-centred and grammar-oriented), especially in degree seeking programmes (Ning, 2001; Zhao, 2010). It is valuable to get more insights into how a student-centred approach can benefit Chinese language and culture teaching and learning in different contexts.

In this study, the exploration of alternative methods was stimulated by the failure of the use of the traditional teacher-centred methods in teaching Chinese in a Danish context, which was related to the mismatch between the methods used in teaching Chinese and the common methods used in a Danish context. It is argued that there is a need to identify teaching approaches which are grounded in local needs and values in order for effective learning to occur (Shehadeh & Coombe, 2012). To respect the Danish culture of learning (which is more open to a student-centred approach) and support learner motivation, student-centred methods (i.e., TBTL and PBL) have been the focus in the process of exploring alternative methods for the teaching and learning of Chinese language and culture in this study. TBTL and PBL were selected based on both the theories and our own teaching practice. At the beginning stage of teaching Chinese language and culture in Denmark, my colleagues and I tried many different kinds of methods. The TBTL method was observed to be more motivating and meaningful than others. Also, PBL is employed at an institutional level at Aalborg University (AAU), where this study was conducted. It has been included in our curriculum reform in order to adapt the university culture of learning. In the following sections, relevant theories about TBTL and PBL will be discussed.

3.3.2. TBTL AS A STUDENT-CENTRED METHOD

Task-based teaching and learning is a student-centred method derived from communicative language teaching, where language is learned through use (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). It is often compared to the traditional PPP approach (presentation, practice, production), which focuses on the explanation of language structures and accuracy. The assumptions behind the PPP approach are: language is a system with wordings governed by a grammar and a lexicon; thus, language learning is a process of mastering the target language following a succession of steps, and students will learn what is taught in the order of instruction. However, there is no evidence that teaching will lead to learning or determine the manner of language development (Skehan, 1996; Shehadeh, 2005). In contrast, the current view points out that it is more productive to see language as a meaning system, and language learning as a developmental, organic process resulting from the learner's internal construction of meaning (Williams & Burden, 1997; Shehadeh, 2005). In a TBTL learning environment, learners are immersed "not merely in comprehensible input but in tasks that require them to negotiate meaning and engage in naturalistic and meaningful communication" (Richards and Rodgers, 2014, p.175-176), and fluency is prioritised over accuracy. Thus, the basic assumptions of TBTL emphasise communication and meaning, process (rather than product) as a focus, communicative and purposeful interaction, learner motivation as an aim, a real-life setting and so on (Du, 2012).

Concerning the suggestion of meaning-focused TBTL, some researchers argue that teachers should include some degree of *focus-on form*, especially in the classroom,

since some linguistic features may not ultimately develop to expected levels when the learning is entirely experiential and meaning-focused (Doughty & Williams, 1998). According to Willis and Willis (2007), the approach of *focus-on form* does not ignore meaning and communication. Learners will be provided with opportunities to use grammar in meaningful situations once it has been taught. In this study, the majority of learners are beginners who did not have any prior knowledge of Chinese language and culture. Therefore, the form needed to be clearly introduced before the learners could use it in meaningful situations.

TBTL researchers have been focusing on the teaching and learning of English as second language in controlled, laboratory settings. Therefore, there has been a trend toward calling for the expansion of the research agenda to include the teaching of learning of different FLs in authentic classroom or educational contexts (Van den Branden, 2006; Shehadeh & Coornbe, 2012). This was my goal with this study. In the teaching and learning of CFL, TBTL has not become a commonly employed method. In most of the countries in Asia, teacher-centred and grammar-focused methods are still dominant in the classroom (my practice in China is an example). In the United States, there are two opposite views toward TBTL: some embrace it (Ning, 2001), while others maintain a conservative attitude and insist that structure or form should be the primary focus (Zhou, 2004). In Europe, Chinese teaching (in degree seeking programmes) generally uses traditional methods, which are more conservative (Zhao, 2010). However, the traditional methods normally require highly motivated students who study Chinese as their major subject, such as most of the students I met in China. In the context of this study, the students learn Chinese language and culture as part of a supplemental curriculum. They normally do not have clear goals or a high level of motivation in the learning process. Therefore, it becomes important to support their learning motivation by exploring more student-centred methods that take context into account, such as TBTL. In the following sections, my understanding of a task and task design will be presented.

3.3.2.1 What is a task?

Tasks are the core units of TBTL. To distinguish them from classroom activities, researchers have defined *a task* in various ways based on different perspectives and scopes (for an overview, see Ellis, 2003; Van den Branden, 2006). For example, a comprehensive definition has been made by Ellis (2003):

> "A task is a workplan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources, although the design of the task may predispose them to choose particular forms. A task is intended to result in language use that bears a resemblance, direct

or indirect, to the way language is used in the real world. Like other language activities, a task can engage productive or receptive, and oral or written skills, and also various cognitive processes. " (p.16)

Reviewing criticisms to TBTL stemming from a fundamental misunderstanding of this definition, Ellis (2009) emphasises that there are multiple ways of doing TBTL, and proposes four criteria of *a task*:

1. "The primary focus should be on *meaning* (meaning that learners should be mainly concerned with processing the sematic and pragmatic meaning of utterances).
2. There should be some kind of *gap* (i.e., a need to convey information, to express an opinion or to infer meaning).
3. Learners should largely have to rely on their own resources (linguistic and non-linguistic) in order to complete the activity.
4. There is a clearly defined outcome other than the use of language (i.e., the language serves as the means for achieving the outcome, not as an end in its own right)." (p. 223)

Teaching and learning is a highly context-dependent activity. These four criteria have offered a more flexible and open way to understand a task, and have also been used as guidance when selecting tasks for the teaching and learning in this study.

3.3.2.2 Designing a task-based curriculum

When designing a task-based curriculum, many factors should be considered, such as type, variable and components. There are various ways to identify task types. Pica, Kanagy and Falodun (1993) list different tasks as Jigsaw task, information-gap task, problem-solving task, decision-making task and opinion exchange task. Willis and Willis (2007) propose six types of tasks according to cognitive processes: listing, ordering and sorting, comparing, problem solving, sharing personal experiences and doing creative tasks. Two broader categories are proposed by Ellis (2003, 2009): focused task and unfocused task. Focused tasks are those designed to provide opportunities for communicating using some specific linguistic features (typically a grammar structure). Unfocused tasks are those designed to provide students with opportunities for using language generally and communicatively. There are even more types identified by others (Nunan, 2004; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Researchers also investigate task variables, such as learners' participatory organisation (i.e., teacher-led, group-work, or pair-work format), task structure, and task complexity (Pica & Doughty, 1985; Long, 1989; Poupore, 2006; Duran & Ramaut, 2006). Findings of research on tasks have suggested that unfocused tasks are best used at the beginning of a language course (Ellis, 2003); tasks with open structures lead to higher level of intrinsic interest in the learner by providing them with more opportunities to make their own decisions

(Julkunen, 2001; Poupore, 2006); and group work has a motivational function in terms of energising the group to complete the task while also producing more negotiation and interaction (Long, 1989; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). All of these findings contributed to this study during the selection of tasks for the Chinese language and culture teaching and learning.

After making a choice on task type or variable, it is important to consider what components make up a task. Shavelson and Stern (1981) suggest that task designers should consider task components such as content, materials, activities, goals, students and social community. Students' abilities, needs, and interests are important in this model. Based on literature, Nunan (2004) proposes a new group of task elements that highlights task goals, but neglects *students*. In our study, we find it important to add the context, cultural elements (language and culture are inseparable, and it is assumed integrating cultural elements can make language learning more interesting and motivating) and the learner component (learners' interest and motivation) into Nunan's task components to guide task design; that is, the task components in this study include the context, culture elements, learners, task goals, input data, learner procedures, teacher and learner roles, and the settings.

There are more factors that should be considered when designing tasks, such as the difficulty level and the time provided for completing a task, especially where beginner learners are concerned. However, the three factors discussed above can together play a key role in the process of selecting/designing motivating tasks.

3.3.3. PBL AS A STUDENT-CENTRED APPROACH

The abbreviation PBL can refer to problem-based learning, project-based learning, or project-organised problem-based learning (for the AAU PBL model, see Chapter 2). PBL is an instructional approach originating from medical education in the 1960s. It was popularised by Barrows and Tamblyn (1980) in their research on the reasoning abilities of medical students at McMaster Medical School in Canada. The drives of the first applications of PBL in medical education were related to:

> "1) failure of conventional teaching methods in improving students' clinical reasoning and problem-solving ability required in medical practice, 2) students' dissatisfaction, where they were disenchanted and bored from the saturation of the vast amounts of information that have little relevance to medical practice, 3) need for involving medical practice into curriculum through educational innovation." (Du, 2012)

Currently, PBL has become the main approach in many medical schools, and has been developed into many other areas of education in professional schools, such as architecture, nursing, business administration, law, engineering, teacher education, social work and language education (Barrows, 1996). In language education, PBL

(project-based learning) has been employed since the 1980s. However, only a few empirical research studies have addressed second and FL education (Beckett, 2006), and little attention has been paid to Chinese language and culture teaching and learning.

To some extent, PBL symbolises an integrative approach to learning, since it draws on a number of learning theories, including constructivist, experiential, transformational and sociocultural learning theories (Savin-Baden & Major, 2004; Du, 2012). Similar to TBTL, PBL acknowledges the importance of experience, interaction, learner motivation, real-life setting and so on (Du, 2012). It also emphasises collaborative learning and learner autonomy. Many scholars have reported the benefits of PBL. One of the most commonly reported is the intensity of students' motivation, involvement, engagement, participation and enjoyment (Stoller, 2006). It is assumed that PBL can also be used as a motivating approach in the teaching and learning of Chinese language and culture in a Danish context. To explore a PBL design, I found it important to get an overall understanding of PBL.

3.3.3.1 Understanding PBL

PBL does not refer to one specific educational method. It can differ depending on the design of the educational method employed and the skills of the teacher at different levels (Barrows, 1986). There can, therefore, be different understandings of PBL. Instead of looking for a universal definition, researchers have tried to outline characteristics of PBL. For example, Barrows (1996) provides a basic definition of PBL by listing six core characteristics: 1) learning needs to be student-centred; 2) learning occurs in small student groups under the guidance of a tutor/teacher; 3) teachers are facilitators or guides; 4) problems form the organising focus and stimulus of learning; 5) problems are a vehicle for the development of problem-solving skills; and 6) new information is acquired through self-directed learning. According to Du (2012), three layers can be used to understand PBL: 1) PBL is a system combining (constructivist and sociocultural) learning theories and educational philosophy, which acknowledge the importance of learning through experience, meaning construction and interaction with others; 2) PBL reflects a student-centred learning approach in which students play a main role in information processing and meaning generation; and 3) PBL is a learning method that is not only focused on learning outcomes but also learning processes. Reviewing the literature and relating to the practice, this study stresses several commonly discussed characteristics of PBL, such as student-centeredness, teacher as facilitator, experience in real-life setting, group work, problem as a focus and self-directed learning.

With these basic characteristics, the goals of a PBL model are to help students to construct an extensive and flexible knowledge base, to become effective collaborators, to become intrinsically motivated to learn, and to develop effective

problem-solving skills for self-directed, lifelong learning (Hmelo-Silver, 2004). In the learning process, students are responsible for their own learning, while the teacher assumes the role of facilitator to guide them by pushing them to think deeply and modelling the kinds of questions they need to ask themselves (Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1989). In this study, the primary aims of implementing PBL are to support learner motivation in meaningful learning.

3.3.3.2 Designing a PBL-inspired method

In practice, PBL designs can differ by individual teaching staff, subject, discipline, institution and societal-educational culture, and the scale of implementation ranges from "a subject level to an integrated part of the curriculum, and even to a complete curriculum system" (Du, 2012, p. 43). As introduced in Chapter 2, PBL has been used at an institutional level for some time at AAU, where this study was conducted. It is employed in all disciplines at AAU, including language and culture studies classes such as Chinese Area Studies. In the Chinese culture course of Chinese Area Studies, the students have to take on a project (see Chapter 2 AAU PBL model) in addition to attending regular lecture-based lessons focusing on cultural theories and analysis. The lecture-based method does not adhere to the principle/characteristics of PBL and has been observed to be inappropriate and demotivating for Chinese culture learning. My colleagues and I found it also important to implement PBL (or a PBL-inspired method) in the regular lessons, which provided the possibility of making the Chinese culture course into a more complete PBL curriculum. This was also our first step in exploring the implementation of PBL in Chinese teaching and learning (starting from culture teaching and learning, see Paper 2).

To give an overall understanding of a PBL-inspired method, several principles are outlined for this study. They have all drawn inspiration from the task-based PBL concept (Du, 2012). In brief (details are elaborated in the specific study in Paper 2), a PBL-inspired method: 1) emphasises learner motivation as an essence of learning; 2) stresses learning through experience; 3) requires learners' active participation in the learning process; 4) underlines the importance of collaborative learning; 5) highlights the association with the real world; and 6) emphasises the important role of the social learning context on learning. These principles serve as a guideline in designing educational practices while remaining open to revision based on empirical experiences.

As mentioned earlier, several PBL characteristics are highlighted in this study, inspired by the literature: student-centeredness, teacher as facilitator, experience in real-life settings, group work, problem as a focus and self-directed learning. These characteristics can also been used to guide the educational practices. It is believed that a PBL-inspired method can provide a supportive learning environment for meaningful learning (e.g., Chinese culture learning) in practice, since it can: 1)

create a student-centred learning environment in which a learner's interests and motivation are given sufficient attention; 2) promote learner autonomy by making students take on the main role in the process of understanding and managing a problem under the guidance of the teacher; 3) allow students to relate knowledge to real life and observe the dynamic nature of knowledge and the world; 4) involve the students in team-based activities with active participation, and provide them the opportunities to reflect on their experiences through communicating and collaborating with others; 5) challenge the student to identify and face a problem in practice, enabling them to realise what they need to learn from the basic sciences, while also providing relevance and motivation; and 6) encourage the students to learn from the real world and their accumulated expertise by conducting their own study, just as real practitioners do. During this self-directed learning, the students can work together, discussing, comparing, reviewing and debating what they have learned (Barrows, 1996).

It is suggested that in a PBL-inspired teaching design, the design of the teaching content should also be more student-centred (more relevant the students) and connected to real life (due to the importance of experience). For example, it is important to introduce the dynamic aspect of Chinese culture and relate cultural theories to real life.

3.4. SUMMARY

Starting from a theoretical background of believing that the integration of language and culture can provide motivation for beginner-level learners, this chapter discusses both learner motivation as an important factor for learning, and teaching and learning method as an influential factor in learner motivation. The understanding of motivation in this study gradually developed from an original static view of motivation (motivation as a static mental status) to a dynamic view of motivation (motivation may change due to certain forces encountered throughout the learning process), and came to include more and more motivational variables (e.g., orientation, self-efficacy) based on the context and the literature. It is believed that the knowledge about learner motivation can help to improve classroom pedagogy and support learners' knowledge of Chinese language and culture, and in return, classroom pedagogy (i.e., teaching and learning method) can influence learner motivation in the learning process. In the discussion about teaching and learning method, the student-centred approach, compared with the teacher-centred approach, is regarded as a more adapted and motivating approach for teaching and learning due to its focus on experience and meaning construction. To respect the Danish culture of learning (which appreciates a student-centred approach) and support learner motivation, student-centred methods (i.e., TBTL and PBL) have been the focus in the process of exploring alternative methods for the teaching and learning of Chinese language and culture in this study. These theories and

hypotheses have guided the research methodology and process, and have provided a foundation for the discussions in this study.

CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS

This chapter reports the methodology and process of this research by discussing the characteristics of the study, presenting the explorative research process, justifying the employment of multiple approaches and showing the procedures of data collection and data analysis. Methodological reflections are also included in this chapter to show how strategies were developed when confronting incongruities between assumptions in theories of methodology and the research context in the study.

4.1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS STUDY

This study has three main characteristics related to the research context, purpose and methodology, which can provide a general picture of how it was conducted.

Firstly, this study can be categorised as classroom research concerning the research context. According to Nunan (1992), classroom research is more a research context than a particular method. Classroom research refers to studies that investigate learners inside actual classrooms rather than outside the classroom in a laboratory setting. Spada and Lightbown (2009) have highlighted one advantage of doing classroom research, which is that "classroom studies are more likely to lead to a better understanding about the kind of interaction that occurs in classrooms where the teacher is the only proficient speaker and interacts with a large number of learners" (p. 159). The studies presented in the four papers were all related to my own Chinese teaching in actual classrooms, so they gave us a comprehensive understanding of what was happening in the setting.

Secondly, this study is essentially an exploratory study relating to the research purposes. In terms of the major purposes of research (to explore, to explain or to describe a phenomenon), studies are generally categorised into three possible forms: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Robson, 2002). Exploratory studies seek to explore what is happening and to search for new insights into phenomena. Descriptive studies, meanwhile, seek to provide a picture of a phenomenon (a situation, person or event) as it naturally occurs. Punch (2005) claims that descriptive studies are more appropriate when a research area is relatively new or unexplored, while a more exploratory approach is advisable in more highly developed research areas that have large amounts of descriptive information. Explanatory studies set out to explain and account for descriptive information, and normally seek to ask *why* and *how* questions. This study is more exploratory because its aims are to explore whether student-centred methods can be

used to foster learner motivation in an intercultural (or Danish) context, as well as (if the student-centred methods are effective and motivating) how the students are motivated in the teaching and learning process.

Finally, this study has been inspired by and has elements of action research (AR). Action research refers to "a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out" (Carr & Kemmis, 2004, p. 162). The concept of AR has developed rapidly in the field of language teaching and learning since the end of the 1980s, along with the rise of communicative and student-centred language teaching, and has been influenced by the *teacher as researcher* movement in the mainstream education (Burns, 2011). Action research can involve one teacher or a group of teachers, and may be used in various areas, such as teaching methods, learning strategies, learner attitudes and values, or professional development of teachers (Holly & Whitehead, 1986). According to Ellis (2012), the model for conducting AR for teachers emphasises several criteria: it is context-specific, practical, systematic, reflective and cyclical. This model "proposes a number of iterative phases:

1. Identifying an issue or problem relevant to a specific instructional context (the initial idea).
2. Obtaining information relevant to the problem/issue (fact finding).
3. Working out a possible solution to this problem and devising ways of trying this out (the action plan).
4. Trying out the solution in the specific instructional context (implementation).
5. Collecting data to investigate whether the solution is effective (monitoring).
6. If necessary, revising the action plan and proceeding through steps (4) and (5) again or alternatively identifying a new issue thrown up by the initial study." (p. 27)

The above phases of AR meets all the five criteria: context-specific (problems are identified by teachers in their own classrooms), practical (aims at improving teaching), systematic (provides an action plan with clearly outlined steps involving both teaching and the collection and analysis of data), reflective (requires teachers to examine problems in their teaching, identify possible solutions and evaluate their effectiveness) and cyclical (recognises the importance of continuous research in finding solutions and the possibility that new problems may arise in the process).

This study has elements of AR: 1) it was also context-specific, and problems were identified in my/our own classrooms, though it was not situated in a single classroom of a specific school, but instead focused on the Danish context in a

broader sense; 2) it also had practical aims that were not intended only to improve my/our teaching, but also to gain a theoretical understanding of the larger context and to explore teaching and learning methods that could be used to foster learner motivation in the context; and 3) it was systematic, reflective and cyclical, because once a problem was identified, solutions were tried out and new challenges were found.

The context-specific element of AR has received critiques. From a positivist perspective, one of the main criticisms of AR (and of qualitative research more generally) is the fact that it is small-scale and therefore not generalisable (has low external validity) (Burns, 2005). However, as Bailey (1998) argues, action research should not be judged by the traditional criteria of random selection, generalisability and replicability since AR's goals are to establish local understandings. At contrast to external validity, recoverability (Checkland & Holwell, 1998) is essential in AR. That is, the research story must be plausible, and the process by which the research was conducted recoverable by an external audience in relation to the methodology and the procedures of data collection and analysis (Burns, 2005). Much like AR, this study also focuses on a specific context: Chinese teaching and learning in Northern Denmark. However, due to the rapid development of Chinese teaching and learning, as well as the worldwide establishment of Confucius Institutes, a number of Chinese teachers with backgrounds/experiences similar to my own are beginning to teach Chinese language and culture in some specific contexts. They may also encounter challenges similar to those I identify in this study, especially in countries with teaching and learning cultures similar to that of Denmark. These have made this study more recoverable.

4.2. RESEARCH PROCESS OF THIS STUDY

According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), research topics may be derived from the following sources: 1) the observation of the real world emerging from the interplay of the researchers' direct experience with emerging theory, the interplay of political commitment with practice, and growing scholarly interests; 2) the intersection of researchers' personal, professional and political interests; and 3) a review and critique of the empirical research and the traditions of theory. In this study, the research process generated research topics that drew on a combination of the first two sources.

Due to the exploratory nature of the research process, this study was not conducted in a linear way. It is argued that research practices are often not rigid. Research questions, topics, interests, issues or concerns are often iteratively developed/ frequently change through research process as the researcher gains more knowledge and insight into a given area (Gibson, 2010). Furthermore, the analysis of data may lead researchers to alter their questions slightly, or change their focuses on something different from their original interests. Similarly, data collection occurs in

tandem with analysis, as researchers may ask new questions about their research setting or to think about existing concerns in new ways during the process of interrogating data, after which they may collect new data in order to answer those questions. All of these non-linear processes were witnessed in this study. A detailed description of the research process will be provided below.

4.2.1. THE EXPLORATIVE RESEARCH PROCESS

I started this PhD project in February 2012, one year after I started working in Denmark as a Chinese language and culture teacher at the Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning (CI) at Aalborg University (AAU). As introduced in the opening section of this study, I had received my education in China, and had had two years of teaching experience in teaching Chinese as a second language there, where I met many foreign students who studied Chinese language and culture as their major, and attended regular Chinese courses every day. The traditional teacher-centred teaching methods (i.e., the situational language teaching method and lecture-based method) were used to teach them Chinese language and culture, as these methods had been proven effective. When I came to Denmark, the context changed, and I found that the situation was different. The courses I taught here were mainly supplemental curricula (mostly after-school elective courses), and most of the students were not taking Chinese language and culture as a major. Influenced by my past experiences (Goodman, 1988; Calderhead & Robson, 1991), I naturally used the teaching methods I had seen in China in this new context, especially at the beginning stage. As a result, the Danish students were not as motivated as those I met in China, and at times they even seemed unmotivated, especially in the lecture-based teaching units. The mismatch between the traditional methods of teaching Chinese and the student-centred teaching and learning methods used in Denmark were identified as an important issue in this study. The literature has suggested that learner motivation plays an important role in learning, and that a teaching method can influence learner motivation in a classroom setting (Gardner, 2010; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Highlighting the context issue, it is suggested that teachers develop appropriate teaching pedagogies, curricula and assessments for the range of specific contexts in which teaching occurs (Lu & Zhao, 2011), thereby supporting student learning and enhancing learner motivation.

4.2.1.1 The first stage of the study

This contextual and background knowledge led to my study's first question: *How can one motivate Danish beginner learners to learn the Chinese language and about Chinese culture by employing alternative teaching methods (i.e., student-centred methods such as TBTL and PBL)?*, which was written in the first version of my study plan in late 2011. At the same time, with the aim of exploring alternative methods of stimulating Chinese language teaching and learning, as well as developing teachers' pedagogical competence, the CI research team was working

on a book project titled *Exploring Task-Based PBL in Chinese Teaching and Learning*, which had also been triggered by the aforementioned issues. My first study, presented in Paper 1, was included as one of the cases in this project, as it focused on a Chinese language and culture course (with culture as a focus) at a local lower secondary school. In the project, the senior researchers Xiang Yun Du and Mads Jacob Kirkebæk invited CI teachers (including me) to conduct classroom research and perform an evaluation study in their classrooms, focusing on the experience of using tasks in developing Chinese language and culture teaching and learning at local schools. The emphasis on the use of tasks was the result of teachers having tried using tasks in teaching and learning, and finding the method comparatively effective and motivating. Participant observation and a qualitative questionnaire for course evaluation were used to generate data for the selected studies in the book. My observation focused on how the course was delivered, and how the students reacted to different teaching methods. Field notes were used to record the observation data. The questionnaire was used to collect data relating to the students' motivation, expectations, learning experience and application of knowledge in the future.

My research process was closely connected to my teaching practice, which was determined by the work of CI AAU in relation to Chinese language and culture courses/programmes in the Northern Denmark region. After teaching the course presented in Paper 1 (spring 2012), I was assigned to plan and teach a Chinese culture course in the elective Chinese Area Studies programme at AAU, together with another four CI staff. Thus, I needed to change my research focus from the school level to the university level, and so I chose to conduct my second study, presented (see Paper 2) in the Chinese culture course. Inspired by the PBL method used at AAU, the CI team designed a PBL-inspired method to replace the lecture-based method previously used in the course, aimed at encouraging student-centeredness via interaction and participation in activities. I was interested in finding out how and to what effect the method could be used in the course. I only taught two of the ten teaching units, but I observed the whole course. I also interviewed four of the eight students and two teachers after finishing the course. Furthermore, a questionnaire for evaluating the classroom activates was completed by five students in the last teaching unit. The office of the study programme distributed an official course evaluation form to the students after the course and then sent the teaching team (me as one of the members) a general evaluation report. In the process of observation, I asked for the students' and teachers' permission to take pictures and notes while observing. I also kept field notes after each teaching unit, and had informal talks with the students and the teachers when I did not understand what they were discussing, doing or thinking. My aims in the participant observation were to gain a deep understanding of how the method was used in the course and how the students performed in the teaching and learning process, especially in the designed activities. The aims and focuses of the interviews with the students were to learn their motivation for learning Chinese, their opinion of the

PBL-inspired method, their learning experiences, the challenges they met in the course and their suggestions for future course development. The aims and focuses of the interviews with teachers were to understand their perception of culture teaching and learning, opinion on the methods, thoughts on the motivation and performance of the students, and reflections on the challenges they encountered.

In both participant observation and interviews, I found it easy to assess the effect of the teaching method, but difficult to assess students' motivation. I tried to get inspiration from the literature on motivation, but found that most of it had used quantitative methods to measure different motivational variables, which I thought too complex in this small-scale study with limited students. Also, I am not from a psychology background, and was thus not ready to delve immediately into motivation theories and use them in my own study. Ultimately, I chose to relate the collected data to more specific questions for the study, focusing instead on the participants' perspectives on cultural learning, the PBL-inspired method and the challenges thereof. It was expected that learner motivation would become an important effect/result of the course design.

After writing the first two papers, I started to rethink my initial question. Then, I realised that if a question started with "how can one motivate Danish beginner learners to learn", the answers should be presented with many practical suggestions encompassing a range of perspectives rather than being limited to a teaching method. This was not what I really wanted to do, as I realised it might be difficult to reach that kind of answer in a PhD study. What I had done was explore whether alternative methods (i.e., TBTL/a PBL-inspired method) could be effective and motivating for the teaching and learning of Chinese in a Danish context. Therefore, the initial research question was revised to be an exploratory question: *Can a student-centred approach (i.e., TBTL or a PBL-inspired method) be used to motivate students to learn Chinese language and culture in an intercultural (or Danish) context?* From the two studies presented in Papers 1 and 2, I gained the impression that a TBTL/PBL-inspired method could be used as an alternative to motivate the students to learn Chinese language and culture in a Danish context. Therefore, I decided to focus on the explored methods (or one of the explored methods) in the upcoming courses and investigate how students are motivated, which became the Research Question 2 for my study.

4.2.1.2 The second stage of the study

From autumn 2012, I was assigned to teach an institution-wide Chinese language and culture elective course (language as a focus) at AAU. There were many students registered for the course in both autumn 2012 and spring 2013 (for beginner level: 143 students in five classes in 2012, and 119 students in four classes in 2013). Seven (out of nine) beginner level classes, three in 2012 and all four in 2013, were taught by me and mentioned in my study (see Paper 3). I also started to

conduct additional classroom research focusing on this course, with my supervisor overseeing the process. Based on the previous experience and research (with positive results found using tasks), we decided to design a course using TBTL, and assumed learner motivation could be enhanced in the interactive tasks and group work inherent in the TBTL environment.

The large number of participants inspired me to use a quantitative post-course survey to collect their feedback on the course design and selected tasks. In order to generate a wider range of responses (Watts & Ebbutt, 1987), group interviews, instead of individual interviews, were used to generate qualitative data at the end of the course. As the teacher, I also got to observe what happened in the classroom and have informal talks with the students. Field notes were used to record observational data. Assuming that the students would feel motivated in the TBTL environment, I became interested in knowing how they were motivated in the teaching and learning process, especially to what degree the tasks could make the students feel motivated to learn Chinese. Thus, I included the question, *To what degree did the following tasks/activities provided during the course make you feel motivated to learn Chinese?* in the post-course survey, along with a list of used tasks in the course. The students were also invited to give feedback on each task in the group interviews. Their responses were used to explain what characteristics they associated with the tasks they considered motivating. As I had not been trained to handle the quantitative data from the surveys, Xiaoju Duan, a post-doctorate with a quantitative research background, was invited to join our research and assist with the quantitative data processing using SPSS. To gain more insight into the processing of quantitative data, I learned some basic and relevant knowledge of statistics and the use of SPSS through Xiaoju Duan's supervision, and through attending a PhD course on this subject. Afterwards, I did my own quantitative analysis in the development and revision of Paper 3. This experience made it possible for me to include a quantitative perspective in my study.

As the teacher, I had observed that most of the students were highly motivated in the course using TBTL, both in autumn 2012 and spring 2013. Additionally, Paper 3 provided evidence (mainly qualitatively) that the students' motivation was enhanced. However, when I introduced my study in PhD courses or seminars, frequently asked questions were: "How can you be sure whether students are motivated in the course?", and "Do you have evidence to show the change (increase) of the learner motivation in the course?" These questions promoted me to do another study (see Paper 4) on the same course in autumn 2013 and spring 2014. The aims of the study were to provide evidence of the motivational changes and to find out in what aspects and to what extent learner orientation/motivation changed, and what factors might have been related to the changes in the given context.

There were some research context limitations when measuring learner motivation in this study. First, the course only consisted of eight teaching units (one teaching unit

each week), and the first two were trials, meaning that the number of students might change after their completion. Second, the students had diverse educational backgrounds and lacked prior experience learning Chinese, which might have made it difficult for them to answer a pre-course survey focusing on their Chinese learning motivation. However, I observed that the students' goals/orientations (reasons for learning Chinese) played an important role in their learning processes and for their continued study. Therefore, I focused on orientation (an important motivational variable), and designed a pre-course survey and a post-course survey to measure it and trace its changes before and after the course. To find out how and why the students' orientations changed, I conducted group interviews after analysing the survey data. As the teacher, I also tried to observe the classroom and the motivational changes. However, it proved difficult to relate the observation data to the study, so the participant observation method was ultimately not included.

In the whole process of the explorative study, some contextual issues, such as the courses (at different levels) I needed to teach, influenced the choices of cases and research topics, and the reframing of the research questions. It was not easy to design research and then proceeded as planned. My understandings of the context and problems developed gradually throughout my teaching and learning experience and self-reflection, proving the argument that research practices are often not rigid, but dynamic and organic (Gibson, 2010).

4.2.2. EMPLOYMENT OF MULTIPLE APPROACHES

It has been suggested that there is no *best* approach for research, since each type has its advantages and disadvantages. There are three commonly discussed research approaches in the literature: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods (Creswell, 2014). The selection of a research approach is often determined by the nature of a particular study, the identified research questions and researchers' own personal training and experiences (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Creswell, 2014). The decision should be informed by the philosophical assumptions the researcher brings to the study, procedures of inquiry, and specific research methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation. The employment of diverse approaches (quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods) has helped to produce meaningful and valid results, and thus achieve a comprehensive understanding of learner motivation and language teaching (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Shehadeh & Coombe, 2012). In this study, a qualitative approach and a mixed methods approach were chosen and employed in the process of reframing research focuses and questions. The following sections will report the process of choosing and employing multiple research methods in the research practice.

4.2.2.1 Qualitative approach for Research Question 1

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. It is naturalistic, pragmatic, interpretive, emergent, multifaceted, and grounded in the lived experiences of people (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). It can also provide insider meaning by exploring the participants' views of the situation being studied, and normally has a small sample size (Dörnyei, 2007). It has become an increasingly important and useful mode of inquiry for the social science and applied fields, especially in the field of education (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Dörnyei, 2007).

At the first stage of my study (see Paper 1 and 2), qualitative research was used due to following considerations:

First, it is suggested that the matching between the research questions and research methods be as close as possible. A good way to achieve fit is to ensure that the methods follow the questions; that is, we first think about what we are trying to find out, and then consider how we are going to do it (Punch, 2009). As mentioned, this study initially focused on the experience of using tasks and a PBL-inspired method in developing Chinese language and culture teaching and learning, with the ultimate aim of enhancing learner motivation, which led to an explorative question: can a student-centred approach (i.e., TBTL or a PBL-inspired method) be used to motivate students to learn Chinese language and culture in an intercultural (or Danish) context? The focus on the learner's perspective in the question fits with the characteristics of qualitative research in that it explores the participants' views of the studied situations and produces insider meaning. This form of inquiry has supported a way of looking at this study that characterises an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of considering the complexity of a situation.

Second, as a newcomer to the Danish context, I needed to gain a deep understanding of both the teaching philosophy of the Danish education system and the unfamiliar teaching and learning methods that might be more appropriate to use in the context. I felt that the choice of a qualitative approach could help me to quickly adapt to the new culture through participation in the natural settings where data was generated and where I could reflect on my role and practice in a systematic way. Thus, the empirical data was mainly collected by participant observation and semi-structured interviews.

Third, I was an arts student (language and literature) when studying as an undergraduate myself; I did not receive any training in quantitative research. Given that a qualitative approach was more familiar, it was the natural choice.

Fourth and last, the small sample size of participants made qualitative research ideal. There was only a small number of students in the two Chinese courses focused upon in the beginning stage of the study (one had 21 students, the other had 8). It is suggested that a sample size of 30 is the minimum number of cases if researchers plan to use some form of statistical analysis in their data (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Apparently, the small sample size in the two cases played a part in determining what methods I could use, making qualitative methods the best option.

4.2.2.2 Mixed methods approach for Research Question 2

For many years, quantitative and qualitative forms of research have been known as two basic alternatives when conducting a study. Different from naturalistic qualitative research, quantitative research tends to test objective theories by examining the relationships between variables, which can be measured and then analysed using statistical procedures (Creswell, 2014). The distinction between the two approaches is often discussed, and is not only related to using words or numbers, using closed-ended or open-ended questions or being deductive or inductive; it is also related to the basic philosophical assumptions the researchers bring to the study (e.g., positivist/post-positivist worldview or constructivist worldview), the potential types of research strategies (e.g., experiments or case studies) and the specific methods employed in conducting these strategies (collecting data on instruments or through observing a setting) (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009; Creswell, 2014).

It is suggested that the two approaches should not be viewed as rigid, distinct categories or dichotomies, since they can represent different ends on an exploratory-confirmatory continuum (Creswell, 2014; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Mixed methods research resides in the middle of this continuum because it incorporates elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The core assumption of this form of inquiry is that the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach does alone. Mixed methods research has been regarded as a "third methodological movement, with some researchers seeing quantitative research as the first movement and qualitative as the second" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 76).

In the second stage of this study (see Paper 3 and 4), a mixed methods approach became a relevant option for following reasons:

First, it had a strong connection to the research problems and questions. From the first stage of the study, I had the assumption that task-based teaching and learning (TBTL) could be used as a motivating and effective method to teach Chinese language and culture in a Danish context. Based on this assumption, I focused on

how students were motivated to learn Chinese language and culture via TBTL in a student-centred learning environment. In order to answer this question, I needed to test the assumption by finding out if TBTL really made the students feel motivated or made learner motivation/orientation increase, and this had to be done before I explored the students' experience of being motivated in the learning environment. It is suggested that research problems suited for mixed methods are those in which one data source may be insufficient, results need to be explained, exploratory findings need to be generalised, a second method is needed to enhance a primary method, a theoretical stance needs to be employed or an overall research objective can be best addressed with multiple phases or projects (Creswell & Clark, 2011). The cases in Papers 3 and 4 encountered these problems when I was seeking answers to the general research question, so a mixed methods research became relevant and important. The following sub-questions (see Paper 3 and 4) have reflected these considerations and the logic behind them:

1) Sub-question 2.1: To what degree can tasks make students feel motivated to learn Chinese language and culture, and what characteristics do students associate with the motivating tasks?
2) Sub-question 2.2: How do students' motivational orientations change in a Chinese language and culture course using a TBTL method?

Second, the large sample size of participants (153 participants in Paper 3, 129 participants in Paper 4) inspired me to use surveys to collect statistical data, and then use that data to measure the motivating effect of selected learning tasks so I could compare the levels of learner orientation before and after the course. Qualitative data from participant observation and group interviews was considered insufficient to clearly show the effect of the teaching method on the level of learner orientation/motivation.

Third, I worked with a co-author with a quantitative research background. It is recommended that researchers should first gain experience with both quantitative research and qualitative research before undertaking a mixed methods study (Creswell & Clark, 2011). As mentioned above, I had not received any training in quantitative approaches before conducting this study, and therefore, only qualitative approaches were considered during the first stage. When a quantitative approach became necessary during the second stage of the study, my co-author Xiaoju Duan was invited to assist with the quantitative data analysis. With Xiaoju Duan's help and through attending a PhD course, I also learned to do relevant quantitative analysis myself. All of these factors made the use of a mixed methods approach possible in this study.

4.2.3. DATA COLLECTION

This section will introduce the multiple methods for data collection used when conducting qualitative or mixed methods research relating to different research questions during different stages of this study.

4.2.3.1 Data collection by qualitative methods for Research Question 1

As mentioned above, qualitative methods were employed to collect the data for answering Research Question 1 during the first stage of this study, in which two explorative classroom research projects were conducted. The data in the first research session (see Paper 1) was collected through participant observation and a qualitative questionnaire for course evaluation. The data in the second research session (see Paper 2) was collected through interviews, participant observation and evaluation forms.

   1)   **Data collected in the first research session (see Paper 1)**

Data in the first classroom research session was collected from October to December 2011, the time in which a Chinese language and culture course (see Chapter 2) was delivered, and also when I was applying for a position as a PhD student. In the course, there were ten teaching units (one teaching unit each week, two hours each teaching unit), which were taught and observed by me. My observation focused on how the course was delivered, how the students performed in the classroom activities, and how they reacted to different teaching methods used in the course. The data from participant observation was collected through field notes (allowing for documenting of speech and personal reflections) (Gray, 2014), informal talks with the students and school representatives and pictures of daily learning activities. In the process, I played two roles at once, acting as both teacher and researcher. It is argued that participant observation involves immersing oneself in a setting, and thus it was important for me to learn to remove myself from the immersion after each teaching unit in order to intellectualise what I have seen and heard, to put it into perspective and to write about it convincingly (Bernard, 2011). During the process of collecting data (quantitative or qualitative) in this study, I paid much attention to the communication with my students, trying to help them understand what I was doing and how they could help with the research (freely sharing what they felt).

At the end of the course, instead of doing interviews, I distributed a qualitative questionnaire for course evaluation (designed by CI team, see Appendix B) to 18 participants in order to gather data concerning the students' motivation, expectations, learning experiences and plans for the application of knowledge in the future. All of these methods were useful in collecting data on the students' lived experience in the classroom.

2)   Data collected in the second research session (see Paper 2)

Data in the second classroom research was collected mainly from the end of January to June in 2012. The interviews with two teaching staff (male) were conducted in September and October of 2012 respectively, due to their busy schedule. The interviews with four students (female) were conducted in May and June of 2012, roughly two months after the end of the Chinese culture course of the Chinese Area Studies programme (see Chapter 2), also due to the students' busy exam schedule. All interviewees were volunteers. The interviews were semi-structured and followed interview guidelines (see Appendix C). The interviews were recorded with the interviewees' permission, and each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes (one with a student reached 65 minutes).

The data from participant observation was collected through field notes, informal talks with the students and teachers, and pictures of daily learning activities. One danger of taking field notes is that it is easy to fail to note a situation due to the belief that it can be recalled at a later date (Gray, 2014). To avoid this danger, I noted all of the situations I observed, including the space, actors, activities, objects, acts, events, time, goals and feelings (Burgess, 1984), right after each teaching and learning activity. The informal talks with participants helped to answer my questions that arose in the process of observation, and the pictures I took helped me to recall the situations.

Two questionnaires were completed by students at the end of the course. One was designed by the teaching team to gather students' feedback on the designed activities, and the other was an official questionnaire for course evaluation distributed by the office of the study programme. The data from these qualitative questionnaires were expected to enrich and supplement data gathered by other methods.

4.2.3.2 Data collection by mixed methods for Research Question 2

Mixed methods were employed in data collection for Research Question 2 during the second stage of this study. The data for sub-question 2.1 (see Paper 3) was collected through a post-course survey, group interviews and participant observation in a convergent parallel mixed methods design. The data for sub-question 2.2 (see Paper 4) was collected through pre- and post-course surveys and group interviews in an explanatory sequential mixed methods design.

1)   Data collected for sub-question 2.1

The data for sub-question 2.1 was collected in autumn 2012 (September – November) and spring 2013 (February – April). As discussed above, the aims of Paper 3 were to explore to what degree the tasks could make the students feel

motivated to learn Chinese, and what characteristics they might associate with those motivating tasks. Therefore, six selected tasks were focused upon from all the methods. In the last teaching unit of the course in each year, post-course surveys were distributed to 153 participants from seven classes. The question, *To what degree did the following tasks/activities provided during the course make you feel motivated to learn Chinese?* was central in the surveys. Participants were asked to score each task on a five-point Likert-type scale. Space was provided for qualitative comments or suggestions relating to each task. As mentioned above, the study presented in Paper 3 followed a convergent parallel mixed-method design (see its prototype in Figure 4-1). As Figure 4-1 shows, quantitative data and qualitative data may be collected during the same phase of the research process. Therefore, data from 3 group interviews (17 participants in total, 9 male) in 2012 and 4 group interviews (19 participants in total, 9 male) in 2013 were conducted right after the last teaching unit in each year.
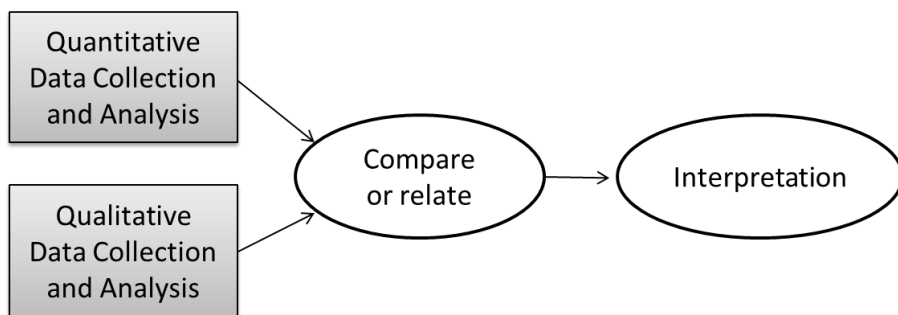
Figure 4-1 The prototype of a convergent parallel mixed-method design (Creswell & Clark, 2011)

Participation in the group interviews was voluntary, and the interviews were semi-structured (see interview guidelines in Paper 3). The paper focused exclusively on the data related to the specific tasks. Before conducting the interviews, the teacher had quickly read through the results of the surveys in order to add relevant questions to the interview protocol. Both audio and video recordings of the interviews were taken, with the permission of the interviewees, and some of my thoughts were noted during the interviews. Each interview was approximately 60 minutes long. Generally speaking, group interviews may have limitations; for example, the responses of individual participants may be influenced and potentially shaped by the presence and perspectives of other participants, which might reduce the validity or credibility of data (Hobson & Townsend, 2010). However, this format provided a number of advantages for this study. For example, this method saved time given the large number of students. Also, in a group interview, the participants may be stimulated into thinking more deeply about the discussed topics due to the *participant-to-participant* dynamic. It can also be argued that group

discussion may better reflect the processes of meaning-construction in everyday life, and may thus produce more legitimate claims to the validity or credibility of data.

The data from participant observation was collected through field notes and informal talks. Since these classes were much larger than previous ones, I seldom had the chance to take pictures in the classroom. The disadvantages of participant observation in this study are that the participant-observer may be too connected to the group to make objective records (Norton, 2009), and that it is challenging to observe a large group of people (Jorgensen, 1989). However, this method can still provide an *insider* view and prevent misinterpretation of the observed behaviour.

2) Data collected for sub-question 2.2

The data for sub-question 2.2 was collected in autumn 2013 (September - November) and spring 2014 (February - April). The aims of Paper 4 were to provide evidence of the orientation changes and find out in what aspects and to what extent learner orientation/motivation changed, and what factors might have been related to the changes in the given context. To reach these aims, a longitudinal, survey-based investigation (consisting of pre- and post-course surveys) was designed and conducted in both years, allowing us to collect data and investigate the orientation changes over time. The pre-course surveys were given to students in the first teaching unit (September 2013 and February 2014, respectively) to collect information such as the students' orientations (reasons/ goals for learning Chinese), perception of the difficulty of learning Chinese and other background information. Post-course surveys were given to students at the end of the penultimate teaching unit (November 2013 and April 2014, respectively) to assess the students' orientations for continuing study, feedback on the motivational degree of tasks, perception of the difficulty of learning Chinese, course evaluation and overall satisfaction. As mentioned above, the study presented in Paper 4 was conducted in an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (see its prototype in Figure 4-2). As Figure 4-2 shows, the data collected by qualitative methods is followed by the data generated by quantitative methods. Thus, following the collection and analysis of survey data in this study, group interviews were conducted to gain insight into what had been related to the orientation changes in the given context.
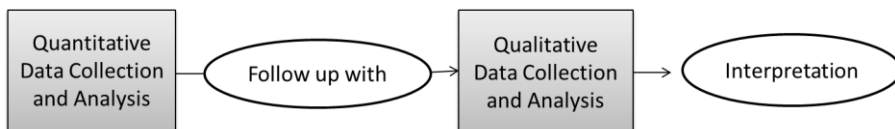
Figure 4-2 The prototype of an explanatory sequential mixed-method design (Creswell & Clark, 2011)

In this paper, data were collected from three group interviews (12 participants in total, 6 male) in 2013 and two group interviews (13 participants in total, 6 male) in 2014. Participation in group interviews was voluntary. In 2013, three group interviews were conducted right after the last teaching unit in each class. In 2014, since there was only one class with a large number of students, two group interviews were conducted separately, one right after the last teaching unit and one the week after completion of the course. The group interviews were semi-structured, focusing on students' feedback on the course design and the learning experience of the course with regard to factors including their satisfaction, their perception of learning Chinese, and others. Both audio and video recordings of the interviews were taken, with the permission of the interviewees, and some of my thoughts were noted during the interviews. Each interview ran for approximately 60 minutes.

4.2.4. DATA ANALYSIS

Various data analysis strategies were applied in this study. The analysis process was guided by the research questions and related literature developed earlier in the research proposal. These strategies will be introduced below in relation to the research questions.

4.2.4.1 Qualitative data analysis for Research Question 1

In relation to Research Question 1, qualitative research was conducted and the data was generated through interviews (not used in Paper 1), participant observation and evaluation questionnaires. The data analysis had gone hand in hand with the data collection to build a coherent interpretation. It is emphasised that the process of bringing order, structure and interpretation to a mass of collected data is not neat and does not proceed in a linear fashion (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

According to Kvale & Brinkmann (2009), the interview analysis can actually begin during the interview. When I was doing the interviews, the students told me what they experienced, felt and did in relation to the topics. In the process, they might discover new meanings in what they had experienced and done in the course. For example, the interviewed students in Paper 2 realised the benefits of doing an activity (student teaching practices at schools) for future personal development when they described it in the interviews. In this way, the interviewees (meaning the students) had provided interpretation or explanation of the data at an early stage. Transcription was a fundamental aspect of the interview analysis process, during which I made sense of and examined the data. When I was transcribing the complete interviews, I developed a familiarisation with the data and had the chance to mark some important places for later analysis. I did not use computer tools to analyse the transcribed data. By reading and re-reading the data, I gained a greater

and greater sense of the whole series, thus developing a deeper understanding of my research and its ties to theories in the literature.

A meaning condensation analysis was employed in the analysis of the interview data. As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest, meaning condensation "entails an abridgement of the meanings expressed by the interviewees into shorter formulations" (p. 205). This form can help to analyse the complex interview text by seeking *natural meaning units* and clarifying the main themes. In the process, the *natural meaning units* of the text are determined by the researcher after reading through all of the data. Each theme, which dominates a *natural meaning unit*, is restated by the researcher as simply as possible, according to the researcher's understanding of the interviewees' viewpoint in the statements. After that, the researcher interrogates the *meaning units* in terms of the specific purpose of the study, and finally draws the essential themes of the entire interview into a descriptive statement. During this process, some interviewees were asked for possible corrections or further explanation by email to ensure that the data accurately represented their opinions.

Differing from the analysing of interview data, context analysis (Dörnyei, 2008; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) was used to analyse the data generated by participant observation and qualitative questionnaires for course evaluation. This form often uses categorisation as an essential feature in reducing large data pools (Flick, 2009). The data pool generated by the two methods in this study was not large due to the small number of participants and the short length of the courses. The purpose of using context analysis was more for showing the key points and categorising the data more systematically. For example, the data from 13 questions in Paper 1 was categorised as motivation, expectations, learning experience and application of knowledge in the future. The categorisation had given a well-structured and simple overview of the data. Observation data analysis followed the same analytical strategy. However, only the results relevant to the discussion were presented in the report.

4.2.4.2 Mixed methods of data analysis for research question 2

In relation to Research Question 2, mixed methods research was conducted, and the data was generated through group interviews, participant observation (not used in Paper 4), and surveys (a post-course survey for Paper 3, pre- and post-course surveys for Paper 4). In the mixed methods design, the data were derived from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. Thus, two parts were included in the process of mixed methods data analysis: quantitative data analysis and qualitative data analysis. The analytical process applied to the qualitative data (from interviews and participant observation) for Research Question 2 was similar to that used in investigating Research Question 1, and will not be repeated in this section. This

section will focus on the quantitative data analysis in relation to sub-questions 2.1 and 2.2.

According to Creswell and Clark (2011), in quantitative data analysis, the researcher analyses the data based on the type of questions or hypotheses, then uses the appropriate statistical test to address the same. The choice of statistical test is based on the type of question being asked (e.g., a description of trends, a comparison of groups or the relationship among variables), the number of independent and dependent variables, the types of scales being used to measure those variables and whether the variable scores are normally distributed. The quantitative data in both Paper 3 and Paper 4 were analysed using the software SPSS 22.

1) Quantitative data analysis for sub-question 2.1

A post-course survey was used to collect quantitative data in relation to sub-question 2.1: *To what degree can tasks make students feel motivated to learn Chinese, and what characteristics do students associate with the motivating tasks?* With the assistance of my co-author Xiaoju Duan, all data were entered into a computer file following three steps: 1) creating the data file in statistical software SPSS; 2) defining the coding frames for the variables; and 3) keying in the data (Dörnyei, 2007). Sub-question 2.1 suggests two types of questions: the description of the motivating degree of each task, and a comparison of the motivating effect among those tasks. Concerning the types of the questions and the number of more than two dependent variables, repeated measures of the general linear model (GLM) were used to analyse the differences among the items. In the process of discussing the results, it was necessary to test the hypothesis arguing that an unfocused task was considered more motivating than a focused task. Thus, a T-test was used to compare the mean values of the two sets of scores, which could provide a statistic to evaluate whether the numerical difference between two means is statistically significant (Hartas, 2010).

2) Quantitative data analysis for sub-question 2.2

A longitudinal, survey-based investigation (consisting of pre- and post-course surveys) was conducted in the study presented in Paper 4, in relation to sub-question 2.2: *How do students' motivational orientations change in a Chinese language and culture course using a TBTL method?* All data gathered from the surveys was entered into a file in SPSS in the same method as described above. Sub-question 2.2 also suggests two types of questions: comparisons among the learner orientations in both pre- and post-course surveys, a comparison between the levels of learner orientations before and after the course, and the relationship among

the orientations and course variables, including task-motivating degree, integration of cultural elements, learner perception of the difficulty of learning Chinese, learner satisfaction and course evaluation. Based on the types of the questions and the number of dependent variables, repeated measures of the general linear model (GLM) were also used to analyse the differences among the orientation in both pre- and post-course surveys. A T-test was used to compare the mean value of each orientation before and after the course, thus finding in what ways and to what extent these orientations changed. Concerning what factors are related to the changes in the given context, the correlations among the orientations and above-mentioned course variables were analysed with the quantitative data from the post-course surveys. It should be noted that the correlations were not directly considered as factual causations, but showed only that some variables were related or correlated (Strand, 2010). In this study, the results of quantitative analysis were explained by the results of the qualitative analysis in the second phase.

In these two studies, the surveys were all filled out in the presence of the teacher, and the students were asked to write their names on them for the research convenience. The group interviews were also conducted by the teacher. However, the teacher did not have any power to influence the students' course results, and the purpose of the research was clearly explained beforehand. The students were therefore aware that their feedback would be used not to evaluate their teacher but rather to evaluate the tasks they had set, which would be useful for the course's development. These factors enhanced the validity of the studies.

4.3. METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

The research process witnessed issues like choices of methods and changes of design based on context and conditions. Reflections on the process of exploring multiple methods will be discussed below.

First, in addition to conducting participant observation and gathering qualitative questionnaires, I could also have interviewed the students (age 13-14) in the study presented in Paper 1 to enhance the credibility and validity of the results. It is suggested that interviewing children allows them to give voice to their own experiences and understanding of their world (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). However, I chose to use a qualitative questionnaire instead of interviews in order to gain knowledge of the students' life experiences and decisions in the study. This choice was based on considerations of the potential issues of interviewing children. First, compared to adults, children may have a limited and different use of vocabulary and understanding of words, and may have a shorter attention span (Boyden & Ennew, 1997). In the study, the only common language that could be used for communication between the students and myself was English, a foreign language on both sides, and it was thus assumed that there would be some misunderstandings in the communication due to varying levels of English

proficiency. It was also observed that the students had short attention spans when listening to some lectures in the classroom, and it was therefore also assumed that they would have similarly short attention spans during interviews. Second, children may be more likely to lie to the researchers for several reasons, either to say what they think the researcher wants to hear or lie through fear, shame or as a desire to create favourable impressions (Gersch, 1996; Richman, 1993). They may also be influenced by the interviewer's suggestions and leading questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). All of these may make them provide unreliable or directly false information. Third and last, as the methods of participant observation and questionnaire had already provided rich data for the purpose of the study, there was no need to conduct interviews.

Second, instead of using an explanatory sequential mixed-method design for the study presented in Paper 4, we could have used a convergent parallel mixed methods design, electing to collect and analyse both quantitative data and qualitative data in the same phase to discuss the orientation changes. To complement the longstanding quantitative tradition of motivation research, Ushioda (2001) has given an example of investigating the changes in learner motivation by interviewing the participants in two stages 15-16 months apart. However, interviewing the students before the course would not have been possible or valuable to this study. Prior to the first teaching unit of the course, I did not know or have access to the students, and most of the students did not have prior knowledge of Chinese language or culture, which would have prevented them from discussing the topic in any sort of depth. Furthermore, as the first two teaching units were organised as trial units, the students' participation in the course was not finalised prior to the course starting. These practical issues contributed to me choosing an explanatory sequential mixed-method design and separating the quantitative research and qualitative research into two phases.

Finally, in order to keep a certain distance from the students, I thought about asking my co-authors to replace me in the process of collecting qualitative data (from observation and group interview), especially in the studies presented in Paper 3 and Paper 4. As the participant observer, I (being the teacher) might have been too connected to the participants to make objective records (Norton, 2009), and it was challenging for me to observe a large group of students (Jorgensen, 1989). Ultimately, I decided to take the position of observer myself, mainly due to considerations of the benefits of *teacher as researcher* and my limited influence on data collection in the situation. First, as the teacher, I was not only the one who was most connected to the students, but also the one who might best understand the process of teaching and learning in the study. By involving myself in the whole research process, I provided a way to link the theories to the teaching practice, thus relating the research to the professional concerns and interests of the students and myself (Nunan, 2004; Norton, 2009). Also, the participant observation could provide an *insider* view and prevent misinterpretation of the observed behaviour.

Second, my influence on the gathered data was limited, as mentioned in last section. In all the courses I taught, I was only an external teacher who did not have any power to influence the students' course results, and would likely not see the students again in the future. More significantly, the purpose of the research was clearly explained to the students beforehand, so they were aware that my observation and their feedback in interviews would not be used to evaluate them or the teacher's (i.e. me) performance, but rather to evaluate the tasks and course design, which would be useful for the course's development.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

As mentioned in Chapter 1, four papers have contributed to this study. Papers 1 and 2 are related to Research Question 1: Can a student-centred approach (i.e., TBTL or a PBL-inspired method) be used to motivate students to learn Chinese language and culture in an intercultural (or Danish) context? After receiving positive results from Research Question 1, Research Question 2 was: How are students motivated to learn Chinese language and culture via TBTL in a student-centred learning environment? Led by Research Question 2, Papers 3 and 4 each address a sub-question (Paper 3: To what degree can tasks make students feel motivated to learn Chinese language and culture, and what characteristics do students associate with the motivating tasks? Paper 4: How do students' motivational orientations change in a Chinese language and culture course using a TBTL method?). In this section, I aim to clarify and discuss the findings in relation to Research Question 1 and the two sub-questions, and also to reflect on the implications of the findings.

5.1. CAN A STUDENT-CENTRED APPROACH BE USED TO MOTIVATION STUDENTS TO LEARN CHINESE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN AN INTERCULTURAL (OR DANISH) CONTEXT?

As discussed in Chapter 3, two student-centred methods (i.e., TBTL and one PBL-inspired) have been selected and focused on in the process of exploring alternative methods in this study based on both the literature and the context. Two classroom research sessions (see Paper 1 and 2) were conducted to investigate the implementation of the selected methods and to relate them to the research question. Positive results have been found from both the teacher's and the students' perspectives. Four points in the following can illustrate the main findings of the two research sessions: 1) the students' perceptions on different teaching approaches; 2) enhanced learner motivation in the student-centred learning environment; 3) meaningful culture learning as another motivating factor; and 4) reflections on the explorative teaching practice.

1) The students' perceptions of different teaching approaches

Two approaches were tried in the beginning stages of our teaching Chinese language and culture in Northern Denmark. One was a teacher-centred approach (i.e., lecture-based method), and the other was a student-centred approach (i.e., TBTL or a PBL-inspired method). The lecture-based method was proved

ineffective and demotivating at both school and university levels, while the TBTL or a PBL-inspired method was endorsed by both the teachers and the students.

It was noticed that not only did the students have different perceptions of the two approaches, but also that the teaching methods influenced the students' participation and motivation to a great extent. In the case presented in Paper 1, students reported a teaching unit (using a lecture-based method) introducing Chinese history to be boring, and I initially thought the factor causing the negative impression was the uninteresting content. After implementing more tasks in the same course, I observed that students' engagement and motivation increased no matter what content was introduced (Chinese language, education system, geography, etc.). Reflecting on the teaching, I finally realised that the lecture-based method was the main reason for the students' lack of motivation in the Chinese history lesson. The teaching method had played an essential role in the teaching and learning, and a student-centred method (i.e., TBTL) could be more motivating than a teacher-centred method (i.e., a lecture-based method). This was continually confirmed by the study presented in Paper 2, which illustrates a course reform from using a lecture-based method to using a PBL-inspired method. In this case, the students appreciated the teaching methodology change in the course, and found the new method "interesting", "practical" and "diverse". The teaching staff (both my colleagues and I) also found a positive change in the degree of learner engagement and motivation in the learning process. The students' perceptions provided evidence for the assumption that a student-centred approach can be used to motivate students to learn Chinese language and culture. More evidence can be found in the enhanced learner motivation in the student-centred learning environment, which was concluded from the findings of the two research sessions.

2) Enhanced learner motivation in the student-centred learning environment

Though there was not a measurement or direct evidence showing how the level of learner motivation changed and how the students were motivated in the courses (see Research Question 2), the teachers observed the increased learner engagement and enhanced learner motivation after using more tasks and implementing a PBL-inspired method (instead of a lecture-based method) in the two courses presented in Papers 1 and 2. TBTL and a PBL-inspired method both emphasise student-centeredness, students' active participation, real-life connection and collaborative learning, etc., all of which have been closely related to students' enhanced motivation. In the process of completing tasks/projects, the students needed to work in groups and take responsibility for their own learning. They acquired knowledge through completing the tasks/projects instead of passively receiving it from the teacher, which offered them an opportunity to deal with the learning problems on their own. For example, inferencing tasks were frequently used in the course presented in Paper 1. These tasks prompted the students to infer, negotiate and

evaluate the language on their own, thus increasing their engagement and interest in learning the Chinese language and culture. In the course presented in Paper 2, students were often required to analyse problems from a real-life setting and then find solutions, which also provided motivation and engagement. The students were satisfied with their learning outcomes – not only knowledge, but also learning skills (see Paper 2). Furthermore, most of the students from both cases developed continuing motivation for learning/using Chinese language and culture in the future.

3) Meaningful culture learning as another motivating factor

Meaningful culture learning was another motivating factor for the students' Chinese learning in this study. In the two courses, culture learning was combined with language learning (see Paper 1), or integrated with language courses within Chinese Area Studies (see Paper 2). The methods for facilitating culture learning were explored along with language teaching and learning, and the result was that, the more culture the students learned, the more they were interested in learning the language, and the more language they learned, the better they understood the culture (see Paper 1 in particular). In the case presented in Paper 2, the students indicated that they had gained confidence in communicating with people from different cultures (e.g., Chinese culture) through learning about the culture via a PBL-inspired method, which also benefited their language learning. The dynamic aspect of culture is highlighted in Paper 2, which also provides learner motivation through relating theories to the real-life setting.

4) Reflections on the explorative teaching practice

The teaching practice is also explorative. Reflections were developed to yield benefit for future practice and research. Two main reflections will be discussed below.

First, concerning the expectations and learning goals, it is important for the teachers to communicate not only with their institutions, but also with their students. This issue was not regarded as an important factor in the courses. Consequently the students' expectations were not well met due to the mismatching of the students' desires and the assumptions of the school (see Paper 1). In the other case (see Paper 2), the students had different understanding of the teaching method and learning goals than the teaching team did, which caused misunderstandings and confusion in the teaching and learning process. For example, since the students did not necessarily plan to work as school teachers in the future, some of them pointed out that they could not see a need for the teaching of Chinese culture at local schools (in one of the team-based activities). However, they finally realised the benefits of this activity in the interviews. This indicates that the students may have participated in the activities in a more active and self-directed manner if there had been better

communication between the teachers and the students. This reflection contributed to later course design and research.

Second, a student-centred method, such as TBTL or PBL, can be employed as a motivating methodology to provide a supportive environment for language and culture learning (i.e., Chinese language and culture learning), particularly in a Danish context. Based on this reflection and assumption, the studies related to Research Question 2 focused on one of the explored student-centred methods (i.e. TBTL).

5.2. TO WHAT DEGREE CAN TASKS MAKE STUDENTS FEEL MOTIVATED TO LEARN CHINESE AND CULTURE, AND WHAT CHARACTERISTICS DO STUDENTS ASSOCIATE WITH THE MOTIVATING TASKS?

The findings of Papers 1 and 2 indicated that student-centred methods can be used to motivate students to learn Chinese language and culture in a Danish context. In order to support learner motivation, a TBTL method was continually explored and employed in an elective Chinese language and culture course (language oral proficiency as a focus), the results of which are presented in Paper 3. In the course, several motivating tasks were intentionally selected based on theories and my teaching experience. Together with my co-authors, I investigated whether the students perceived the selected tasks as motivating, and if so, to what degree those tasks made the students feel motivated, and what characteristics they associated with those motivating tasks. The three following points illustrate the main findings of Paper 2: 1) the motivating effect of the selected tasks; 2) characteristics of the motivating tasks from the learner perspective; and 3) challenges of implementing TBTL in a Chinese language and culture course.

1) The motivating effect of the selected tasks

In general, the students found all of the selected tasks very motivating, which aligned with the teacher and researchers' assumption. The students gave high points to each task for its motivating degree in the post-course surveys, and showed their interests in the tasks both in the classroom and in the interviews. However, some tasks seemed more motivating than others according to the students' voting. Based on this result, those tasks were divided into three categories: most motivating tasks, motivating tasks and less motivating tasks.

2) Characteristics of the motivating tasks from learners' perspectives

Concluded from students' feedback on each task, there are six positive characteristics shared among the motivating tasks: 1) the motivating tasks provided

the student enjoyment and a sense of challenge and satisfaction, which contributed to affective factors connected with their intrinsic motivation (IM); 2) the use of the tasks supported learner autonomy by inviting the students to define their own realistic objectives and put forth effort to attain them (learner autonomy was strongly connected to learner motivation, especially IM); 3) the use of the tasks increased learner self-efficacy in using the language in real-life communication, since the students had rich opportunities to practice the language when completing the tasks, attained better cultural understanding through learning about the cultural elements integrated into the tasks and experienced successes in the appropriately challenging tasks; 4) the tasks promoted social interaction among the students, who were required to interact and negotiate meanings with each other in order to complete them, and regarded the interactive learning process as motivating and positive; 5) the tasks, which mostly involved a group work format, promoted cooperative learning through group work. They made students' learning easier and created a safe environment by obliging them to work together in a cooperative environment where they more willingly adopted learning goals and had higher self-efficacy, which led to higher motivation; and 6) the integration of cultural elements into language tasks was effective and motivating, especially for the beginners in this study. In learning about the culture, the students wanted to learn more about the language and the country. All of these positive characteristics were strongly related to learner motivation, especially IM in the learning process. The study indicates that when designing a task for beginner learners, it is important to consider the learners' affective and learning situation factors, which can boost learners' IM. It is also important to integrate cultural elements into tasks as an added incentive to motivate learners. This further suggests that the teacher can intentionally design motivating tasks and add these characteristics to the task design in future studies. Additionally, by comparing the differences among the tasks, it was found that unfocused tasks were more motivating than focused tasks. This finding indicates that unfocused tasks are more suitable for use at the beginning stage of language teaching and learning, which matches Ellis's (2003) assumption.

3) Challenges of implementing TBTL in the Chinese language and culture course

Along with the positive task characteristics, several challenges of implementing TBTL were also identified in the study, including the beginner learners' low language skills, the difficulty level of learning the Chinese language, lack of institutional support at a curriculum level and the unfamiliarity among the students with multiple backgrounds. These challenges indicate that it may be more realistic to focus on learner motivation and active participation instead of linguistic accuracy and fluency in an elective course with limited teaching hours. Group work demands many internal mechanisms in order to function effectively, such as member familiarity. Furthermore, it may be necessary to explore specific criteria for designing tasks for Chinese language and culture learning due to its linguistic

nature. These challenges can also serve as guidelines for future course design or policy-making.

5.3. HOW DO STUDENTS' MOTIVATIONAL ORIENTATIONS CHANGE IN A CHINESE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE COURSE USING A TBTL METHOD?

Some aforementioned studies have tried different methods (mainly qualitative methods) to prove learner motivation is enhanced in the student-centred learning environment. However, none of them could provide direct evidence to show to what extent learner motivation changes in the learning process. In order to validate the assumptions of this study, the quantitative perspective was included to measure an important motivational variable—learner orientation—and to investigate the motivational changes in the longitudinal mixed-method research presented in Paper 4. However, I believe that quantitative measurement is not the only way to investigate learner motivation; qualitative data can also accomplish this goal.

The research in Paper 4 was conducted at the same research site as Paper 3, the Chinese language and culture elective course at AAU, but in different academic semesters. The three points below can illustrate the main findings of Paper 4: 1) learner orientations for learning Chinese language and culture in a Danish context; 2) orientation changes and the factors related to the changes in a Chinese language and culture course using TBTL; and 3) challenges of implementing TBTL in the Chinese language and culture course.

1) Learner orientations for learning Chinese language as a foreign language

When conducting the research presented in Paper 3, a pre-course survey was used to collect qualitative data concerning students' reasons/ goals for learning Chinese, their expectations and other background data. Though these data were not used in Paper 3, they contributed to the research in Paper 4 when designing survey items of learner orientations (reasons/ goals for learning a foreign/second language). Based on these data and relevant literature, four types of orientations (represented by ten items) were identified: knowledge, sociocultural, friendship and instrumental orientations. It was assumed that one student might have more than one orientation (but with different extents) for learning Chinese. Therefore, the students were asked to rate each orientation according to their individual situations. By comparing the means of different orientations before and after the course, we found that the knowledge orientation ranked highest (most important), while the instrumental orientation ranked lowest (least important) in both pre- and post-course surveys. In general, the integrative orientation (including knowledge, sociocultural and friendship orientations) had played a more essential role than the instrumental

orientation in the course. This may have been related to the nature of the course as an elective. Most of the students, who had multiple backgrounds, had chosen to participate in the course for knowledge development and other integrative orientations, and did not focus on potential future instrumental gains (as the finding indicates).

2) **Orientation changes and the factors related to the changes in a Chinese language and culture course using TBTL**

A general positive change of learner orientations was found in the course, indicating that learners found it more meaningful/purposeful to study Chinese language and culture. Together with the high rate of attendance and willingness for continual study, all of these contributed to proving that learner motivation was enhanced in the process of learning via TBTL.

With a quantitative correlation analysis, five course variables were found to be related to the increased orientations: the task motivating degree, integration of cultural elements in tasks, learners' perception of the difficulty of learning Chinese, learner satisfaction and course evaluation. The data from group interviews provided further insight into the factors related to the orientation changes. According to the students, increased self-efficacy and satisfaction (internal factors), and the motivating course design (both content and method as external factors), were the main factors influencing their learning goals and motivation in the learning process. These factors were also correlated to each other. For example, the course design, especially the method, provided a supportive learning environment and led to the learners' increased self-efficacy and satisfaction. These findings suggest that the TBTL method can be used to promote positive orientation changes and enhance learner motivation.

3) **Challenges of implementing TBTL in the Chinese language and culture course**

Most of the challenges of implementing TBTL encountered in Paper 4 were similar to the ones encountered in Paper 3. However, in Paper 4, there was one new challenge identified from a debate on the effectiveness of the TBTL method in comparison to a traditional, teacher-centred method. Although most of the students endorsed the TBTL method, a few students suggested using more traditional methods highlighting the central roles of the teacher and the subject. According to them, they had learned other foreign languages in more traditional, teacher-centred ways in specific contexts, and thus found it difficult to engage in the interactive or collaborative learning process. Their challenge indicated that the students' previous learning experience is also an important issue to be considered when designing a TBTL course.

5.4. IMPLICATIONS

The findings from this study have responded to the research questions and helped to achieve the study's goals, which are to explore the influence of a student-centred approach on learner motivation and Chinese language and culture learning, as well as to understand how the students are motivated to learn Chinese language and culture in a student-centred learning environment. Through the discussion of the findings, I have found several pedagogical or theoretical implications of this study, which are also linked to relevant theories discussed in Chapter 3.

First, more attention should be paid to the students who learn foreign languages in elective courses, as the number of this population is increasing in the globalised age, and there are challenges in their learning process. Foreign language (FL) teaching and learning has become a more and more important subject in educational institutions due to increasing intercultural communication and internationalisation. Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) is a strong example since increasing numbers of universities, elementary schools and secondary schools across the world are either currently teaching Chinese or setting up Chinese courses, a result of a globally rising "Mandarin fever" (Gao, 2011). As a result, the number of CFL learners is growing by the day. However, not every student is studying CFL in compulsory/regular courses or degree seeking programmes, the area on which most researchers have focused. Many students, from different educational backgrounds and with different learning orientations, are studying the language in newly-offered Chinese elective courses[5]. In this study, it has been observed that the teaching and learning of Chinese in elective courses are facing challenges such as learner demotivation, low prioritisation by learners and learner unfamiliarity, among others. In response to this new trend, it is important to seek more information on students who learn Chinese (or other languages) in elective courses, and on their learning processes, in order to explore how to better facilitate learning and support learner motivation while also enhancing teaching and learning quality, which is especially important in an intercultural context where the teacher and the students are from different cultures.

Second, this study has indicated that learners' intrinsic and integrative orientations (compared with extrinsic and instrumental orientations) have played more important roles in their learning processes in the elective Chinese courses. This is related to the nature of the courses as electives and the resulting context. Researchers have argued that the students who learn a new language in elective courses are more motivated and feel a greater enjoyment in learning than those who learn in required courses (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Vallerand & Blssonnette, 1992),

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[5] News about many newly-offered Chinese courses worldwide can be found online at http://www.hanban.edu.cn/. 28 April 2015.

presumably because motivation (intrinsic orientation) comes into play during the selection of elective courses. However, this initial motivation needs to be maintained over the course of the learning process. In this context, the students in the lower secondary school did not have clear goals for learning Chinese. The students of Aalborg University are from different educational backgrounds, most of which have no connection to China or its language and culture. This study has provided evidence that, in this situation, most of them chose to learn Chinese due to integrative orientations, so their instrumental orientation only significantly increased after learning about the language and culture. Having this knowledge on the importance of intrinsic and integrative orientations, teachers can enhance these learner orientations by conducting motivation-conscious pedagogies, such as implementing student-centred teaching methods, designing tasks with motivation characteristics or combining language and culture in their teaching.

Third, the methods of teaching and learning FLs should be integrated with the cultural backgrounds and educational traditions of certain contexts. There may be no best way for teaching and learning; theory does not clearly favour one curriculum/method over the other (Berkson, 1993). However, we can develop more suitable ways for teaching and learning in certain contexts. The issue of contextual adaptations of certain methods has been oft-discussed in literature. For example, many researchers have reported challenges or difficulties of implementing Western student-centred methods, which are assumed to be superior, in China due to cultural context conflicts (Hu, 2002; Clarke, 2010; Iwashita & Li, 2012). Reviewing the literature on the cultural conflicts arising from the introduction of a predominantly Western language teaching approach (communicative approach) to Far Eastern cultures, Ellis (1996) argues that for the Western approach to be made suitable for Asian conditions, it needs to be both culturally attuned and culturally accepted. In contrast to the studies discussing Western methods used in Asian contexts, this study reports a cultural conflict due to the use of traditional methods in a Western context. An important factor for learner demotivation in this study was the mismatch between the traditional methods for teaching Chinese and the student-centred methods in use in the Danish context. Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2009) suggest developing culturally responsive teaching to support learners' IM in intercultural contexts (for them, this means that students are culturally diverse). Similarly, this study suggests exploring alternative methods to support learner motivation in learning Chinese language and culture when the classroom is situated a Danish context, and it has proven that student-centred methods can be used to motivate students to learn Chinese language and culture in said context. It is believed that many other Western countries may have cultural backgrounds and educational traditions that are similar to those seen in the Danish context, and it is thus suggested that teachers explore and implement student-centred methods in the teaching and learning of Chinese language and culture, especially in Western contexts.

Concerning the TBTL method for teaching Chinese language, it is suggested that educators should pay attention to the characteristics of Chinese language (e.g., tones and the complicated scripts) and design suitable or specific tasks for Chinese learning. Since most research on the implementation of TBTL has focused on the teaching and learning of English or other Western languages, the findings may not be totally adaptable for the teaching and learning of Chinese. This is also one of my interests for future research.

Fourth, culture should be integrated into or combined with language teaching and learning, since it is an efficient way to support learner motivation, especially at the beginner level of FL (i.e., Chinese) learning. As discussed in Chapter 3, it has been widely acknowledged that culture and language are interrelated and inseparable (Brown, 1989; Crawford & McLaren, 2003). Though there have been many discussions on the importance of cultural studies in language education, little empirical research has explored the actual learning of and about culture in language programmes worldwide (Young, Sachdev, & Seedhouse, 2009). To a certain extent, this study has filled the gap by exploring and showing how to facilitate culture learning using TBTL and a PBL-inspired method. In a TBTL learning environment, it is suggested that teachers integrate cultural elements into the language tasks, which can make the tasks even more motivating.

There is one point concerning different concepts of culture that was not presented in the *Discussion of findings* section, but that I believe is important to consider in the teaching and learning of foreign cultures (e.g., Chinese culture). Two concepts of culture from Jensen (2007) are discussed in Paper 2: the descriptive and the complex concepts of culture[6]. According to Jensen, both are needed to describe a culturally diverse society (i.e., Chinese society). On the one hand, in following deeply-rooted routines, culture changes very little from decade to decade, which allows anthropologists to record customs and demonstrate the stability of culture; on the other hand, individuals often have connections with other cultures where people speak and think differently, and live in a balance between the modern and the traditional. Similar to this view, this study suggests that both descriptive and complex concepts of culture are important in teaching and learning, especially in beginner-level courses. One potential way of incorporating this is to start with the basic knowledge of the descriptive view of the culture and then highlight the

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[6] As presented in Paper 2, people who hold a descriptive concept of culture see culture as everything that is non-biological in a society, such as artefacts, beliefs, customs, behaviour and concepts, etc.; or as group identity, like the traditional view of national culture. The complex concept of culture highlights the dynamic nature of culture. With this concept, culture is seen as something that is temporal, emergent, unpredictable and constantly changing. In a nation, not everyone shares the same elements of culture. Relevant references are shown in Paper 2.

complex aspect of culture in a way that relates to the real-life setting and the ways the culture has changed over time. This will help the beginners gradually understand foreign cultures with which they are not familiar.

These implications may have mainly focused on the field of Chinese language and culture teaching and learning. However, they can also serve as inspirations or suggestions for the teaching and learning of other FLs in other intercultural contexts, especially when introducing Asian languages or languages from other regions to Western countries.

CHAPTER 6. CONTRIBUTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This PhD study explores the influence of student-centred methods on learner motivation and investigates how students are motivated to learn Chinese language and culture in a student-centred learning environment. The findings of this study have provided both theoretical and pedagogical implications for the fields of teaching and learning Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) and foreign language (FL) education in general. Based on the findings and implications, the contributions of this study can be summarised in the following ways:

1) **Improving awareness of the need to foster learner motivation in foreign language elective courses**

Though the significance of learner motivation in language education has been much emphasised in the literature, and many researchers have suggested various motivational strategies to foster/enhance learner motivation, little attention has been paid to the students and their motivation in the FL courses offered as electives. One possible reason for this may be related to the common assumption that students have already had motivation prompting the selection of their elective courses (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Vallerand & Blssonnette, 1992). However, this study has proved that the students in elective courses are similar to students in other settings; they are only motivated in a supportive learning environment, where appropriate teaching and methods are used. Otherwise, they may be demotivated in the learning process. To better facilitate FL learning and further develop FL teaching and learning, it is important to support learner motivation in elective FL courses.

2) **Improving awareness of the need to implement culturally attuned methods for foreign language teaching and learning in certain contexts with the aim of supporting learner motivation**

As the literature has suggested (Goodman, 1988; Calderhead & Robson, 1991) and as my personal experience has shown, teachers' teaching practice is easily influenced by guiding images from past events, such as previous teaching experience or memories from their own experiences as students. When teaching in a new context, it is important to learn about the characteristics of the new context and to reinvent one's teaching practice by exploring culturally attuned/accepted methods. Doing so will be helpful for supporting learner motivation. As Brown (1994) has argued, when learners' learning styles (based on the characteristics of the context) are matched with the instructional styles, learner motivation, performance and attainment will be enhanced. This study has suggested that

student-centred methods can be used to motivate students to learn Chinese language and culture in a Western context (i.e., a Danish context). This conclusion can serve as an inspiration for the development of sound pedagogy for Chinese teaching and learning, particularly in an intercultural (or Western) context.

3) Showing diverse methods for investigating learner motivation

As discussed in section 3.2.2., the study of learner motivation for language learning has evolved in a quantitative research paradigm, and the learners' voices had long been silenced in the statistical analyses. Though some researchers have also explored a more qualitative or mixed methods approach to motivation, which have complemented the longstanding quantitative tradition of research, they have still been primarily focused on measuring various motivation variables and the relationships between them. This study, especially Paper 3, has demonstrated an alternative method to investigating learner motivation, which may have also been more related to/useful for teaching practice. A mixed methods approach was used in paper 3. However, the quantitative analysis is not focusing on measuring the motivational variables, but rather on gaining an understanding of the learners' perception of the motivating effect of selected tasks. Here, qualitative findings are used to compare with and relate to the quantitative findings. In this way, more insights have been explored in the hope of understanding how students are motivated in the learning environment.

4) Offering insights into CFL learners

As discussed in this report, FL education researchers have largely focused on the teaching and learning of English and other Western languages. Though the number of CFL learners is increasing rapidly worldwide, little research has offered insight into CFL learners in general, and even less attention has been paid to their motivation. This study has filled the gap and offered insight into the nature of CFL learners, which can be used for future studies in the field.

5) Showing the actual learning of and about culture in FL education

This point was mentioned earlier, in section 5.4. Though most researchers have agreed on the significance of integrating culture into language teaching and learning, little empirical research has offered insight into the actual learning of and about culture (Young, Sachdev, & Seedhouse, 2009). This study has filled this gap by showing how to facilitate Chinese culture learning using TBTL and a PBL-inspired method. This study has also suggested that it is important to provide a supportive learning environment for the teaching and learning of and about culture, and that integrating culture into language learning can enhance learner motivation, especially at the beginning stage of language learning.

6) Bringing new prospects for future studies

As discussed in Papers 3 and 4, future studies can examine how to design specific tasks for the learning of certain types of languages (i.e., Chinese), how teaching design and methods can be improved via the influence of learners' perceptions and learning preferences, how to better integrate culture/intercultural elements with communicative language tasks or how to expand the studies of motivational changes to more instructional settings in various contexts. More new directions for future studies can also be developed from the identified juncture between learner motivation, teaching and learning methods and contexts in this report; for example, exploring more qualitative methods for examining learner motivation in certain learning environments, conducting comparative studies on the effect of different teaching and learning methods used in a specific context, exploring sound pedagogical techniques for teaching Chinese language elements (tones, Chinese characters, etc.) in a TBTL learning environment, etc.

The above contributions indicated that this study can be helpful for future research and practice. However, this study does have limitations. Some overarching points can be summarised as follows:

1) The language issue

Firstly, my poor English skills created limitations for this study during data collection, especially at the beginning stage. For example, in the interviews with the students and teaching staff discussed in Paper 2, some points were not able to be discussed in the rich detail that was expected. Secondly, I have limited skills in speaking and understanding Danish. Though the students were required to speak English in my classrooms, they would sometimes forget to speak English when discussing issues in group work, especially when all the group members were Danes. This created an inconvenience for me in observing their learning process and thus required me to spend time either reminding them to speak English or asking them about what they discussed in the classroom.

2) The research design issue

Writing an article-based PhD thesis is different from writing a monograph. This PhD study relies on a series of papers, which were not only required to complete the PhD, but also had to meet the requirements of certain publications. When this final report was planned, some disconnections were found between the contributions of a certain paper and the overall PhD study. For example, there is lack of discussion of the relationship of language and culture in Paper 2, which differs from other papers. Some overlapping points appear in Papers 3 and 4 due to the requirements of publication; for example, cultural elements as a motivating factor and several challenges of implementing TBTL were discussed in both papers.

3) The assessment issue

As one of the most important aspects of curriculum, assessment defines how learning outcomes can be aligned with learning goals (Du & Kirkebæk, 2012). However, this has not been addressed in this study. The major reason was that most of the courses in this study were offered as electives (the Chinese culture course in Chinese Area Studies at AAU being an exception), meaning there were no formal exams. This led to confusion for the teacher and remained a consistent limitation in this study.

The above limitation indicated the possibility for improvement in future academic work. I have spent slightly more than three years working on my PhD study in a Danish context, and my role has gradually changed from that of a language teacher to a teacher-as-researcher. My experiences have taught me that reinventing my teaching practice is not only a strategy to foster learner motivation, but can also lead to a new way of thinking, working and collaborating with my colleagues at AAU. I have gained much more than a PhD project during the time I have spent in Denmark.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Paper 1-4

Paper 1: Can tasks be used to teach Chinese culture at the beginner level?

CHAPTER FIVE

CAN TASKS BE USED TO TEACH CHINESE CULTURE AT THE BEGINNER LEVEL?

YOUJIN RUAN

Abstract

In the autumn term of 2011, the Confucius Institute for Learning and Innovation at Aalborg University (CI AAU) offered a Chinese course as part of an international programme at Gug School. The course introduced Chinese culture and information about modern China as well as limited Chinese language instruction. In this course, the teacher tried to combine the culture with the language by using tasks, games and lectures. As more and more tasks were introduced in culture and language teaching, the students' motivation improved, and they became more active and involved in the classroom. This chapter describes the background, content and methods of the teaching in detail and also discusses the exploration and application of using tasks as a method in this course.

1. Background

1.1 International Study Programme at Gug School

As mentioned in chapter 2, Gug School's motto is "Think globally, act locally!" The school has recently been working on finding its place as a school which can understand and meet the globalised world challenges, becoming "a school that fits with time", as stated in the school plan. Therefore, they offer an "International Study Programme" for grade 7 students, the aims of which are:

- "To give students an international and cultural perspective of the world around us
- To prepare students for an international community
- To strengthen students' language skills
- Bringing the world closer to us using digital media" (Skoleplan Gug Skole 2011-2012[7])

Students who choose the International Study Programme are requested to attend every international course, each of which normally introduces a foreign country and

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[7] Please see "Skoleplan Gug" on www.gug-skole.skoleintra.dk.

culture, like this Chinese course. The school decided to add Chinese after the students had already chosen the International Study Programme, which means the students did not choose the Chinese course directly.

1.2 How the Course Started

After the school decided to introduce China as a subject for the term, teachers from Gug School and the CI AAU held a meeting four days before the course started. A list of topics for the course was made after the discussion: introduction to basic Chinese language, Chinese culture, Chinese history, everyday life in modern China, etc. Additionally, Gug School teachers expressed the hope that all 43 students could learn the same topics even if they were divided into two classes and being taught by different teachers. An accelerated course designed for both classes was made by two Chinese teachers.

1.3 Students in This Course

There were 43 students participating in this programme. They were all grade 7 (age 13-14), but came from different school classes. The group was made up of 32 girls and 11 boys and was split into two classes (see table 5-1):

Table 5-1: Students' distribution

Class	Number of girls	Number of boys
Class A	15	6
Class B	17	5

The students had been learning English as a foreign language since grade 3; therefore, it was assumed that it would be no problem for them to attend a course taught in English.

In general, the students knew little about China, with the exception of one girl whose father had occasionally travelled to China on business.

1.4 Expectations of the Course

1.4.1 The School's Expectations

Gug School's expectations fit the aim of the International Study Programme that expected the students to open their eyes to the world and build up a global citizen's understanding and intercultural competency by gaining some knowledge about China. They did not expect the students to learn many language skills because of the limited number of teaching hours.

1.4.2 The Teacher's Expectations

The teachers from CI AAU believed that culture and language should be connected in the teaching; therefore, they expected the students to:

- acquire basic communication skills by learning simple expressions in Chinese
- gain basic knowledge about Chinese culture by doing tasks and experiencing cultural activities
- develop their intercultural competency by understanding Chinese culture from a global perspective
- increase their interest in Chinese and maintain their motivation for learning the Chinese language and culture in the future

1.4.3 The Students' Expectations

Because of the limited time for preparation, neither the school nor CI AAU examined the students' expectations before designing the course.

1.5 Teaching Contents and Materials

There was not a fixed curriculum for this course, so the teachers were allowed to design the teaching content (see "teaching plan" in 3.1) and choose the teaching material by themselves. Materials for teaching Chinese language and culture, especially textbooks and culture-related books, are quite varied and numerous. However, the teacher from class A could not find any textbooks specifically suited for this course. With the help of the website "Confucius Institute Online"[8] and the textbook *Happy Chinese*[9], the teacher designed her own materials for language teaching and prepared some PowerPoint files for culture teaching.

2. Theoretical Backgrounds

When designing the course, there were two aspects to consider: content and method, or, in other words, "what to teach" and "how to teach it." To answer these questions, the teacher consulted theories on language and culture and theories on task-based teaching and learning.

2.1 Theories on Language and Culture

There are different views on the relationship between language and culture in language education. Risager (2006, 2) argues that "language and culture can in certain respects be separated", while many scholars claim that "language and culture are essentially inseparable" (Crawford and McLaren 2003, 128) and

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[8] Please see www.chinese.cn.

[9] It is a Chinese language textbook for 11-16 years-old students, which was published by People's Education Press, China, in 2010.

demonstrate that the two are often strictly intertwined. From the existing evidence, it can be argued that culture plays an important role in language education. Lange and Paige (2003) and Kramsch (2004) point out that culture is the core of language teaching and learning, and many researchers have acknowledged that culture is an "integral part" of language learning (Courchene 1996, Byram 1989, Kramsch 1996, 1998). At the same time, language is also seen as a crucial part of culture. Fishman (1996) describes language as "an inevitable part" of culture and emphasises that "all those who seek fully to enter into and understand a given culture must, accordingly, master its language" (quoted from Risager 2006, 13). The teacher of the course at Gug School took the standpoint that culture and language should be connected, and it is assumed that they could have an "add-on" value to each other in the teaching and learning.

Gullestrup's theory of culture gives inspiration with regard to "what to teach" in this course. Gullestrup (2006, 82) divides "culture" into six different layers under two categories, which are presented in a hierarchical structure, and analyses how the culture layers affect people's understanding process of a new culture.

- Manifest culture layer— or the symbolising culture layers
    1. The immediately perceivable process layer
    2. The difficult-to-perceive structural layer
    3. The formalised layers of norms and values
- Core culture layers—or the symbolised culture layers
    1. The non-perceivable existence
    2. The basic values
    3. The fundamental world conception

In the manifest culture layer, or the symbolising culture layers, there are three sub-layers containing great symbolic value for the core culture. Gullestrup claims that, when encountering an unknown culture, the first impression will be formed through the culture elements in the immediately perceivable process layer, and later "the deeper hidden assumptions as well as the more fundamental epistemological assumptions and values – of which the manifest culture segments may often be symbols or symptoms – will begin to influence the culture perception of the culture actor" (Gullestrup 2006, 81).

Only then can people gain an understanding of the target culture. And for someone who encounters a new culture, it is certain that "the deeper into the layer he gets, the better understanding he will have of the other culture" (Gullestrup 2006, 99).

Inspired by Gullestrup's theory and considering the duration of the course, ages of the students and other factors, the teacher chose the manifest culture layer as a guide for introducing Chinese culture elements in this course. The first two mini-layers ("the immediately perceivable process layer" and "the difficult-to-perceive structural layer") consist of immediately perceivable and basic culture elements, and it was assumed that they could provide a shortcut for the students to gain an understanding of Chinese culture; therefore, the teacher concentrated on these two layers.

Gullestrup gives many examples of significant culture elements within these two mini-layers, and emphasises the symbolic value of the elements. In relation to

Chinese culture, some elements, such as the tea ceremony, paper cutting, taiji, etc, are self-perceived as the most representative Chinese culture symbols by the Chinese people; hence, the teacher decided to involve some of these traditional culture elements in the course.

Language is also mentioned as an important culture element in the difficult-to-perceive structural layer in Gullestrup's book, a point which supported the teacher in combining language with culture in the teaching. Additionally, there were two principles considered while designing how language would be taught in this course: ensuring that the language teaching would be relevant to the culture elements and teaching the language in a way that would make it helpful for daily communication.

2.2 Task-based Teaching and Learning

As discussed in chapter 3, using tasks has been well practiced as an effective method in foreign language education, and there are many different types of tasks suggested in many pieces of literature; Pica, Kanagy and Falodun (2009) illustrated five kinds of tasks: jigsaw, information gap, problem-solving, decision-making and opinion exchange. Willis and Willis (2007) name many kinds of tasks from a micro perspective, such as matching, comparing, problem-solving, projects and storytelling, etc. Additionally, Nunan (2011) introduced three principal task types: information gap, reasoning gap and opinion gap. A reasoning- gap activity

"involves deriving some new information from given information through process of inference, deduction, practical reasoning, or a perception of relationships or patterns" (Nunan 2011, 57).

It can be learned from this explanation that inferring can be used as a strategy when doing a task. "Inferring" or "inferencing", which means "identifying ideas that are not explicitly stated" (Nunan 2011, 63), can also be found in many discussions on developing students' language skills, such as reading comprehension, vocabulary learning, etc. (Barclay et al 1984, Lai 1997, Panther and Thornburg 1998). It is seen as an important skill when using a foreign language and it can be a strategy to connect the classroom to the real world. In this case, it was assumed that inferencing tasks could activate the students to infer, negotiate and evaluate the knowledge on their own, and increase their engagement and interests in learning a foreign language and culture in the process.

In relation to conducting a task, Nunan (2011) argues that the issue of difficulty is important to consider when designing or processing a task. Brindley (1987) illustrates what makes one task more difficult than another with three intersecting sets of factors: the learner's factor, the task's factor and the text's factor (Nunan 2011). For example, considering the situation via the learner's perspective, the task will be easier to conduct if the learner has had necessary prior learning experiences, while, in contrast, if the learner has no prior experiences, the task will become more difficult for him or her.

Inspired by this theory, the teacher left space for lowering the difficulty of the tasks when designing them, and made an integrative category with some

allowances that would enable her to lower the difficulty for beginners in this course i.e., if the learner did not have language skills, then plenty of help and much time would be given for the task.

3.Teaching Plan and Methods

3.1 Teaching Plan

The teacher developed a teaching plan, as shown in table 5-2, according to the expectations and the theories she had examined. Culture teaching was considered a challenging part of the teaching at the beginning. Therefore, the teacher decided to intertwine culture with language and employed some classroom activities to this effect. The teacher did not meet the students before the course, and it was assumed that the teaching plan could meet the interests of the students.

In teaching practice, the teacher found that the students would like to learn more language and do more activities, so the last five topics were slightly modified to keep in line with the interests of the students. The adjustment will be presented in appendix C.

3.2 Teaching Methods

The teacher used various methods in this course; however, this section will focus on the method of using tasks. Two teaching episodes will be presented in detail below. They will show how language and culture were intertwined, how tasks were processed and how the students interacted with both the teacher and their classmates in the classroom.

Table 5-2: Teaching plan

Weeks	Lectures (culture)	Language or culture activities
Week 40	Introduction to China and Chinese greeting culture	Language learning: introducing yourself
Week 41	Chinese name culture	Giving Chinese names Doing Chinese calligraphy
Week 43	None	Visiting Learning Centre (music, tea ceremony, etc)
Week 44	Chinese history	Paper cutting
Week 45	Taiji culture	Playing Taiji

Week 46	Chinese education system; Chinese student's life	None
Week 47	Chinese cuisine culture	Cooking; names of food
Week 48	China geography; Eastern China	Doing Chinese painting
Week 49	Chinese zodiac	Making a dragon
Week 50	Chinese festivals (spring festival or mid-autumn festival)	Calligraphy

3.2.1 Episode 1

Topic: Introducing yourself

Teaching Objective: Students will gain knowledge of Chinese greeting culture and learn how to greet others and introduce themselves in Chinese.

Teaching Methods: The teacher used three tasks in this lesson. A shared information task, a referencing task and a task involving a "word-connecting" game (see the description of during-task below) were introduced.

Teaching Material: Teacher-made word cards in pinyin[10].

Teaching Duration: 30 minutes.

Teaching Language: English.

Teaching Procedure:

It was the first lesson in this course. After a Danish greeting of goddag (hello) between the teacher and the students, the teacher started with a class brainstorm: "when you are introducing yourself, what kind of information would you like to present?" Some of the students appeared to be shy speaking English to a foreign teacher and answered quietly, but there were many good answers, such as "name", "job", "age", "nationality", etc.

Pre-task:
The teacher distributed the word cards to different groups and gave a short introduction to the rules of the task in English. The cards should form the following

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[10] Pinyin is the official system to transcribe Chinese characters into Latin script, which was developed in China in the 1950s. It is often used to teach Mandarin Chinese, spell Chinese names in foreign publications and is used as an input method to enter Chinese characters into computers.

sentence: "Nǐhǎo, wǒ jiào XXX, wǒ shì zhōngguó rén, wǒ shì hàn yǔ lǎoshī, jiàn dào nǐmen wǒ hěn gāoxìng", which means "Hello, my name is X, I am Chinese, I am a Chinese language teacher, nice to meet you."

During-task:
In this stage, the students were asked to follow two steps in order to achieve the outcome of greeting and introducing oneself in Chinese. The difficulty increased in small increments, with each step being a necessary preparation for the following one. Please see details below.

Step1: Listen, form the words into a sentence and guess the meaning
The teacher started the task with a listening comprehension exercise. The students were asked to sit and listen for the first round, and the teacher introduced herself very slowly in Chinese with the prepared sentence. At first, the students looked at each other and laughed because they found the different pronunciation of Chinese amusing.

After three rounds of listening, the students were asked to form the words into a sentence according to what they had heard. Some groups worked very quickly, making 3-4 small sentences after only the third round of listening.

After the task with cards, the teacher asked the students to guess the meaning of the sentence according to their previous knowledge and experience on self-introduction. They discussed with each other actively, and were mostly correct in guessing the meaning of the sentence.

Step 2: Practicing speaking and introducing oneself through a word-connecting game
Later, the teacher taught the new words "Danish" and "student": "dānmài rén" and "xuésheng." The students were asked to use them to introduce themselves.

It was a long sentence for beginners, so students initially struggled with it. The teacher separated the sentence into three smaller sentences and designed a word-connecting game for them to process the speaking task.

For the first two rounds, every student in each group needed to speak one word according to its sequence in the sentence; for example, after student A said the beginning word "nǐhǎo", student B needed to say "wǒ", student C would follow to say "jiào", and the other students continued and finished the sentence one by one. From the third round on, the students did the same work together in order to finish the sentence, but when the teacher clapped her hands and said "ting" which means "stop" in Chinese, the student whose turn it was next needed to say the whole sentence, such as "Nǐhǎo, wǒ jiào X." After several rounds of practice, the students could say the whole self-introduction sentence.

Post- task:
At this stage, the students were asked to do presentations of self- introduction in Chinese. Chinese greeting culture was also discussed.

It was hypothesised before the lesson that complete beginners could also do a language task, and they could concentrate more and memorise more effectively if the listening and speaking tasks were separated. As presented in section 1.3, the students were all beginners, but they were able to learn to understand and speak Chinese through tasks and a game. In the first shared information task, the students

were not pressured to speak, instead they were asked to listen and form a sentence with word cards according to the teacher's self-introduction in Chinese, and then guess the meaning of the sentence in the inferencing task using their personal experiences in the real world. Listening before speaking also avoided the possibility of a negative transfer of the Danish phonetic system onto Chinese pronunciation. After the knowledge preparation, the students were asked to practice the speaking task through a word-connecting game. During the task's processes, the students worked in groups and took responsibility for their own learning without teacher's interference; they even inferred the meaning of a new sentence themselves instead of receiving it from teacher, which offered them an opportunity to deal with the details of the language on their own. The tasks used in this lesson worked very well, and the teacher's hypotheses were proved correct to some extent. However, it is believed that the tasks can be further developed to be more broad and appropriate for use in other courses, possibly by adding more cards or letting the students design the cards.

3.2.2 Episode 2

Topic: Chinese characters' evolution

Teaching Objective: Students will gain the knowledge of the development of Chinese characters.

Teaching Method: The teacher combined the method of using tasks and multimedia resources in this lesson. A 10-minute film and a Power-Point presentation were presented, and an inferencing task was introduced.

Teaching Material: A 10-minute mini film, a PowerPoint presentation, and A4 hand-outs with teacher-prepared information.

Teaching Duration: 45 minutes.

Teaching Language: English.

Teaching Procedure:

Pre-task:
A 10-minute mini film called *36 Characters*[11] was introduced to the students at the beginning of the lesson. The film tells a story illustrated by 36 Chinese pictographs. Some conversations in the film are in Chinese, but this did not cause any misunderstanding about the story. The students could also learn modern forms of the pictographs, which have changed a little, or, in some cases, dramatically over time. The purpose of the film was to attract the students' attention and arouse curiosity about the teaching content.

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[11] Please see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VhOCX5WLpw which was available on 4 October 2009. This mini film was made in 1984 by Shanghai Art Film Studios.

During-task:
In this stage, the students were asked to follow three steps in order to accomplish the final task, with the difficulty of the steps gradually increasing and each step being a necessary preparation for the next one. Please see details below.

Step 1: Write down as many of the Chinese pictographs as you can remember
    The students watched the film carefully and with interest. After the 10 minutes, they were asked to form groups and write down as many of the Chinese pictographs as they could. They then helped each other to place the pictographs in a table with 20 small, blank boxes on the blackboard.

Step 2: Guess the meanings of pictographs (which were not shown in the film)
    After gaining a first impression of Chinese pictographs from the film, the students were asked to guess the meanings of some Chinese pictographs (see fig. 5-1 below) which were not shown in the film.
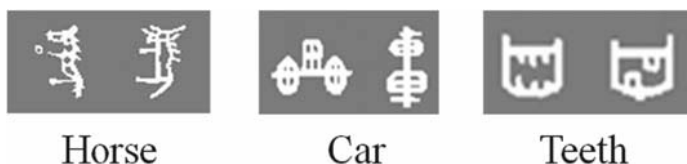
Fig. 5-1 Chinese pictographs for guessing

The students guessed "car" and "teeth" more easily, though the pictographs of "horse" resulted in a variety of guesses, such as "animal", "cow", "sheep" or "horse." The teacher gave the right answer and explained relevant culture.

Step 3: Creating Chinese pictographs
In the next step, the students needed to create two Chinese pictographs of their own according to two pictures, one of which was "eye" and the other "mountain" (see fig. 5-2 below).

Fig. 5-2 Pictures for the students to create Chinese pictographs

The students were very interested in this task and felt proud when they found that their drawings were very close to the original, which might have given them the

message that they could also invent Chinese characters, as well as guess the meanings of established characters.

Post-task:
At this stage, the teacher wrote the modern forms of "山" (eye) and "目" (mountain) on the blackboard, and further explained the evolution of Chinese characters. The students were asked to discuss their understanding of the history and development of Chinese characters, and compared this with the history of other written languages in the world. Some of the students pointed out that the Chinese character was closely connected to China's long history, and that it was easy to guess the meaning of them according to their form. From this finding, they also learned the importance of symbolism to Chinese culture and language.

It seems that task-based learning, as opposed to lecture-based learning, can motivate students to learn Chinese culture and make for a livelier atmosphere in the classroom, even though the topic was assumed to be boring or complicated for the students. In this episode, the film and the PowerPoint file played supportive roles and helped to provide knowledge that the students would later find necessary for completing the tasks. In the tasks, the teacher worked as a facilitator; her major role was to help the students to understand the learning goal and develop learning strategies. While the students were the centre of the tasks, they learned the development of Chinese characters by guessing the meaning of pictographs and creating pictographs step by step instead of merely sitting and listening to the teacher lecture. This led to the idea that qualified guessing could be used as an effective strategy in foreign language teaching and learning by enhancing the students' confidence in learning new language and culture. During the process, the learning goal was realized as expected, and the students also learned the symbolism feature of Chinese culture and language through the development of Chinese characters.

4. Evaluations

The school, teacher and students all contributed to evaluate the teaching of this course. The relevant results and reflections will be presented and discussed below.

4.1 The School's Evaluation

During the 10 classroom sessions, there was a Danish teacher from Gug School observing every class. In class A, the Danish teacher liked to give feedback after lessons. In general, she would comment: "it was a good lesson, the students were interested, and I also learned a lot from the lesson." After five classes, the Chinese teacher planned to revise the later lessons, so she interviewed the Danish teacher, who suggested that it would be beneficial to involve more tasks and activities in culture teaching and learning.

4.2 The Teacher's Evaluation

The course did not require any form of test or exam. The teacher evaluated the students' learning outcome by students' performance during class and a "guess lantern riddles" game in the last lesson.

The teacher prepared a small ball, eight small gifts from China and eight questions covering the knowledge they had learned from the ten lessons. The teacher threw the ball randomly, and the student who got the ball could answer a "riddle" and received a gift if his or her answer was correct.

The eight questions were:

a. How do you say "a Dane" in Chinese?
b. Is eight a lucky number or unlucky number in Chinese culture?
c. When is the Spring Festival in 2012?
d. What is hóngbāo[12]?
e. What is the meaning of fú (福)[13]?
f. How do you say "Happy New Year" in Chinese?
g. Is the Han nationality the only nationality in China?
h. Which city is the capital of China?

The students performed very well on the test. The teacher was satisfied with their progress on understanding Chinese culture and language and also happy to find that students became more open to Chinese culture.

4.3 The Students' Evaluation

At the end of this course, 18 students in class A were asked to answer 13 questions from an evaluation form about the course. The evaluation results showed the students' motivation, expectations, learning experience and application of knowledge.

4.3.1 Motivation

In question 13, the students were asked if they planned to continue learning Chinese and to explain why or why not. Seven out of the eighteen students said they would like to continue the study because they were really interested in the language and country. Another seven students thought they might continue the study if they

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[12] Hóngbāo, a red envelope or a red packet, is a handy-sized paper envelope stuffed with money. Normally, the elderly will give hóngbāo to children, as an act of well-wishing and blessing at family gatherings on holidays, such as the Lunar New Year. Chinese people also give hóngbāo to new couples as wedding gifts.

[13] Fú (福) is a lucky character in Chinese, meaning "good fortune" or "happiness". Mounted Fú is a widespread Chinese tradition associated with Chinese New Year and can be seen on the entrances of many Chinese homes worldwide.

could learn more language or if it could be useful in their future life. Just three students said "no" to future Chinese study. This question showed that students felt motivated to continue learning Chinese after the course, and it was found that they were more interested in language and the country, which could be described as their motivations being more integrative than instrumental[14].

4.3.2 Expectations

In question 2, the students were asked about their expectations for the teaching (teaching content, teaching methods, etc.). The students gave various answers to this question. Most of the students expected to learn basic Chinese language, some students expected the course to be "fun" and "exciting" and only a few students mentioned learning about "culture". This result showed that students' expectations were different from the school's and the teacher's, both of which placed more emphasis on learning about culture.

In question 3, the students were asked to what extent their expectations had been met. Three out of the eighteen students found that all their expectations had been met "greatly" and eight of the remaining students found that their expectation had been met "to some extent"; however, seven students ticked "to a lesser degree." One of the seven students ticked both the boxes of "to some extent" and "to a lesser degree." This comment indicated that his expectations were met to some extent in some lessons and to a lesser degree in other lessons. Using the result from question 2, it was easy for the teacher to understand students' answers to question 3. This indicated that it was also very important to ask about the students' expectations before a course begins.

4.3.3 Learning Experiences

In question 5, the students were asked about what had made the greatest impression on them in the course and why. This question could both show the interests of the students in this course and be a very useful reference for future curriculum planning. Seven out of eighteen students specified the tea ceremony, calligraphy, Taiji, games and other cultural activities, while other students specified the country and its different culture, history or language pronunciation and characters, etc. Three out of eighteen students specified history, but two of them stated that "there was too much about it (history)." There was one student who answered "(The Chinese teachers) have come so far to teach us. The best part was

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[14] Integrative motivation and instrumental motivation are discussed very often in language research. Gardner and Lambert (1972) indentified integrative motivation as an interest in learning the second language (L2) in order to interact with the L2 group as well as to have positive attitudes toward the native speakers of this group and their culture. In contrast, instrumental motivation was identified as "an interest in learning the L2 in order to attain a pragmatic objective, such as to enhance future career opportunities" (Hernández, 2010).

when she came here", which indicated that the presence of a native Chinese teacher could be also a positive and motivational factor for the students.

In question 6, the students were asked how difficult they found the teaching, which they answered by ticking off one of the six choices and elaborating if needed. The results are recorded in table 5-3.

Table 5-3: Evaluation form question 6 results

Very easy	Easy	Manageable	Somewhat difficult	Very difficult	Don't know
1	2	7	7	1	0

The major reason for the students feeling the class was difficult was the challenge of remembering Chinese words after lessons. One of the students explained

> "[it was difficult] to remember a language you know nothing about and can't hear the sounds correctly. In French, German and English, you can sometimes hear the Danish but you can't in Chinese."

A history-focused lesson and the Chinese teacher's English also challenged some students. The results indicated that it was necessary to improve the English language skills of the teacher and the students, as well as suggesting that the teacher needed to lower the difficulty of the English used in the classroom by simplifying her language and replacing words like "ancient time" and "emperor" with "in the olden days" and "king."

In question 7, the pupils were asked how they liked the teaching, and most of students' responses seemed to indicate that they were satisfied with the course. Eleven out of eighteen students answered "fine" and four of the remaining students found it was "interesting." However, there were three out of eighteen students who ticked "boring", with two of them pointing out "history" as the boring part. They wrote "it was fun when we had to learn to speak, but Chinese history was boring", and "it was funny, for instance, when we had to move and draw, but sometimes it could be quite boring." The answers suggested that the teaching of culture elements, such as history, needed a better design, which was also the reason the teacher introduced tasks more and more frequently later in the course.

In question 11, the students were asked if they had benefitted from the course. They answered by ticking off one of four choices and elaborating if needed. The results are recorded in table 5-4.

Table 5-4: Evaluation form question 11 results

Yes	To some extent	No	Don't know
11	6	0	1

The results clearly showed that almost all students found they had benefitted from the course. Those students ticking off "to some extent" explained: "(what I have learned) is their culture, which I remember, but not so much the language", and "There was too much history and there was not much time to learn language." From the explanations and comments given, it was clear that "history" had made a significant impression on the students, though it was not necessarily a positive or motivational factor, and that the students expected to learn more language.

4.3.4 Application of Knowledge in the Future

In question 12, students were asked about how they planned to use what they had learned in the future. All but four of the students answered. Eight out of eighteen students expressed a wish to use the knowledge from the course in China someday. Three of the remaining students thought they could use it in some ways in Denmark, such as "to show off with my knowledge of China." Meanwhile two other students wrote that what they had learned was not enough and expressed the desire to learn more language.

5. Reflections

The experience and evaluation results of this course lead to five major reflections on teaching preparation, content and method. These can also be considered as suggestions for future courses.

Firstly, during the preparatory stages of the course, not only the expectations of the school and the teacher, but also the expectation of the students should be examined and regarded as the basis of the course design. Since not all of the expectations from all three parties were considered, some of the students' expectations were just met "to a lesser degree" in this course. The students also repeatedly expressed their wishes in the evaluation form, but their desires for the course were in complete contrast to the school's assumptions and the course design. It has become a crucial point to include students' expectation in the consideration of course design.

Secondly, it worked well to intertwine language and culture in the teaching, with each of them serving as having add-on value for each other in this course. From the teacher's observation and the students' evaluations, we can see that the more culture the students learned, the more they were more interested in learning language, and the more language they learned, the better they understood the culture.

Thirdly, the teaching content planning should pay more attention to previous knowledge of the students. As shown in the evaluation form, a history-focused lesson which was lecture based made a negative impression on the students. One of the reasons might be the students' limited knowledge on world history. Due to a lack of previous knowledge, it was difficult for the students to understand Chinese history, and they received too much information about it in one lesson. After five classes, the teacher adjusted the remaining topics and added more

language- learning content (see the adjustment in appendix C), and the decision was supported by both the school and the students.

Fourthly, for beginners in a course that consists of 10 classroom sessions, introducing the most basic expressions and characters is expected and practical. From the evaluation results, the students expected to learn more Chinese language, but their expectations for this were not high; they only expected to learn some basic language, an expectation they expressed with phrases like "pronounce and spell my Chinese name", "some good phrases" and "a little Chinese." Some Chinese teachers argued that learning Chinese characters was different and difficult for Westerners, and therefore, it was not a good subject for the beginner-level class. At least from the teacher's experience, Gug School students were very interested in learning characters and writing them, mainly because the characters are so different from theirs.

Finally, teaching methods play a significant role in the teaching, so the teacher should find suitable methods for the course, especially in a beginner's course with a limited number of hours at a lower secondary school. In this course, the teacher initially believed that it was the cultural topics, such as Chinese history, that made the great negative impressions on the students because those topics were too complicated for grade 7 students. However, after the experiment of conducting tasks based on cultural elements, the teacher realized that it was the lecture-based method that made the lessons unsuccessful, not the topics or contents. How to best develop tasks for the teaching and learning of culture elements needs to be further discussed and studied.

6. Summary

In the field of foreign language education, there are many discussions on the definition of culture, the relationship between language and culture, language and culture pedagogy, etc. However, there are limited texts focusing on a micro level about how to teach culture elements in the classroom. An example has been elaborated on in this study. Although both the teacher and the students met challenges in this course, they benefitted from the teaching and learning experience. The most precious finding is that using tasks could also be a meaningful method of teaching and learning culture elements. Through tasks, students can gain the most from topics, listen to classmates' opinions, help each other to achieve the agreed learning goal and subsequently share their experiences of completing a task. Compared with lecture-based learning, tasks can at least make the students more involved in the learning process. Because of this, the practice of using tasks in teaching and learning cultural elements needs to be improved and better employed in the future, with teachers and researchers considering ways of making the tasks more interesting, finding ways to increase the students' involvement and establishing a method of presenting tasks that will prove motivational to the students.

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Paper 2: A PBL-inspired method for facilitating culture learning

YOUJIN RUAN, XIANG-YUN DU

4.A PBL-INSPIRED METHOD FOR FACILITATING CULTURE LEARNING

INTRODUCTION

In a globalized age, culture is increasingly regarded as an important concept for knowledge mastery and competence development in the fields of language education, cultural studies and intercultural communication, among others (Byram, 1989; Seelye, 1993; Martin & Nakayama, 2007). In recent years, an increasing number of educational activities are being offered for teaching and learning culture and in particular about foreign cultures within formal curricula. Since culture can be understood and defined in a wide range of ways, it also allows for diverse methods when learning about another culture and developing cultural awareness.

At Aalborg University (AAU), a Chinese culture course has been provided as part of a bachelor's program in the Faculty of Humanities since 2009. According to the study guidelines of the course, students are expected to learn about Chinese religion, philosophy, aesthetics, history, etc. and to acquire independent analysis skills in regard to a discussion of relevant cultural aspects of Chinese society from a comparative perspective. For two years, the course was delivered in the form of lectures with a focus on culture-related theories and China-related information. In 2011, the Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning at AAU (CI-AAU) was invited to take over the teaching of this course. For the CI-AAU team, the existing course objectives implied a "descriptive concept of culture" (Jensen, 2007), which tends to believe that culture is fixed and teaching a culture consists of transferring knowledge about the culture. On the other hand, the CI-AAU team holds the belief in a "complex concept of culture" (Jensen, 2007), which emphasizes the complex and dynamic nature of culture and focuses on active participation as the key to culture learning. In the autumn semester of 2011, one CI-AAU teacher delivered the course by following the existing objectives and the previously used teaching methods. During this experience, the teacher observed a lack of student motivation and interest in the class mainly due to the theory-focused and context-independent content as well as the lecture-based teaching method. Due to the philosophical disagreement with the previous teaching team over how to acquire knowledge of a culture and bearing in mind the unsatisfactory teaching experience, the CI-AAU team decided to reform the Chinese culture course in both content and teaching methods. For this purpose, starting from spring semester 2012, a teaching team with diverse backgrounds was organized and a Problem-Based Learning (PBL)-inspired approach was employed for the course design and delivery with an aim to encourage student-centeredness via interaction and participation in activities. The

teaching content was designed to focus on theory and real-life connections through practice.

This article investigates the design, operation and evaluation of the culture course and discusses the questions: 1) How do students and teaching staff perceive culture learning in general, and especially via a PBL-inspired method? 2) What are the challenges and possibilities for successfully implementing a PBL-inspired approach to culture teaching and learning? Theoretically, this study departs from a complex concept of culture and PBL-related learning theories. The empirical findings are drawn from multiple methods of data generation that include observation, questionnaires, official evaluation forms and interviews with both teaching staff and students involved in this course.

A PBL APPROACH TO CULTURE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Understanding Culture

Definitions of culture vary according to their application in different disciplines such as education, linguistics/communication, cultural studies, anthropology, organizational psychology and management, etc. (Baldwin et al., 2005). To structuralists, culture can be artifacts, beliefs and customs, or everything which is non-biological in a society, including behavior and concepts. To functionalists, culture is about group identity, which expresses value and establishes stereotyping (Hecht, Baldwin & Faulkner, 2005). These two dimensions form part of what Jensen (2007) refers to as the descriptive concepts of culture which is also the traditional view of national culture. It is understood that everyone in a group shares the same culture and is what gives a collective identification to a group. However, it leaves a fixed image of the group while the culture itself continues to shift and change. Thus, it obscures the dynamic nature of culture and the diversity within the group (Hecht, Baldwin & Faulkner, 2005).

In contrast, the process theorists see culture as an active process of meaning-making. They focus on change, development, practice and procedures of culture (Hecht, Baldwin & Faulkner, 2005), which presents the complex concept of culture. With this concept, culture is seen as something that is temporal, emergent, unpredictable, constantly changing and is seen as consisting of knowledge, meanings and values shared with one another. Meanwhile it also recognizes that not everyone in a nation may share these same elements of culture (Kahn, 1989; Jensen, 2007). This concept encourages a complex view that considers events longitudinally instead of statically and captures the dynamic nature of culture. However, it may "miss the very elements that create the process (the structures) and neglect the purposive nature (function) of an activity" (Hecht, Baldwin & Faulkner, 2005, p. 57).

In relation to the educational practice, a process perspective seems to allow for possibilities to emphasize change, development, practices and procedures of culture – not only to see what culture is, but also to see how culture operates. It is therefore employed as a theoretical standing point from which to understand culture in this

study. If culture is dynamic, complex and multidimensional with rich meanings, how can culture be taught and learned in meaningful ways, in particular, within formal curricula which are often established within certain frameworks?

Culture Teaching and Learning Approaches

In order to explore answers to the aforementioned question, we find it important to first understand how people learn a culture. Many scholars agree that a culture is passed on from one generation to the next by learning (Hatch, 1985; Bonner, 1980). The ways that a person acquires a culture is "from contact with other persons or from such things as books or works of art, knowledge, skills, ideas, beliefs, tastes, sentiments" (Baldwin et al., 2005, p.43). That is, one can learn his/her own culture in everyday life through contact with other persons and products. From this, one may ask how it is possible to learn another culture, in particular, a foreign culture.

In a globalized age, people are exposed to a world with different cultures. They can learn a foreign culture through an acculturation process (Berry, 2005) or through intercultural relationships (Martin & Nakayama, 2007). Since culture is being paid more and more attention, foreign culture learning is also included as learning contents within formal educational settings. At the university level, foreign cultures are often subjects in second/foreign language education and cultural study programs. The teaching and learning of foreign cultures normally aims at developing the learners' cultural awareness and understandings (Byram, 1994; Byram et al., 1994, Aktor & Risager, 2001).

In foreign language education, to deliver the knowledge of the target culture, foreign language teachers often focus on three "P"s of culture[1]: products, practices and perspectives, where products are elements of the traditional view of culture as theatre, music and dance; practices are cultural elements such as bowing, shaking hands, etc.; and perspectives are the underlying values and beliefs of a people. The three "P"s of culture present the descriptive aspects of a foreign culture. However, more and more researchers and teachers are paying attention to cultural experiences and real-world contacts to explore the complexity of culture (Byram, 1989; Steele & Suozzo, 1994; Peterson & Coltrane, 2003). Thus, some real-world sources or activities, such as authentic materials, role play and ethnographic studies (activities involving the target-language community), are also often used for presenting the target culture in the language classroom. A comparative approach is frequently used to develop the students' cultural awareness in the foreign language classroom (Byram et al., 1994).

Relevant literature shows that in current cultural study programs at the university level, the teaching and learning content often focuses on knowledge of the target culture and/or culture theories from relevant research fields such as anthropology, sociology, communication studies, cross-cultural psychology, etc. (Byram, 1994; Singelis, 1998). A wide range of alternative approaches are conducted in cultural study programs such as the lecture-based approach, task-based and problem-solving approaches and the problem/project-based approach, etc. (Byram et al., 1994; Risager, 1993; Singelis, 1998). Risager (1993) studied a two-year International Cultural Studies program (1991-1993) by using a problem-oriented project-based

learning approach at Roskilde University, Denmark. Each semester the students worked on a large group project to solve a certain problem. They were required to write a project report for each semester and then had a compulsory final oral examination in a group discussion form at the end of the program. The teachers worked as supervisors for the groups in relation to the project report writing. This program emphasized student-centred learning, group work and problem-solving. The rationale of this program is similar to the background of this study, and its characteristics were found inspiring in the course design of this study.

Therefore, culture learning not only takes place in one's daily life but can also be facilitated in formal educational settings. In relation to a formal curriculum context, based on the complex concept of culture, this study suggests that culture learning requires a supportive environment where learning can take place in a meaningful way, in particular, when the focus is on developing cultural awareness and understanding. Important elements to facilitate the meaningfulness of culture learning include: 1) a student-centered learning environment where sufficient attention is given to learners' interests and motivation, 2) teaching content should provide opportunities for learners to see how theories can be linked to real life in a meaningful context and to see the dynamic and changing nature of culture, and 3) diverse methods must be employed to facilitate learners' active participation in activities and reflection upon their experiences through communicating and collaborating with others. In such a learning environment, the role of teachers is also shifted from that of transferring factual knowledge to facilitating learning through creating learning opportunities and assisting with reflection.

A PBL Approach to Learning

As discussed above, culture can be taught within formal curricula, but learning does not take place unconditionally. To make learning meaningful, a well-thought out methodology is essential.

The Problem-Based Learning (PBL) method is an educational philosophy as well as a methodology emphasizing student-centered learning. Rooted in constructivism, it advocates a holistic approach to learning and focuses not only on learning outcomes, but also on a meaningful learning process with learners' active participation. In the past half a century, PBL has been implemented globally in diverse social cultural contexts within a wide range of disciplines such as medicine, engineering, business studies, law, administration and language studies, among others. In practice, PBL can be carried out in many forms, such as project, case, scenario, etc. The International Cultural Studies program at Roskilde University provides an example of foreign culture learning through project work-organized PBL. In general, PBL is seen as an effective and efficient approach to facilitating student-centered learning (Du, 2011; 2012).

Worldwide, the application of PBL in language education (where cultural studies are often part of the curricula) started in the 1980s, and it has mainly taken the form of project-based learning. The project work in language teaching focuses on: 1) learners' participation in new knowledge gaining and exploration through communicative work with outside curricula, 2) learners' outcome production and 3)

written or oral reports and presentations (Wrigley, 1998; Eyring 2001). So far, PBL in language learning is mainly implemented in the curricula for above-beginner level learners in the field of teaching English as a foreign language. Nevertheless, recent interest has led to its application in other language teaching and cultural studies such as French, German and Spanish language and culture (Cancino, 2004) and Chinese language and culture (Du & Kirkebæk, 2012). Micro-level studies on PBL within language and culture programs have reported students' satisfaction with their own motivation, participation and learning outcomes (Savignon, 1991; Wrigley, 1998, Eyring, 2001; Kemaloglu, 2010; Du & Kirkebæk, 2012); research in the area, however, remains limited.

   In relation to the aforementioned supportive environment for culture learning, a PBL methodology shares similar characteristics: a belief in learner-centeredness, focus on learning processes with learners' active participation and experiences, meaningful content and contexts, and facilitation as the major role of teaching. With these commonalities, PBL can be employed as a methodology for designing and delivering a supportive environment for culture learning (in this study, a Chinese culture course).

A PBL-inspired Approach for Culture Learning

In relation to the PBL methodology, due to the complex concept of culture and the advocated learning environment necessary for culture learning, a PBL-inspired approach can be suggested for use in culture teaching and learning. Inspired by the principles for teaching and learning with a task-based PBL concept (Du and Kirkebæk, 2012), the following principles have been established to serve as a guideline for the design and delivery of a PBL-inspired approach for culture teaching and learning.

1. A PBL-inspired approach emphasizes learners' motivation as an essence of learning. In relation to culture learning, a PBL-inspired approach focuses on encouraging learners to learn the target culture by participating in meaningful activities in a motivating context.
2. A PBL-inspired approach stresses learning culture through experiences. Learning is a process where knowledge is created through the transformation of experiences (Jarvis, Holford & Griffin, 1998; Kolb, 1984). In a classroom setting, learners will gain knowledge about the target culture as well as develop cultural awareness and understanding through reflecting upon their experiences.
3. A PBL-inspired approach requires learners' active participation in the learning process. In order to achieve a certain learning goal, it is important for an individual to participate actively in activities and interact with others in the situated context (Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1998; Lave, 2009). To better understand the target culture, it also requires the learners' active participation and interaction with others in the learning process.
4. A PBL-inspired approach underlines the importance of collaborative learning. It can make maximum use of cooperative activities involving small groups of learners in the classroom (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Learning a foreign culture in a collaborative context, the learners can learn to exchange opinions

with others, compromise or support each other when solving certain problems in groups. They not only gain knowledge about a culture, but they also develop their learning skills and a culture of learning is promoted.

5. A PBL-inspired approach highlights the association with the real world due to its focus on meaning-making instead of the structure and function of culture. The link between theory and real-world practice is presumed to be of help to the students' cultural awareness and motivation.

6. It emphasizes the important role of the social learning context on culture learning. Both teaching staff and learners are expected to handle concrete problem analysis by solving problem and solution argumentation in accordance with their situated contexts.

These proposed principles are mainly based on culture learning beliefs and theoretical assumptions and thus remain tentative. They will serve as a guideline in designing educational practices while remaining open to revision based on the empirical experiences.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A study focusing on a particular case was conducted to implement the idea of the aforementioned proposal of a PBL-inspired approach to culture learning. Based on the principles discussed in the previous section, PBL-inspired teaching and learning activities were designed and delivered in a Chinese culture course at the university level. In this paper we report the design, operation and evaluation of the course.

An investigation was conducted during the spring semester[2] 2012 to study how this method works with regard to students' participation, motivation and learning experiences. This study also aimed to evaluate the course design and the PBL-inspired methodology in culture learning. Multiple methods were used for data generation:

- Observation of the process for the whole course duration.
- A questionnaire designed by the CI-AAU team for the course participants (students) to evaluate the course.
- An official evaluation form distributed to the course participants (students) by the study program.
- Interviews with course participants (students) and the involved teachers.

Table 4.1. Teaching team's background

Teacher	Nationality	Age	Field of work	Role in this course
A	Chinese	Late 30s	Educational research	Design and research
B	Chinese	20s	Language education and research	Design, delivery and research
C	Danish	40s	Language education and research	Design, delivery and assessment
D	Danish	Early 30s	Cultural studies	Design and delivery
E	Danish	20s	Project manager	Design and delivery

Observation is viewed as a satisfying technique to use in investigation (Simpson & Tuson, 2008). Its key strengths are that it can give direct access to social interactions and enrich and supplement data gathered by other techniques. In this study, the observer was also a member of the teaching team (see Table 4.1). In addition to participating in the course design and delivery of two teaching units, the observer also participated in the course through note taking, keeping a research journal, doing interviews and participating in informal talks with course participants and teaching staff, as well as collecting evaluation forms.

Questionnaires were used to conduct student evaluation of the six team-based activities. Course participants were asked to give their opinions on how relevant the activities had been for them on a scale of one to five (where one is of almost no relevance and five is most relevant). Space for free comments or suggestions was also included. Copies of this questionnaire were distributed to the five (out of the total eight students in the class) who attended the last teaching unit of the course.

The official evaluation form was distributed online by the study program after the course. Course participants were asked to choose an answer to eight multiple choice questions about the students' opinions regarding content and learning outcomes. The CI teaching team received a report of the evaluation form from the study program.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted after the conclusion of the course with two teachers and four students who participated in the course with an aim to further understand their perceptions of the new teaching experiment. One of the teachers was the main teacher and coordinator of the course. The students were interviewed regarding their 1) motivation in the study of Chinese culture, 2) opinions on the teaching method used in the course, 3) learning experiences in the course, 4) challenges and suggestions for the course etc. The teachers were interviewed regarding their 1) perception of culture teaching and learning, 2) opinions on the teaching method and the motivation and performance of the students, 3) challenges and reflections. The length of the interviews varied from 18 minutes to 65 minutes. They were transcribed in early 2013. The transcription was coded using a "meaning condensation" approach (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The interview was also used as a way to verify the results of the observation and questionnaires.

The study uses multiple methods of generating data in order to give an in-depth understanding as well as an overview of different perspectives.

THE CASE: A PBL-INSPIRED TEACHING DESIGN IN A CHINESE CULTURE COURSE

Course Background

Aalborg University (AAU) is one of the pioneer universities in the world for implementing PBL at an institutional level. Since its establishment in 1974, Problem and Project-based Learning has been well employed in all disciplines. In the AAU-PBL Model, a problem is the starting point of the learning process, which

grows out of students' wondering within different disciplines and professional environments (Barge, 2010). The problem-solving process is organized by group project work lasting five months. Lecture-based courses go hand-in-hand with the project work. Courses are assessed independently of project assessment.

China Area Studies (CAS) is a specialization within a bachelor degree study program in the Faculty of Humanities. This specialization is offered in the third year and final year of the degree program and includes the fifth and the sixth semesters of study. The course consists of four different modules: Chinese civics, Chinese culture, Chinese written language and Chinese oral language. The Chinese culture course is a 10 ECTS[3] course in the fifth semester and a five ECTS course in the sixth semester of the CAS program. The formal overall teaching and learning objectives of the sixth semester are the following, as stated in the study guideline[4]:

During this teaching unit, students should acquire:

Knowledge and understanding of

– selected areas within Chinese religion and philosophy.
– selected areas within Chinese aesthetics.
– interaction in a Chinese context.
– theories and methods related to the fields of the subject.

Skills in

– independent analysis and discussion of cultural aspects of Chinese society within areas such as religion, philosophy and aesthetics from a comparative perspective by means of theoretical and methodological tools.

Competencies in

– placing knowledge of Chinese cultural conditions in a global perspective.
– structuring one's own learning in relation to a given assignment.

In the fifth semester of the Chinese culture course, students are requested to conduct a group project worth 10 ECTS. Parallel to the project work, students are offered 10 teaching units (two hours per unit) that are often delivered through a lecture-based method. There is no group project in the sixth semester due to time constraints brought on by students' thesis projects necessary for graduation. Instead, students are required to pass an external, written two-day examination consisting of a written assignment at the end of the semester. Parallel to the exam, students are also offered 10 teaching units on Chinese culture. This Chinese culture course has been offered since 2009. With the exception of the group project in the fifth semester, the course has mainly used a lecture-based method. Normally 10 independent lectures are delivered on different topics every semester. An essay is then submitted by each individual student as the assessment method at the end of the sixth semester.

In spring 2012, the Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning at AAU (AAU CI) took over the responsibility of teaching the Chinese culture, written language and oral language courses. A team of five faculty members decided to conduct collaborative teaching and made changes in the teaching method in the Chinese culture course. The five faculty members had diverse backgrounds in terms

of nationality, age, fields of study and roles in this course, which was assumed to bring different perspectives of a complex Chinese culture. They designed the course using a PBL-inspired approach and four of them participated in the actual course delivery. For the teaching staff's backgrounds, see Table 4.1.

Course Design

The teaching team expected the students to achieve the following learning goals:

– To acquire the basic knowledge of the relevant aspects of Chinese culture.
– To develop cultural awareness and understanding through meaningful team-based activities.
– To establish a complex understanding of Chinese culture.
– To develop learning skills such as problem-solving skills and self-directed learning skills.
– To analyze and discuss cultural aspects of China independently from a comparative perspective by means of theoretical and methodological tools.
– To critically reflect on the usefulness and possible limitations of the texts, lectures and real-life experiences they are exposed to.

The teaching team designed the content and method of the course cooperatively. They designed four topics based on their own interests and experience. The topics and who the responsible teacher for each topic was as follows: 1) cultural theories overview (teacher C), 2) Understanding Chinese educational culture (teacher D), 3) Chinese business culture (teacher E), 4) Chinese family culture in a cross-culture context and acculturation (teacher B).

Each teacher was responsible for a topic. Every topic was given at least two teaching units, except the first lesson which was only given one teaching unit. Each teaching unit lasted two hours. Teachers were required to prepare relevant theories for each topic and upload them to Moodle (a system for communication between teachers and students at AAU) for the students to read before reaching the classroom.

With the principles and objectives, the course departed from a PBL-inspired concept. Team-based activities were at the center of the course. For the overall course design, see Table 4.2.

At the end of the semester, an assignment was designed by teacher C (see Table 4.1) using a case closely connected to real life:

A Danish machinery company has started cooperating with a Chinese industrial firm and plans to send two employees to China. One is going to work in Shanghai in the research and development unit of the Chinese company. The other is going inland to set up new production lines in two of the Chinese partner's factories in Shanxi province. The Danish company has hired you to introduce the two Danish employees to Chinese (business) culture and prepare them for their first trip to China.

The students were required to analyze this case through an external, written two-day examination. The design of the examination paper reflected the following teaching and learning goals: students were not only asked to reproduce knowledge from texts they had read during the semester, but were also expected to reflect critically on these texts and show how they would use their theoretical knowledge about Chinese culture in a real-life situation.

Course Delivery

Eight students registered for this course, five female and three male. All of them were Danish. Most of the students were studying both International Business Communication and Chinese Area Studies, while one of them was a high school teacher. They were beginners to Chinese language courses.

Here, three of the activities are presented as examples to show how the course was delivered. The third topic was aimed to facilitate learning about the educational culture in China by teaching it to others. Students were divided into two groups and asked to conduct a mini project consisting of organizing a two-hour teaching activity in two local schools (a lower secondary school and a high school). Three teaching units were included (see table 4-2, teaching units two to four). In teaching unit two, students spent 40 minutes working in teams discussing how to teach Chinese educational culture to school students, what content they should include and how the content should be presented in order to maximize learning outcomes. After the discussion, they presented a teaching plan as a group. Group A chose to present the Chinese one child policy to the lower secondary school students and group B decided to present their fifth semester project about Chinese food in Aalborg to the high school students. They were also expected to relate the teaching practices to relevant culture theories. After teaching unit two, students had one week to prepare for the teaching practice as a team. During their preparation work, both groups made adjustments to their original plans. Group A designed a team-based activity for school students to participate in in order to teach and learn about Chinese youth culture because they assumed that this topic would be more interesting to school students and the method would be more motivating than giving a presentation. Instead of a presentation of their previous project report, Group B introduced interesting Chinese food by showing pictures from their previous trips to China. By doing so, they hoped to give their audience, the high school students, a glimpse of real Chinese life. Both groups omitted the presentations about culture theories because they did not think that theories in this context would make sense to their audience. During the process, the course participants showed an increase in their concern for the learners and the learning goals. Based on these concerns, they tried to develop meaningful methods to make their teaching interesting and useful to their audience.

The third topic was learning about Chinese business culture though two example cases planned for the course participants. The first was meeting with a representative from the public sector who was experienced in collaborating with Chinese organizations, and the second was visiting a Danish company who had

Table 4.2. The overall course design

Topic	Teaching unit	Activity	Methods	Facilitator
Topic 1 Cultural theories overview	1	Discussions	Learning by reviewing and discussing cultural theories	Teacher C
Topic 2 Understanding Chinese educational culture	2	Preparing teaching and discussions	A mini project of teaching practices	Teacher D
	3	Student teaching practices at schools	Learning by doing	Teacher C, Teacher D & Teacher B
	4	Students' presentations and discussions	Reflecting on experiences	Teacher C & Teacher D
Topic 3 Chinese business culture	5	Discussions	Learning by discussing relevant theories	Teacher E
	6	Guest lecture (a chief surgeon from Aalborg hospital) and problem-solving task	Learning from real-life cases and Problem-solving	Teacher E
	7	Students visit a local company	Learning by experiencing	Teacher C
	8	Student presentations and discussions	Reflection	Teacher C
Topic 4 Chinese family culture in a cross-culture context and acculturation	9	Student interviews with Chinese mothers from immigrant families in Aalborg(one from mainland China, one from Hong Kong)	Learning by questioning and exploring answers via communicative experiences	Teacher B
	10	Student presentations and discussions	Reflection	Teacher B

business contacts in China. CI-AAU had previously facilitated collaboration between Aalborg hospital and several local companies and Chinese partners. Through these contacts a chief surgeon from Aalborg hospital was invited to present his experiences, in particular, the difficulties and barriers he experienced in cultural encounters. Students were expected to discuss these challenges and issues and provide their proposed solutions in the discussion with the course facilitator. They identified that a list of culture-related theories could be linked to interpret the case provided by the guest lecturer. For the second case, students visited a local Danish company who had their production lines in China. The company had experienced rather different cultural experiences than those discussed in the hospital case. In this case, the real-world experience did not match the theories in the books. The two different cases helped students learn the complexity of real-life problems and develop their own understanding of Chinese culture as well as their own culture (Danish culture).

Course Evaluation and Reflection

The following sections discuss the students' and teachers' reflections and evaluations on the implementation of the PBL-inspired method in the Chinese culture course. The aims are to discuss 1) how the PBL-inspired course design and delivery is perceived by the students and teaching staff involved, 2) what the students and teaching staff think of culture learning in general and, in particular, using the PBL method, 3) what the challenges and possibilities for successfully implementing a PBL-inspired approach to culture teaching and learning are.

Empirical data mainly comes from the following resources: 1) observation of students' performance during the course, 2) questionnaires and official evaluation forms from the students after the course, 3) semi-structured interviews with the students after the course, 4) reflection discussions and meetings held with three out of the five teaching staff after the course and interviews conducted with the other two teaching staff who were not present in the meeting.

The results of the questionnaire, official evaluations, interviews and observations showed that the students were, generally highly satisfied with the topics, content, activities and methods as well as their learning outcomes from the course. The teachers were also satisfied with the students' performance and the teaching design and delivery process. The course motivated students in the learning process and helped them to develop their cultural awareness and understanding – not only of the target culture, but also of their own culture and other cultures. These results indicate that the experiment of using a PBL-inspired method in this context fulfilled the expectation of facilitating culture learning in a meaningful way.

Perceptions of the PBL-inspired approach   The students appreciated the teaching methodology change in the course. They had many of positive comments and suggested that the teaching team continue to apply the methods. They thought the methods were "interesting", "practical" and "diverse" because they included both lectures and team-based activities. Furthermore, it involved different teachers who brought different cultural perspectives. They pointed out that the activities provided

them opportunities for "solving some problems in groups cooperatively for a certain goal" and relating "theories to real life" which they thought was very important for culture learning. Compared to the project work-organized PBL method in the International Cultural Studies program at Roskilde University, as Risager (1993) describes, the course design in this study shares many commonalities such as the emphasis on student-centeredness, encouragement of students' active participation in problem-solving activities and collaborative learning, among others. In these ways, the students not only learn about the foreign culture itself, but also learn how to take responsibility for their own learning. Nevertheless, experiences from this course also reflect certain differences from the program that Risager (1993) presents. Although there was no report on the effectiveness of their program, we can assume that students had more time to formulate real-life problems on their own when conducting a semester-long (5 month long) project. In this study, we employed a PBL- inspired method within a 5 ECTS course, which allows for approximately two hours of teaching for each unit. This course length limits the space in which students can identify programs on their own, and it also limits the breadth of the problems.

The students and the teachers were positive about many different angles of the learning outcomes. The students emphasized the development of their cultural awareness, cultural understanding and their knowledge mastery in the interviews. They stated that they were more confident in regard to a future career after participating in this course. On the official evaluation form, when they were asked if the course had given them good learning outcomes in relation to the learning objectives, the students only ticked "totally agree" and "agree." The teachers focused on the development of the students' problem-solving skills and self-directed learning skills. The teachers highlighted that in this course the students not only gained knowledge of Chinese culture, but also developed their learning skills in team-based activities. For example, when the two groups designed their teaching task in schools (see teaching unit three in table 4-2), they held meetings in their spare time and tried to solve problems concerning the content and method in a collaborative manner. This was exactly what the teaching team had hoped for.

Compared to the teaching units with lectures, the teachers found that students showed a different degree of engagement in the team-based activities. Teacher E (see teaching unit five and six in table 4-2.) described it as follows:

> The first time we just had the traditional lecture, in which the students had read some texts, and I gave a presentation, and then we discussed the presentation of the texts. It was okay, but it wasn't fantastic… Two or three of them were quite active and six of them were not very active. The second time, I think three of them were really active and the other six also joined in more. They were more engaged. (The total number of students is actually only 8, not 9.)

The "first time" in the description was referring to teaching unit five and "second time" meant teaching unit six, where a Chief Surgeon from Aalborg Hospital gave a guest lecture. After the lecture, the students were required to analyze the problems from the real-life setting and where asked to find solutions to the problems. The

students learned the Chinese culture through other people's real experience. This also provided motivation and engagement.

Perceptions of culture learning   The teaching team designed the course based on their perception of culture and culture learning. They believe that one cannot only learn about culture through books and lectures. Real-world experience (see teaching unit three, six, seven, and nine) and active participation are the essence of cultural learning because the dynamic and complex nature of culture can be understood more directly through real-life experiences and through a high degree of participation. The teaching team expected the students to better understand the cultures and develop their cultural awareness by using these methods.

The students had an understanding of culture and culture learning in harmony with that of the teaching team. They believed culture is complex and "is changing constantly and evolving into something different all the time." Thus, one "cannot just read a lot of books and then think 'I know what Chinese culture is'". The complex and dynamic nature of culture made it challenging for them to learn about Chinese culture. However, it was also a motivating element of their learning. They emphasized the importance of culture learning and voted the Chinese culture course to be the most important course within the program. They argued that the culture course had developed their cultural awareness and understanding. After participating in the activities, they found themselves more open to other cultures and felt they better understood "how culture works, not only Chinese culture", "why cultures are different", "how to behave in another cultural context" and "how to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds." They believed that what they gained from this course would be useful in their future career. In this course, the teaching team also delivered some relevant cultural theories to present the descriptive aspects of culture. The students also found them to be important and helpful. They described how the theories prepared them for the team-based activities and they used the theories "quite a lot" in their reflection report. When explaining why the theories are important, they pointed out that "you need some kind of background (knowledge) before you just go out and talk about it." This indicates that the descriptive aspects of culture are also important and necessary for culture learning.

In this course, the teachers and the students shared the same understanding of culture and culture learning, and both highlighted the diverse methods and learning outcomes. From the observation and assessment, it was noticed that the students, to a great extent, achieved pre-defined learning goals. They gained the knowledge of both descriptive and complex Chinese culture, developed their own learning skills and cultural awareness, grew capable of critically reflecting on their own learning process and were able to analyze certain aspects of Chinese culture independently. These learning outcomes may indicate that the design of the course focusing on student-centeredness, diverse methods and real-life experiences is a meaningful way to help with culture learning in a PBL environment.

Reflections   In general, this study draws similar conclusions as previous studies with regards to students' performance achievements being linked to students'

interest and motivation, eagerness to learn, active participation and engagement in the teaching and learning activities, high level of self-satisfaction, etc. However, in addition, the authors of this chapter have the following reflections.

Firstly, communication between the teaching staff and the students concerning expectations of the course content and methods needs to be improved. Although the students were all very satisfied with the course design, their understanding of the method was not necessarily PBL as the teaching team claimed. This was not observed until the students were interviewed. According to the students, in some situations, the unclear instructions seem to have led to some misunderstandings and confusion about the learning goals. For example, some students did not understand why they had needed to teach culture in a school and write a short reflection paper afterwards since they did not plan to work as a school teacher in the future. However, during the interviews they realized that all the activities could be very useful for their own development and future career. With a better understanding of the expectations of the course, the students may have participated in the activities in an even more active and self-directed manner. This reflection indicates that when implementing a new teaching method, it is essential to communicate effectively with students to provide them with the knowledge and skills to manage the methods. Likewise, agreement and support from students can be of great help for the success of the implementation. In the case of the teaching team, communication between teaching staff is also highly important throughout the process of course delivery so that the later stages of facilitation can be tailored and reshaped according to lessons learned in the beginning.

Secondly, assessment methods remain a challenge. Although the students' performance and participation in the activities demonstrated their interest and motivation as well as abundant capabilities, an effective method to assess culture learning is needed. It is also challenging to assess the effect of PBL in such a context. In particular, in this study, the course reform was due to the divergent understandings of culture, which challenged the assessment design of the course. The assessment method developed for this course was also an attempt to experiment with evaluating students' learning via their own written reflections. However, this paper did not address the discussion of this assessment method due to limited space. This study argues that in future courses, it is important to implement efficient assessment methods that are aligned with the teaching methods and learning objectives. Inspiring methods that can be tested include peer- assessment learning and process-focused method. Implementing appropriate assessment methods that aim to maximize learning is also challenged by institutional policies and facilities, among other issues.

Thirdly, this study intends to emphasize the complex and dynamic nature of culture. With this assumption, the teaching team designed the course by employing diverse methods and involving teachers with diverse backgrounds which the students highlighted both in questionnaire, official evaluation form and interviews, by saying the diversity brought different perspectives to the course. Students' high motivation and active participation in the activities demonstrated their understanding of the complexity of culture as well as their capabilities of handling the dynamic nature of culture. Especially in the practice of designing Chinese

culture teaching at Danish schools and interviewing Chinese mothers from different regions of China, the students adjusted the way of doing the tasks/due to their awareness of complex culture and their intention of delivering the dynamic culture. Nevertheless, our findings also show that the descriptive aspects of culture have been an important learning interests and outcome to these students, in particular, for those who had limited prior knowledge about Chinese culture. This indicates that it is difficult to divide descriptive and complex culture in a learner-centered educational setting, because individuals are different from each other in their learning needs.

CONCLUSION

This paper presents and discusses a study of designing and implementing a PBL-inspired approach in culture learning at a course level. The pilot study was conducted in a Chinese culture course at Aalborg University. Results of this study showed that both students and teaching staff appreciated a supportive environment to learn culture. Preferred characteristics include 1) relevant contents including not only descriptive culture but also complex and dynamic aspects of culture, 2) motivating activities that apply theories to practice and give real-life experiences, 3) diverse learning methods and sources that emphasize student-centred learning. The following conclusions can be drawn from the study. Firstly, culture can be learned in a formal educational setting when appropriate methods and contents are provided so that learning takes place in a meaningful way. Secondly, PBL can be a positive and meaningful method to support culture learning in a formal educational setting; however, it demands proper understanding of the methods from both teaching staff and students. Finally, facilitating culture learning is not transferring factual knowledge about descriptive culture, but more about facilitating meaningful learning by developing the students' cultural awareness and understanding.

NOTES

1. It can be found in American National Standards for Foreign Language Education (ACTFL, 1999). See http://www.actfl.org/publications/all/national-standards-foreign-language-education.
2. In Aalborg University and the rest of Denmark, one academic year consists of two semesters: spring semester is from February 1 to June 30; autumn semester is from September 1 to January 31.
3. ECTS: European Credit Transfer System. Each student is expected to earn 30 ECTS per semester and each ECTS is equivalent of 30 hours' work.
4. This study guideline is sent to the teachers in a Word file by email. The general guidelines for the students contain some similar descriptions and can be found at http://www.studyguide.aau.dk/programmes/postgraduate/55759/.

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Paper 3: Tasks and learner motivation in learning Chinese as a foreign language

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Tasks and learner motivation in learning Chinese as a foreign language

Youjin Ruan[a]*, Xiaoju Duan[a,b] and Xiang Yun Du[a]

[a]Department of Learning and Philosophy, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark;
[b]Institute of Psychology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing, People's Republic of China

This study focuses on how beginner learners in a task-based teaching and learning (TBTL) environment perceive what is motivating to them in the process of learning Chinese as a foreign language at Aalborg University, Denmark. Drawing upon empirical data from surveys, group interviews and participant observation, this study explores which kinds of tasks are perceived as motivating from the students' perspective and which characteristics the learners associate with motivating tasks. The study indicates that it is important to consider the learners' affective factors and learning situation factors, which can boost learners' intrinsic motivation, when designing a task, especially at a beginning stage of foreign language learning, and to integrate cultural elements into tasks as an added value to motivate learners. Finally, this study identifies challenges and barriers related to TBTL that beginner-level students may find discouraging. It is suggested that motivating learners to continue learning the language and encouraging active participation may be more important than developing their linguistic accuracy and fluency in the given context.

Keywords: task-based teaching and learning; motivation; beginners; Chinese as a foreign language; cultural elements

Introduction

Given the growing political and economic importance of China in the world today, studying the Chinese language has become a more attractive option for students in many countries. There are a number of challenges in encouraging growth in this area, despite the increasing number of Chinese language learners, including difficulty in sustaining motivation (Du & Kirkebæk, 2012), low student retention rates (Wen, 1997; Yu & Watkins, 2008) and lack of research on Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) motivation (Cai & Zhu, 2012). The perceived difficulty of the Chinese language (Mandarin) due to its different tone and orthographic systems may also create major affective and motivational barriers for speakers of European languages (Wen, 1997; Yu & Watkins, 2008). CFL education at Danish universities faces the same challenges, especially in newly offered beginner-level elective courses. Maintaining students' interest has become the main objective of these

courses. This study focuses on one such course at a Danish university. The rapid development of CFL teaching and its attendant challenges have strengthened the call for a research agenda, particularly for research into classroom teaching and learning in a variety of contexts (Tsung & Cruickshank, 2011). One of these is CFL as an elective.

Research on language motivation has focused mainly on second language acquisition in the teaching and learning of Western languages. Only recently has the range of research broadened to the teaching and learning of non-Western languages as foreign languages, including CFL (Cai & Zhu, 2012; Wen, 1997; Yu & Watkins, 2008). Furthermore, studies of motivation in various contexts have focused on what motivation is, how to measure learner motivation and the relationships between motivation and variables such as achievement, persistence of learning and use of strategies (Dörnyei & Schmidt, 2001). Relatively little attention has been paid to the relationship between teaching and learning practice and learner motivation in a classroom setting.

Previous studies have shown that many students and teachers find completing tasks a motivating and effective method of education (Du & Kirkebæk, 2012; Edwards & Willis, 2005). A few studies have further discussed the connection between language learning tasks and motivation (Du & Kirkebæk, 2012; Julkunen, 2001), and have suggested that some language learning tasks may be used to intensify learners' motivation in language learning. However, only a limited number of studies have addressed the issue of teaching and learning CFL in a task-based teaching and learning (TBTL) environment, especially in an elective course aimed at maintaining beginner-level learners' motivation to learn the language in question.

Aalborg University (AAU), Denmark, where this study was conducted, has implemented a problem/project-based learning (PBL) approach at an institutional level since its inauguration in 1974. Similar to the PBL approach, TBTL also emphasises student-centredness, learner's active participation and others. A research project was initiated in 2011, with an aim to observe, understand and evaluate how an alternative approach, the TBTL method, could help students learn Chinese at AAU. In a previous study (Du, Ruan, Wang, & Duan, 2015), we found that many students felt motivated to learn in a TBTL environment. However, some students reflected critically on how the language tasks could have been better designed to be effective and motivating. This paper summarises part of this longitudinal research with a focus on the degree to which beginner learners from diverse backgrounds perceive selected tasks as being motivating for learning Chinese at the beginner level, and also contributes to research in the fields of TBTL in CFL teaching and learning and CFL motivation. Three research questions are addressed in this paper:

(1) To what extent do the tasks make the students feel motivated to learn Chinese?
(2) What characteristics do the learners associate with the motivating tasks?
(3) What are the challenges of implementing TBTL in the CFL course?

Using pre- and post-course surveys, group interviews and participant observation, we documented the motivating effects of the tasks used in late 2012 and early 2013. The analysis in this paper focuses on learners' perceptions of the tasks.

Literature review

TBTL in language education

As a method derived from the communicative approach, TBTL has attracted considerable attention from researchers, curriculum developers, educationalists and language teachers since the 1980s (Van den Branden, 2006). It emphasises student-centredness, active participation, interaction and cooperative learning (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Tasks are central to TBTL. In the literature, 'task' has been defined in various ways based on different perspectives and scopes (for an overview see Ellis, 2003; Van den Branden, 2006). However, there seems to be a general agreement that a 'task', distinguishing from a language-teaching activity, must satisfy the following criteria (Ellis, 2009. P.223):

(1) The primary focus should be on 'meaning' (by which is meant that learners should be mainly concerned with processing the sematic and pragmatic meaning of utterances).
(2) There should be some kind of 'gap' (i.e. a need to convey information, to express an opinion or to infer meaning).
(3) Learners should largely have to rely on their own resources (linguistic and non-linguistic) in order to complete the activity.
(4) There is a clearly defined outcome other than the use of language.

We follow these four criteria of a task when selecting tasks in this study. Concerning the defined outcome, Ellis (2003) emphasises the fact that a task is a 'work-plan', and, as such, task designers cannot determine the outcomes of their planned tasks, which demonstrates that the expected task outcomes may be influenced by other forces during the learning process.

Designing motivating tasks for foreign language learning

In relation to learner motivation, it is suggested that certain learning tasks can be more attractive and motivating than others, such as tasks with an optimal amount of uncertainty and unpredictability, or open tasks (Julkunen, 2001). Though the term 'learning task' here is used to represent a broader concept, encompassing both the 'task' we define in this study and other learning activities. This inspires us that teachers may intentionally design language tasks to be motivating for language learning.

In communicative language education, discussions of task design have mostly focused on the teaching and learning of English and other European languages. Recently, with the development of Chinese teaching and learning, a few researchers have begun to study task design and implementation in CFL education (Du & Kirkebæk, 2012; Kirkebæk & Du, 2013). Their research indicates the importance of

considering context, teaching and learning goals, task type, task structure, task complexity and other factors when designing a task. In this study, we believe it is important to select task types and task components – that is, which kind of task to use, and what elements to include in a task design – based on the teaching objective and the context.

Researchers have proposed a variety of task types. For example, two broad categories of tasks are discussed by Ellis (2003) and Nunan (2004): focused tasks, which induce learners to follow a particular structure; and unfocused tasks, which make use of any available resources. Kirkebæk and Du (2013) invite several CFL teachers to write down their self-designed tasks. They find it important to offer a high degree of openness and flexibility in designing tasks. Therefore, they also use these two broad categories to sort the collected tasks in their booklet. Furthermore, they point out that teaching and learning are highly context-dependent activities; thus, the way of categorising tasks can also differ depending on the context. The discussions also pay attention to other task variables, such as learners' participatory organisation (i.e. teacher-led, group work or pair work format), task structure and task complexity (Pica & Doughty, 1985; Long, 1989; Poupore, 2006; Duran & Ramaut, 2006). Research on these task types and variables has found that (1) unfocused tasks are best used at the beginning of a language course, as early stages of language acquisition do not require much focus on form (Ellis, 2003); (2) tasks with open structures lead to higher levels of intrinsic interest for learners by providing them with more opportunities to make their own decisions (Julkunen, 2001; Poupore, 2006); (3) more negotiation and interaction occur in tasks involving group work (Long, 1989; Pica & Doughty, 1985) and (4) it is important to control, manipulate and balance task complexity, especially with learners at a basic language level (Duran & Ramaut, 2006). We found all these suggestions useful in our task design, the ultimate purpose of which was to design motivating tasks for beginner learners.

Many scholars have also suggested setting components for designing a task (Nunan, 2004; Shavelson & Stern, 1981). Nunan (2004) argues that a task is comprises of task goals, input data, learner procedures, teacher and learner roles and setting. In this study, the context (the university, the course and the learning situation), the learner (learners' interest and motivation, from Shavelson & Stern, 1981) and cultural elements (integrated to task goals, input data or learner procedures) have been added into Nunan's task framework to guide task design. In a foreign language situation, learners may rarely have the opportunity to interact with the target culture, which makes it important to also include cultural elements in the task design.

Based on the context and the course objective, selected tasks have addressed communicative, sociocultural, learning-how-to-learn, and language- and cultural awareness-related goals (Nunan adapted from Clark, 1987). These tasks often use group work as a setting to increase cooperation and cohesiveness among students, thus, to promote a positive affective climate and motivate learners (Long & Porter, 1985); and also frequently integrate cultural elements to promote intercultural learning through language use (East, 2012). The selected tasks, designed based on

these components, are expected to promote both learner motivation and language learning in this study.

Motivation in foreign language education

It is widely accepted that learners' language motivation plays an important role in foreign/second language learning. However, there is little agreement in the literature with regard to the concept of language learning motivation (Dörnyei, 1998). This study takes a process-oriented view of motivation (following Dörnyei, MacIntyre & Henry, 2014), which claims that motivation is dynamic. That is, motivation can be either instigated and sustained or weakened by certain forces, such as the teaching and learning method or institutional/ linguistic challenges (the issues that are the subject of this study), all of which might be present throughout the learning process.

We also include Deci and Ryan's concept of motivation to understand learners' behaviours and thoughts. Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory introduces two widely accepted categories of motivation: intrinsic motivation (IM) (doing an activity for the pleasure and satisfaction derived from it) and extrinsic motivation (undertaking a task because of external pressures or rewards, not out of intrinsic interest). Deci and Ryan (1985) claim that IM leads to more effective learning in general, but those extrinsic incentives are more necessary in the education of children. Vallerand and his colleagues (1992) proposed three types of IM: IM-Knowledge (motivation related to the feelings associated with exploring new ideas and developing knowledge), IM-Accomplishment (sensations related to attempting to master a task or achieve a goal) and IM-Stimulation (motivation based simply on the sensations stimulated by engaging in a task, such as sensory pleasure, fun and excitement). IM is therefore strongly associated with the learner's feelings and sensations.

To instil motivation, researchers normally measure different variables and analyse statistical data (Noels, Pelletier, Clément & Vallerand, 2000). Some researchers have explored alternative methods in conducting motivation research, such as qualitative interviews (Ushioda, 2001; Csizér, Kormos & Sarkadi, 2010) or mixed methods approach (Cai & Zhu, 2012; Busse & Walter, 2013). This study aims to explore and relate learners' feedback about tasks to learner motivation, primarily from a qualitative perspective.

Research on motivational strategies

Though long concerned with the concept of motivation, more and more researchers are now studying how to use motivation for the benefit of learners and have proposed different motivational strategies for teaching practice (Wlodkowski, 1999; Brophy, 2010; Dörnyei, 2001). These primarily consider (1) affective factors, such as satisfaction, enjoyment and self-efficacy; and (2) learning situations and conditions, such as learner autonomy, peer interaction and cooperative learning. Here, 'self-efficacy' refers to learners' judgment of their ability to learn the target language and has also been shown to influence learner motivation (Dörnyei 1994).

Chinese is often seen in Western cultures as a difficult language to learn, and since the learners in this study are beginners with low language skills, they do not have high initial self-efficacy. Busse and Walter (2013) have presented evidence that challenging curriculum design and learning tasks can lead to declines in IM and self-efficacy when students' initial evaluations of their self-efficacy are low. Designing suitable and motivating language learning tasks may be an important motivational strategy to increase learners' self-efficacy and therefore to enhance learner motivation in this context.

'Learner autonomy' refers to a learning situation in which the learner is responsible for decision-making and implementation during the learning process (Dickinson, 1995). Within a classroom setting, developing a certain level of autonomy in relation to power and control is recommended (Benson, 2011). The idea of autonomy has often been incorporated into studies of communicative language teaching and learning, since autonomy, communicative teaching and learner-centredness share a focus on the learner as the key agent in the learning process (Benson, 2011). Promoting learner autonomy could therefore be a way to enhance learner motivation in language teaching and learning.

In sum, the proposed motivational strategies should also be considered when designing motivating tasks. We believe that task designer can intentionally design motivating tasks by following certain task criteria, task features or motivational strategies. However, task designer cannot determine a task is surly motivating or not, and how motivating a task is for the learners. Therefore, we find it important to involve learner's perspective to find out to what extent and how the selected tasks make the learners feel motivated in the learning process.

Methodology

Research context

The Chinese language (Mandarin) beginner-level course has been offered as an elective course by the Faculty of Humanities at AAU since 2011. It focuses on Chinese oral proficiency and consists of eight teaching units. One unit is presented each week, each one lasting 90 minutes. The students (143 in 2012 and 119 in 2013) come from all four faculties at AAU. The teacher is a native speaker of Chinese from the Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning at AAU. Students can pass the course with 80% attendance, without taking an exam. Students enrolled in these semesters were only informed of course credit being offered after completing the course due to policy changes that took place during the semester.

Eight language learning tasks were selected and implemented in the 2012 courses. Six of the eight tasks were also used, with minor revisions, in the 2013 course. This paper presents the data and findings on the six tasks that were used in both 2012 and 2013. The short introduction to each task is provided in Appendix 1. Detailed descriptions of T1, T4, T5 and T6 can also be found in two publications (see T1 in Kirkebæk, Bao & Ruan, 2012 and others in Kirkebæk and Du, 2013). All six tasks were designed to develop the learners' speaking and listening skills with the purpose of promoting both learner communication and learner motivation.

Unfocused task and group work setting were used frequently, since they were hypothesised to be more acceptable to and motivating for beginners. Considering the learners' basic language level, plenty of planning time and necessary information were provided for each task. Cultural elements were also integrated into each task to develop the learners' cultural awareness and communication competence. The goals of the tasks were communicative, cultural awareness-related, sociocultural or related to learning-how-to-learn, but did not necessarily only target language accuracy. The input data for three of the tasks were student-generated, which was expected to promote learner autonomy.

Discussions of task design have mostly focused on the teaching and learning of English and other European languages. As the oldest recorded Sino-Tibetan language, Chinese is different from English, Danish or other European languages in many ways, including its non-alphabetic scripts (Chinese characters), the four tones in Mandarin's pronunciation system and the grammatical system without tenses or inflection. However, this distinction is assumed to have a very limited impact on task design for this course. Since Pinyin[1], a pronunciation system that uses the Roman alphabet, is used to teach spoken Chinese in the course instead of Chinese characters, the tone system is introduced at the beginning of the course, and the basic sentence structure (subject–verb–object) is similar to that of the English language.

Participants

In this paper, we discuss findings from participants in seven classes from both years. The first author of this paper taught all seven of these classes. There were 66 participants from 3 classes in 2012 and 87 participants from 4 classes in 2013, totalling 153 participants from 4 faculties (39.2% from Engineering, 32.0% from Humanities, 5.2% from Medicine and 23.5% from Social Science). Most of the students were Danish (86.9%). The gender ratio was close to equal (52.5% male and 47.5% female). The majority of participants were beginners without prior knowledge or experience of China or the Chinese language. Twenty-two of them, however, had travelled to China or lived in China for some months as exchange students and knew a few random Chinese words before attending the course. Nevertheless, they had not learned the Chinese language in a classroom setting.

Data generation and analysis

This study employs a convergent parallel mixed-method design (Creswell & Clark, 2011) for data generation, including surveys, group interviews and participant observation to provide opportunities to converge, corroborate, triangulate and validate findings. Data from both quantitative and qualitative approaches were collected in parallel during each term.

Survey

A post-course survey was used to collect students' feedback on the TBTL course design. In this paper, we mainly report findings that are relevant to the students' perceptions of the selected tasks in relation to their learning preferences and motivations as indicated by the post-course surveys. The surveys were filled out in the presence of the teacher and the students were asked to write their names on them. However, the teacher did not have any power to influence the students' course results, and the purpose of the research was clearly explained beforehand. The students were therefore aware that their feedback would be used not to evaluate their teacher but rather to evaluate the tasks they had set, which would be useful for the course's development. These factors enhance the validity of this research. In the surveys, the question, 'To what degree did the following tasks/activities provided during the course make you feel motivated to learn Chinese?' is central. Participants were asked to score each task on a five-point Likert-type scale. Space for comments or suggestions was also provided. To get feedback on the cultural elements integrated into each task, the item 'integrated cultural elements' was also included in the question. The data were analysed using software SPSS 22. Repeated measures of the general linear model (GLM) were used to analyse the differences among the seven items. $P<.05$ was considered to be statistically significant.

Group interview

To avoid definitive statements from a single respondent (Frey & Fontana, 1991), group interviews were conducted to further understand the students' evaluation of tasks. In this paper, data from 3 group interviews (17 participants in total, 9 male and 8 female) in 2012 and 4 group interviews (19 participants in total, 9 male and 10 female) in 2013 were analysed and discussed. Participation in the group interviews was voluntary, and the interviews were done in the last teaching unit. The group interviews were semi-structured, focusing on the learners' (1) feedback on the course design as a whole, including course content and methods and specific tasks related to students' learning preferences and motivations, and (2) perception of cultural learning in the course (see Appendix 2.). Only the data related to the specific tasks will be discussed in this paper. Before conducting the interviews, the teacher had read through the results of the surveys in order to add relevant questions to the interview protocol. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Some interviewees were asked for possible corrections or further explanation by email, ensuring that the data truly represented what they wanted to say. The data were coded according to Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) meaning condensation method.

Participant observation

Participant observation was also used to generate qualitative data in this study, with the goal of enriching and supplementing data gathered using other techniques (Simpson & Tuson, 2008). The teacher, as a participant in the course, observed the students' performance in the classroom by taking field notes and talking with

students informally. The disadvantages of participant observation in this study are that the participant observer may be too connected to the group to make objective records (Norton, 2009), and that it is challenging to observe a large group of people (Jorgensen, 1989). However, this method can still provide an 'insider' view and prevent misinterpretation of the observed behaviour. It is also beneficial in combination with other methods of gathering information (Jorgensen, 1989; Norton, 2009). The observation data will be analysed along with the interview data in the following.

In the sections that follow, the findings from surveys, group interviews and participant observation will be presented and discussed. Findings from surveys are mainly related to Research Question 1, while findings from group interviews and participant observation are mainly related to Research Questions 2 and 3.

Findings and discussion

Question 1: To what degree do the tasks make the students feel motivated to learn Chinese?

Results from seven items from the post-course survey were analyzed and reported according to the students' overall feedback on the tasks regarding their motivation. These items are referred to as T1–T7 in the following sections. T1–T6 signify the students' responses to the six language learning tasks, while T7 refers to the feedback given about the integrated cultural elements in each task. The students were asked to evaluate to what degree the tasks made them feel motivated to learn Chinese on a five-point Likert-type scale (one being very low and five being very high). All the surveys were valid and participants' scores differed among items. In each table analysed in the following, the minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation are shown for every item. Table 1 presents the findings on the students' responses to the items in both years.

To facilitate the comparison of each combination of tasks, the P values of the repeated measures of GLM analysis are shown in Table 2 (N=107). The mean, standard deviation and rank for each task are presented. There were no significant

Table 1. Descriptive data on tasks.

	N	Min.	Max.	M	SD
T7 Integrated cultural elements	149	3	5	4.36	0.69
T4 Quiz battle for reviewing previous lessons	143	1	5	4.31	0.88
T6 Group work: teaching beginners Chinese language and culture	126	1	5	4.24	0.91
T5 Role play: ordering food	140	1	5	4.17	0.95
T1 Connecting word cards into sentences	148	1	5	4.06	0.94
T3 Interviewing Chinese people in the classroom	143	1	5	4.02	1.04
T2 Surveying several classmates and reporting the results (used in various teaching units)	153	1	5	3.76	1.07

Notes: *N* stands for the number of participants, Min. for minimum, Max. for maximum, *M* for mean and SD for standard deviation. This note applies to Table 2 as well.

Table 2. Comparisons among tasks.

	Rank	M	SD	T7	T4	T6	T1	T5	T3
T7 Integrated cultural elements	1	4.41	0.70						
T4 Quiz battle for reviewing previous lessons	2	4.35	0.89	0.509					
T6 Group work: teaching beginners Chinese language and culture	3	4.22	0.90	0.031	0.203				
T1 Connecting word cards into sentences	4	4.13	0.96	0.004	0.059	0.451			
T5 Role play: ordering food	5	4.11	1.00	0.007	0.051	0.282	0.848		
T3 Interviewing Chinese people in the classroom	6	4.08	1.00	0.002	0.031	0.255	0.715	0.841	
T2 Surveying several classmates and reporting the results (used in various teaching units)	7	3.83	1.08	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	0.015	0.13	0.031

differences in scores between the two highest-ranking tasks (T7 and T4), or between the four middle-ranking tasks (T6, T1, T5 and T3).

Furthermore, to test whether the students' previous experiences might have influenced their perceptions of the motivating effects of some of the tasks, 22 students who had travelled to or lived in China were put into Group 1, while other students without similar experiences were put into Group 2. A T-test was used to compare the two groups' responses to all the tasks. The results showed that there was no significant difference between the two groups in any of the tasks. Similar tests were also used to examine the influence of gender, nationality and educational background (Engineering and Medicine vs. Humanity and Social Science), and no significant differences were found.

The findings show that the participants from both years and different backgrounds gave almost all tasks a score of over four points on average on a five-point scale, meaning that the participants found the selected tasks very motivating. However, some tasks motivated the students more than others. Tasks T7 and T4 ranked highest, while Task T2 ranked the lowest. Based on the result, the tasks can be put into three categories: most motivating tasks (T7 and T4), motivating tasks (T6, T1, T5 and T3) and less motivating tasks (T2).

In group interviews, the students also expressed interest in all of the tasks, particularly the highest-ranking ones. Participant observation showed that they were motivated to engage in the tasks and were satisfied with the learning outcomes.

Question 2: What characteristics do the learners associate with tasks that motivate them to learn Chinese?

In the surveys, many students wrote comments or suggestions about the tasks in the provided space. In the group interviews, the students recalled their learning processes and commented on each task in detail. Most descriptions in surveys and interviews matched the teacher's classroom observations that the tasks were generally motivating; some tasks were more motivating and attractive than others. The students gave similar responses for each task in both years. Using meaning condensation, several characteristics of each task were interpreted based on students' responses and were then categorised into three themes, as shown in Table 3. These characteristics will be used to understand the ways in which the students felt motivated while conducting the tasks.

As Table 3 shows, most of the characteristics are positive and motivating and, for the most part, come from two themes: affective sensation and learning situation. Others are related to some discouraging, in some cases unavoidable, factors (e.g., lack of time for task preparation, low level of language skills and unfamiliarity with group members) and the students' wish to learn more about Chinese culture. The unavoidable factors were also noted in the teacher's field notes as challenges. There are six common positive characteristics (providing enjoyment, a sense of challenge and satisfaction; supporting learner autonomy; increasing learner self-efficacy; promoting social interaction; promoting cooperative learning in group work and integrating cultural elements into language tasks/language learning) that are widely shared among all the tasks. The characteristic of 'increasing learner self-efficacy' was not related to some tasks in Table 3. However, participant observation has shown that students' self-efficacy increased after the success of completing tasks T1, T2 and T4, even though the students did not comment that these tasks had this effect at the end of the course.

The positive characteristics shared among the tasks

In this section, we will discuss the six common positive characteristics of the aforementioned tasks, since these positive characteristics may provide insight into the ways in which the students felt motivated when conducting the tasks.

Providing enjoyment, a sense of challenge and satisfaction. Ehrman, Leaver and Oxford (2003) suggest that when students find tasks interesting and challenging, their reward is enjoyment of the activity and a feeling of competence, factors that support IM. This study found a strong sense of IM among the students, something that plays a vital role in the learning process. According to the students, the tasks were enjoyable and gave them a sense of challenge and satisfaction. Many students experienced sensations such as sensory pleasure, fun or excitement when engaging in the tasks, which may be related to what Vallerand and his colleagues refer to as 'IM-Stimulation'. Several students mentioned that the tasks requiring them to present something in plenum – i.e., Tasks T1, T5 and T6 – brought them particularly enjoyable personal challenges, although

Table 3. Characteristics of each task analysed from students' responses.

Tasks	Affective factors	Learning situation factors	Discouraging factors
T7 Integrated cultural elements	Enjoyment; satisfaction with learning outcome (better cultural understanding) and increased self-efficacy in future intercultural communication	Integrating cultural elements and language tasks/learning	Not enough cultural elements
T4 Quiz battle for reviewing previous lessons	Enjoyment of competition and satisfaction with learning outcome	Group work	Not enough culture-focused tasks
T6 Group work: teaching beginners Chinese language and culture	Sense of challenge; satisfaction with learning outcome and sense of autonomy	Group work; interaction among group members and learning by teaching others	Lack of time for preparation; unfamiliar group members and low level of language skill
T1 Connecting word cards into sentences	Enjoyment; satisfaction with learning outcome and sense of challenge	Group work and interaction among group members	Low level of language skill
T5 Role play: ordering food	Enjoyment; satisfaction with learning outcome; increased self-efficacy in future language use; sense of challenge and sense of autonomy	Group work	Low level of language skill
T3 Interviewing Chinese people in the classroom	Enjoyment and excitement; satisfaction with learning outcome; increased self-efficacy in language use; sense of challenge and sense of autonomy	Group work; interaction among group members and communication in real-life situation	Lack of time for both preparation and doing the task and ineffective communication with Chinese guests because of low level of language skill and cultural understanding
T2 Surveying several classmates and reporting the results (used in various teaching units)	Satisfaction with learning outcome; sense of challenge and sense of belonging/equality	Interaction among individuals	Low level of language skill

they also felt 'pressured', 'scared' and 'nervous'. As Student 12 said, describing T5, 'There is pressure; you need to do it. When you have done it, it is cool, and it is a great motivation.' The students' positive attitude about pressure may be related to their satisfaction with the learning outcome. In reference to Task T1, Student 11

stated, 'There was a lot of pressure going on, listening to the words, but I also think that made quite an impact, and I still can remember it.'

These findings echo results from previous studies on how enjoyment through completing a challenge can bring satisfaction and contribute to affective factors connected with students' IM (Dörnyei, 1998; Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford, 2003).

Supporting learner autonomy. Learning autonomy is often seen as a positive aspect of learning a foreign language via tasks. Scholars Dickinson (1995), Ushioda (1996) and Benson (2011) have provided substantial evidence that learner autonomy is strongly connected to language motivation, especially IM (Noels et al., 2000). In this study, the students were motivated intrinsically when they had opportunities to define their own realistic objectives and put forth effort to attain them (Tasks T3, T5 and T6). Student 1 stated, 'This presentation we did on our own (in task T6), when I read about it, it was really interesting, I felt like reading more about it.' Student 31 said, 'I was motivated in the way that we have to structure ourselves. I like the autonomy of it.'

Increasing learner self-efficacy. Students were observed to have a generally increased self-efficacy in using the target language in real-life communication. A few even mentioned using very beginner-level Chinese to order food at a local restaurant. Students expressed their confidence in being able to use the Chinese language and apply their understanding of Chinese culture properly in future intercultural situations. Student 20 stated, 'I believe, when I go to China, Chinese people will not get angry with me in a way. (Because) I understand what they believe and what they do.'

In a language classroom setting, students judge their own language abilities and competencies while engaging in tasks (Bandura, 1993). Once they gain the self-confidence to believe that they can learn, they may participate in the learning process more actively and make greater efforts to attain a better learning outcome (1993). More importantly, they may be more likely to continue with language learning. One student wrote in the provided space in a post-course survey: 'I learned a lot (through tasks), and feel confident to go further.' Many other students expressed their interest in continuing to learn Chinese and learn about Chinese culture, or their hopes to travel or study in China in the future.

In this study, students' increased self-efficacy was evidently derived from their 'experience of successes' in the challenging but also appropriate tasks – as indicated by Student 21 – as well as from the change in their perceptions about learning Chinese. Student 3 stated, 'I expected (the course) to be very very hard, especially the pronunciation. And I actually think it was easier to learn (now), at least than I expected. (This was) because of the practice (tasks) we had.' Other students agreed that learning Chinese language is 'doable', and not as difficult as they had assumed before the course, due to the use of tasks, and also the use of Pinyin instead of Chinese characters. That is, the tasks with the appropriate difficulty level contributed to the self-efficacy change, which may lead to the

enhancement of motivation in learning Chinese. This is a lesson we have learned from Buss and Walter's (2013) study.

Promoting social interaction. Many scholars (Kramsch, 1986; Lightbown & Spada, 2006) argue that foreign language education's focus should move from language proficiency to interactional competence. Social learning theorists argue that meaningful learning takes place through interaction with others in situated activities and participation in communities of practice (Vygotsky, 1978; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Learners in this study were required to interact and negotiate meanings with each other in order to achieve the learning objectives. They needed to actively engage in the learning process. Student 33 described how he completed Task T2 by saying, "(When doing the task,) I really got to think about what sentence (to use), how to structure it, and how to say it. And I really got to think 'Did he (communication partner) understand what I say?' Because if he answered something completely different, then I know, 'Ok, there is something wrong here.'" The students viewed the interactive learning process positively and mentioned 'a drive for learning more', opportunities to get to know each other and a 'safe learning environment' as advantages of social interaction as a component of completing tasks.

Promoting cooperative learning in group work. Most of the tasks in this study involved group work. Students identified two main advantages of group work: making their learning easier by dividing tasks among group members, and creating a safe, fear-free environment for completing tasks that required speaking in front of others. It is often noted that students may be afraid of speaking a new language with strangers or of speaking in front of a large group in general (Ebert-May, Brewer & Allred, 1997). When offered a safe environment, learners feel freer to express themselves appropriately, to share their ideas, to ask questions and to fail and try again (Porter, 1997).

It is widely acknowledged that group work is associated with student motivation (Nichols & Miller, 1994; Ellis, 2003). Nichols and Miller (1994) find that students more willingly adopt learning goals and have higher levels of self-efficacy, which leads to higher motivation, in a cooperative environment. However, group work is not simply about making students work together; it demands many internal mechanisms in order to function effectively.

Integrating cultural elements into language tasks. Researchers (Dörnyei, 1994; Ho, 1998) argue that integrating cultural elements into language learning can increase learners' motivation to learn a foreign language. In this study, cultural elements were integrated into all the language learning tasks. The students were excited to learn about Chinese culture through the language, authentic materials, real-world applications and classroom discussion. In the surveys, item T7, 'integrated cultural elements', was consistently rated as being very motivating. This was echoed in the interviews, with many students stating that cultural elements added value to their language learning in the course. They felt the cultural elements helped them to

'understand Chinese people', use the language properly and make language learning more 'colourful' and 'interesting'. The most important factor, after learning about Chinese culture, was many students wanting to 'learn more about the language' or 'travel to China'. Student 19 often 'went straight home on Wikipedia (to find more information about the discussed cultural elements) for an hour', and this made her 'want to learn more and more', which may also demonstrate what Vallerand and his colleagues (1992) refer to as 'IM - Knowledge'. These findings indicate that integrating cultural elements into language tasks is effective and motivating for foreign language beginners.

The aforementioned task characteristics were analysed from the students' responses. The students' sensations stimulated in the learning process were strongly correlated to their motivation (especially IM) in learning Chinese.

Why some tasks were more motivating than others

To understand why some tasks were more motivating than others according to the learners' ratings, it is necessary to look at the differences among the tasks themselves. Table 4 illustrates these differences.

The table lists the tasks according to their ranking results. Since item T7 stands for the cultural elements integrated into every task, not for a 'full' task, it is not listed in Table 4. As Table 4 shows, the unfocused tasks and tasks involving group work rank at the top, which indicates that unfocused tasks and tasks involving group work are more motivating and effective for beginners learning a foreign language in an elective course. Furthermore, the data from surveys also support this conclusion. The mean of the ratings for unfocused tasks T6, T5 and T3 was calculated as the index for unfocused tasks, while the mean of the ratings for focused tasks T1 and T2 was calculated as the index for focused tasks. A T-test was

Table 4. The main differences among the tasks.

Tasks	Differences
T4 Quiz battle for reviewing previous lessons	Unfocused and focused tasks Group work
T6 Group work: teaching beginners Chinese language and culture	Unfocused task Group work
T1 Connecting word cards into sentences	Focused task Group work
T5 Role play: ordering food	Unfocused task Group work
T3 Interviewing Chinese people in the classroom	Unfocused task Group work
T2 Surveying several classmates and reporting the results (used in various teaching units)	Focused task Individual work

used to compare learners' feedback on the two types of tasks. The unfocused task (M=4.13; SD=0.76) was rated more highly than the focused task (M=3.90; SD=0.81) (N=153; t=3.29; P<.001). This result matches the findings of previous studies, suggesting that unfocused tasks should be used more often at the beginning stage of a language course (Ellis, 2003) and that group work can motivate learners to learn (Nichols & Miller, 1994).

Question 3: What are the challenges of implementing TBTL in the CFL course?

As discussed earlier, other unavoidable factors were identified in both the interviews and the participant observation. These perceptions can help to identify several challenges in helping beginners to complete the tasks in this course.

First, conducting tasks generally demands a certain level of language skill. As the students in this study were all beginners, many students admitted that they were nervous about speaking in Chinese and had difficulty remembering the language during the communicative tasks. Most of them needed to look at notes while talking to each other in Chinese. These barriers are why many language teachers believe that language tasks are too complex for beginners (Duran & Ramaut, 2006). In this course, the teaching team aimed to design appropriate beginner-level tasks, but there were still some communication difficulties due to a lack of linguistic knowledge and skill.

Second, the nature of the Chinese language itself had also created barriers for the students to learn via TBTL, though the course used Pinyin instead of Chinese characters to lower difficulty. Two main linguistic challenges were found in this study due to the context-oriented nature of the language (DeFrancis, 1984). The first challenge was the four tones in Mandarin Chinese, which are used to distinguish meaning (e.g., mā, má, mǎ and mà, meaning, respectively, 'mother', 'hemp', 'horse' and 'to scold'). It was observed that the tones not only created extra memory loads and communication difficulties but also caused the students to focus on the tones instead of meaning negotiation when conducting a task. The second challenge was related to the grammatical system. After learning the words 'bù'(no), 'shì'(yes; to be), student 11 still found it difficult to reply simply yes or no in some situations, since the way to say 'yes' or 'no' in Mandarin Chinese relies on the verb in a question or on the specific situation. Similar challenges were mentioned in the interviews. In contrast to English and other European languages, the different nature of Chinese language brings different learning challenges. This raises a question: whether task designers should design different tasks or follow different criteria for Chinese language learning.

Third, lacking institutional support at a curriculum level, the students did not or could not give a high priority to the Chinese course because it was designated as an elective course and scheduled at an inconvenient time. It was also difficult for most of them to review materials from class, prepare themselves for some tasks (i.e. T3 and T6) for the next teaching unit or do homework. There is little literature discussing foreign language learning in such a situation, but Oxford and Nyikos (1989) do suggest that students who are studying a new language as an elective are more motivated than students who are taking the language as a requirement. In this

study, most of the students seemed motivated to attend the course regularly and actively engaged in the tasks, but they had difficulty spending time learning outside the classroom.

Last but not least, the effectiveness of cooperation and interaction in small groups was judged to be inconsistent from a social learning perspective. Although the majority of the students were positive about group work as a way of learning a new language, some mentioned negative experiences, especially when group members did not know each other. Research has shown that group cohesion and member familiarity impact group interaction and task performance (Dörnyei, 1994; Ellis, 2003). Group cohesion and fostering member familiarity become very important for elective courses that draw students from all faculties of the university.

The challenges found in this study may indicate that it is unrealistic to attempt to develop students' linguistic accuracy and fluency in an 8-week (14 hours in total) elective course. Motivating learners to continue learning the language and encouraging active participation may be more important. Also, while communicative tasks can promote student interaction and facilitate group work, the effectiveness of student cooperation and interaction may depend on conditions, such as member familiarity. Finally, designing tasks for Chinese language learning may demand different criteria because of the different linguistic nature of the language.

Conclusion

This paper discusses designing and implementing a TBTL approach to language learning at a course level. Results of this study show that the students enjoyed a supportive environment for learning a foreign language and that a TBTL approach can be motivating in a beginner-level language course despite certain practical limitations. Regarding pedagogical implications, the recommendation is to use unfocused tasks, along with tasks involving group work, interaction and learner autonomy for language learning beginners. Task designers should also consider both the learners' affective factors and their learning situation factors – which can boost learners' IM – when designing a task, especially at a beginning stage of foreign language learning. It is also effective to integrate cultural elements into language learning tasks, since they can serve to add value to both language learning and motivation. Lastly, several challenges are identified for helping learners learn via TBTL, such as learners' low level of language skill, the contextual nature of the Chinese language, lack of institutional support at a curriculum level, and group member familiarity. It is suggested that motivating learners to continue learning the language and encouraging active participation may be more important than developing their linguistic accuracy and fluency in this context. With these findings, this study has provided insights into CFL learners and a framework to link the teaching and learning method (i.e.TBTL) and learner motivation.

The research methods have some limitations. Firstly, the active involvement of the teacher could have created a potential bias towards data analysis and sensitivity

in the data generation process. Secondly, the participants answered the surveys and were interviewed at the end of the course, making it possible that they may not have clearly remembered the tasks in earlier lessons by the time they were asked to evaluate them. Future studies on using a TBTL approach could examine how teaching design and methods could be improved via the influence of learners' perceptions and learning preferences, how to design specific tasks for learning of certain types of languages (e.g. Chinese), the ways to integrate cultural/intercultural elements with communicative language tasks and learners' motivational changes in a TBTL foreign language course.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Note

1. Pinyin, which was developed in the 1950s to serve many practical purposes, is the official system for transcribing Chinese characters into Latin script.

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Appendix 1. Tasks used in 2012 and 2013

Tasks	Task types	Required language skills	Goal types	Input data	Learner procedures and settings
1.Connecting word cards into sentences	Focused task	Listening and speaking	Communicative, language and cultural awareness	Authentic spoken language was gained through greetings and introductions; data provided by the teacher	This task is used in the first lesson. To begin the lesson, the teacher introduces herself in Chinese. The students need to use their previous knowledge to guess what the teacher says. By working in groups, the students need to connect word cards into sentences according to what they hear, and infer the meaning of the sentences. After mastering the way of introducing oneself in Chinese, the students need to find out the way to introduce themselves in Chinese, too. Greeting culture is discussed in the post-task phase
2.Surveying several classmates and reporting the results (used in various teaching units)	Focused task	Speaking	Communicative, language and cultural awareness	Authentic spoken language was gained from conversations with classmates; data provided by the teacher	The students are required to individually survey several classmates and then report the results. Relevant cultural elements are discussed in each task
3.Interviewing Chinese people in the classroom	Unfocused task	Speaking	Communicative, sociocultural and cultural awareness	Authentic spoken language was gained from conversations with native speakers. Studentgenerated task	Several Chinese people are invited to be interviewed by the students in the classroom. The students plan interview questions and negotiate their sequence in small groups

(Continued)

Appendix 1. **Continued**

Tasks	Task types	Required language skills	Goal types	Input data	Learner procedures and settings
4. Quiz battle for reviewing previous lessons	Focused and unfocused task	Listening and speaking	Communicative, language and cultural awareness	Knowledge from previous teaching units was provided by the teacher	The students work in small groups to solve a predesigned quiz and compete with other groups. The quizzes consist of many tasks on small scales and contain both linguistic and cultural questions
5. Role play: ordering food	Unfocused task	Speaking	Communicative, language and cultural awareness	Spoken data were generated by the students in the role play	The students plan and complete the task in small groups. Chinese, Danish and other countries' cuisine cultures are compared and discussed
6. Group work: teaching beginners Chinese language and culture	Unfocused task	Listening and speaking	Communicative, learning how-to-learn, language and cultural awareness	Authentic data from books and internet, generated by the students	The students work in small groups. They are required to negotiate and plan the task over a certain time span. The students set realistic objectives and study what they want to. Some groups choose to focus on cultural learning

Appendix 2. The interview guideline

1. What did you think of the course in general in relation to your expectation and interest?
2. How did the course generally meet your learning preference and motivate you to learn Chinese? How about the following specific aspects?
    2.1 How about the course contents?
    2.2 How about the teaching methods, namely the task-based teaching and learning?
    2.3 What did you think about the language learning tasks?
3. What did you think about the relationship between learning about a culture (e.g. Chinese culture) and learning its language (e.g. Chinese)?

Paper 4: Using tasks to enhance beginners' orientations for learning Chinese as a foreign language

Using tasks to enhance beginners' orientations for learning Chinese as a foreign language

Ruan, Youjin ✉
Department of Learning and Philosophy, Aalborg University, Denmark (yojinan@gmail.com)

Duan, Xiaoju
Department of Learning and Philosophy, Aalborg University, Denmark (duanxj04@gmail.com)

Du, Xiang Yun
Department of Learning and Philosophy, Aalborg University, Denmark (xiangyun@learning.aau.dk)

Abstract

This study explores learners' orientations, or goals, for learning Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) in a Danish university. Drawing upon empirical data from both pre- and post-course surveys and group interviews, this study examines in what aspects and to what extent these orientations change, and by what these changes are caused, in a university-wide CFL course using task-based teaching and learning (TBTL). The study identifies four orientations. Results indicate that the knowledge orientation plays a vital role in the learning process, while instrumental orientation appears to be the least important to students. Furthermore, the study indicates that all orientations have been enhanced by the end of the course, meaning the learners have developed clearer goals for further study in a TBTL environment. We also show that several external and internal factors, such as the motivating course design (especially the task-based learning method), the learners' increased self-efficacy, and student satisfaction, served to contribute to these positive changes in learners' orientations. It is suggested that a communicative approach (e.g. the TBTL method) can be used to promote positive orientation changes and enhance learner motivation. The study also discusses challenges encountered in helping beginners learn a foreign language via TBTL.

Keywords: orientation; motivation; motivational change; task-based teaching and learning; Chinese as a foreign language

Using tasks to enhance beginners' orientations for learning Chinese as a foreign language

1. Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that motivation plays a vital role in foreign/second language learning. In the last fifty years, scholars have measured various motivational/ attitudinal variables and discussed the relationship between motivation and factors such as achievement, classroom participation, and persistence at learning (Ushioda, 2001; Alavi & Abbasnia, 2014). One of the variables, orientation (or goal), has received much attention, as the basis of language learning motivation (Noels, Pelletier, Clément, & Vallerand, 2000). Some scholars argue that orientation differs from motivation, as learners might profess a particular orientation without being highly motivated to learn the language in practice (Gardner, 1985). However, other researchers find that some orientations might influence, or even predict learners' motivation (Gardner & Tremblay, 1994; Belmechri & Hummel, 1998). Additionally, the two words, orientation and motivation, are often used interchangeably in many studies. Based on the literature review and our experience, our understanding of orientation is that it does not equal motivation but can reflect or predict it in certain situations, particularly, in a university-wide extracurricular foreign language course. It seems to be a more important variable in terms of reflecting learner motivation when the students choose to learn a language of their own volition rather than as part of their routine degree study.

Many orientation researches have focused on the classification of static orientation, and the relationship between orientation and motivation. (Clément & Kruidenier 1983; Noels et al., 2000). More recently, a 2004 study indicated that learner orientation, among several motivational variables, also changes during the learning process (Gardner, Masgoret, Tennant, & Mihic, 2004). Another recent development, stemming from a global increase in enrollment in Chinese courses at the university level, has been the topic of learner motivation in Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) gaining more attention among educators and researchers (Wen, 1997; Cai & Zhu, 2012).

Concerning what may influence learner motivation, Gardner (2010) claims that learner motivation can be affected by the nature of the course and the curriculum. Task-based teaching and learning (TBTL), the method used in the CFL course on which this study focuses, is a student-centred approach that encourages peer interaction and cooperative learning. Several of its features have been included in various motivational strategies (Dörnyei, 2001). The CFL course at the heart of this study focuses has been offered as a university-wide elective course at Aalborg

University, Denmark. In previous studies (Ruan, Duan, & Du, 2014, in press), we found that many students felt motivated to learn Chinese in a TBTL environment. However, there was no concrete evidence directly showing the enhancement of motivation or orientation. Focusing on learner orientation, this study addresses two research questions:

> ➢ What are the important orientations of beginner learners for learning Chinese as a foreign language in a university-wide course?

> ➢ Is there any significant orientation change after a Chinese course using the TBTL method? If so, in what aspects and to what extent do these orientations change, and what causes the changes in the given context?

2. Literature review

2.1 Motivational orientation

The concept of language motivation was proposed from a social psychological perspective by Gardner and Lambert (1959). This initial concept of motivation was "the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language" (Gardner, 1985, p. 10). As one variable of motivation, the learner's goal or orientation (the reason for language learning), which may influence the amount of desire and energy expended and is associated with positive affect (Noels, 2001), started to draw the attention of motivation researchers.

Scholars have proposed various orientations for language learning according to different contexts (Gardner & Lambert, 1959; Clément & Kruidenier, 1983; Dörnyei, 1990), several of which are still gaining much attention in the field. Integrative orientation, which is a desire to learn the language to have contact with and perhaps identify with members from the target community, and instrumental orientation, related to the potential pragmatic gains of language learning, such as job advancement or course credit, was proposed by Gardner and Lambert in 1959 in a second language learning situation. For the foreign language situation, Dörnyei (1990) proposes an Integrative Motivational Subsystem consisting of three dimensions: 1) Interest in FL, cultures, and people; 2) Desire to broaden one's view and avoid provincialism; and 3) Desire for new stimuli and challenges. Gardner and Lambert (1972) suggest that the integrative orientation demonstrates greater motivational effort and thus greater achievement in second language learning, while Dörnyei (1990) argues that instrumental orientation contributes significantly to learner motivation in the foreign language context.

Focusing on Chinese language learning, Wen (1997) supplies some reasons for learning Chinese (traveling in China, meeting new people, conversing with Chinese-speaking friends, and acquiring a language that is important in the

economic development of the world), and associates them with instrumental orientations, which is different from how we identify certain orientations. Reviewing the literatures, also relating to the given context, this study identifies knowledge, sociocultural, friendship and instrumental orientations. Of the four orientations, three (all except instrumental) can be related to Dörnyei's integrative motivational subsystem.

2.2 Language motivation as a process and research on motivational changes

Many scholars are coming to believe that motivation is a dynamic process, and they claim that motivation may change because of certain forces throughout the learning process (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998; Dörnyei, 2002). This is what Ellis and Larsen-Freeman (2006) describe, arguing, "Motivation is less a trait than fluid play, an ever-changing one that emerges from the processes of interaction of many agents, internal and external, in the ever-changing complex world of the learner" (p. 563). In sum, this view of dynamic motivation is exerting increasing influence on language motivation research, and it has inspired us to investigate the potential changes in learner orientations using this study.

Because of this trend, more and more studies have focused on learners' motivational dynamics in language learning (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002; Gardner et al., 2004; Csizér, Kormos, & Sarkadi, 2010; Cai & Zhu, 2012; Kiany, Mahdavy, & Ghafar Samar, 2012; Busse & Walter, 2013; Dörnyei, MacIntyre, & Henry, 2015). It is suggested that motivational changes can be influenced by motivational strategies and instructional setting. Dörnyei (2001) suggests implementing motivational teaching strategies, such as increasing the learners' drive to pursue goals, creating realistic learner beliefs, promoting learners' self-confidence, fostering cooperation among the learners, and increasing learner satisfaction to motivate students. Csizér et al. (2010) argue that aspects of the instructional setting, such as methods of instruction and teachers' general in-class behavior have a strong influence on learners' motivated behavior. Other factors, such as learner self-efficacy and success (or achievement), are also mentioned in various literature (Schunk, 1991; Dörnyei, 1994; Hosseini Fatemi, Pishghadam, & Vahidnia, 2013). In our view, an alternative method, such as task-based teaching and learning, is assumed to influence learner orientation (as motivation) in a positive way in this study.

2.3 Motivating features of a TBTL course design

Task-based teaching and learning (TBTL) is a method derived from the communicative approach. The method provides rich opportunities for learners to interact with their peers (Ellis, 2003). A few studies have indicated that interactive language tasks may influence learners' motivation (Du & Kirkebæk, 2012; Ruan, Duan, & Du, 2014, in press).

Relating to Chinese teaching and learning, Du and Kirkebæk (2012) suggest that using tasks to organize teaching and learning can motivate learners to engage in a communicative foreign language learning process, especially in a completely new language such as Chinese. Ruan, Duan, and Du (2014, in press) indicate that beginner learners feel motivated to learn Chinese language and culture in a TBTL environment. The learners in the former study pointed out several motivating features of language learning tasks, such as supporting learner autonomy, increasing learner self-efficacy, promoting social interaction and cooperative learning, integrating cultural elements into language tasks, and providing enjoyment, a sense of challenge, and satisfaction. Self-efficacy refers to learners' judgment of their ability to learn the target language in this context and has been shown to influence learner motivation (Dörnyei, 1994). In western cultures, Chinese is often seen as a difficult language to learn. Our previous study has suggested that designing achievable and meaningful language tasks is an effective way to increase learner self-efficacy. The course in this study had implemented tasks similar to those discussed in a previous study (Ruan, Duan, & Du, 2014, in press). Based on the previous study, it is hypothesized that if the level of learners' orientations changes in this study, it may be related to factors such as the use of the tasks, the integration of cultural elements in the tasks, learners' perception of the difficulty of learning Chinese (related to learner self-efficacy), learner satisfaction and course evaluation (including the entire course, and course content and teaching method).

Most researchers in this field use surveys to collect quantitative data (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002; Gardner et al., 2004). This is also the dominant method in the motivation research field (Ushioda, 2001), though Csizér et al. (2010) try to gain insights into motivation by conducting qualitative interviews with 15 students, which can be seen as complementary to the long-standing quantitative tradition of motivation research. A longitudinal mixed-methods approach is employed in studies by Cai and Zhu (2012), and Busse and Walter (2013), and this study itself, as the researchers sought to address the time- and context-sensitive nature of motivational attributes. As Larsen-Freeman and Long (1990) have suggested, language acquisition research may benefit from a combination of both approaches.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research context

Chinese language courses at beginner and intermediate levels have been offered as electives by the Faculty of Humanities at Aalborg University (AAU) in Denmark since 2011. New students are enrolled in the course every semester (autumn or spring). This study focuses on the beginner-level courses in autumn 2013 and spring 2014, both of which were taught using a nearly identical course design by the same teacher, who is a native Chinese speaker from the Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning at AAU and the first author of this paper. The students can gain course credits with 80% attendance, but without any exam. The courses focused on oral proficiency in Chinese, and each consisted of eight teaching units.

One unit was presented per week, each lasting 90 minutes and taking place after school (from 16:30-18:15). Since there was no published textbook suitable for such a course, the teacher designed the course content.

Nine language learning tasks were designed for and implemented in the 2013 courses. Six of the eight tasks were also used, with minor revisions, in the 2014 course. This paper presents the data on the six tasks that were used in both 2013 and 2014. All six tasks were designed to develop the learners' speaking and listening skills with the purpose of promoting both learner communication and learner motivation. Considering the learners' basic language level, plenty of planning time and necessary information were provided for each task. Cultural elements were also integrated into each task to develop the learners' cultural awareness and communication competence. Group work was widely used. The input data for three of the tasks were student-generated, which was expected to promote learner autonomy. Please see the short introduction to each task provided in Appendix A.

3.2 Participants

In this paper, we discuss findings from participants in classes from autumn 2013 (82 participants in three classes) and spring 2014 (47 participants in one class). The participants were mainly from three departments (Engineering 34.1%, Humanities 37.2%, and Social Science 27.9%) at AAU. Most were Danish (79.1%), while others were from other European countries. The gender ratio was fairly equal (55% males). The majority of participants were beginners without prior knowledge or experience of China or the Chinese language. Twenty-four of them, however, had travelled to China or lived in China for some months as exchange students and knew a few random Chinese words before attending the course. Nevertheless, they had not learned the Chinese language in a classroom setting. The course was not related to their own studies.

3.3 Data generation and analysis

An explanatory sequential mixed-method design (Creswell & Clark, 2011), which consisted of surveys and group interviews, was used to generate both quantitative and qualitative data in this study. The design began with the collection and analysis of quantitative data. This first phase was followed up by the subsequent collection and analysis of qualitative data. The qualitative results were expected to help to explain one of the initial quantitative results.

Surveys **-** A longitudinal, survey-based investigation (consisting of pre- and post-course surveys) was designed and conducted in both the autumn semester of 2013 (September-December) and the spring semester of 2014 (February-June). The surveys were revised according to literature in the field (Dörnyei, 1990, 1994; Wen, 1997) and the advice of three educational researchers. The pre-course surveys were given to students in the first teaching unit (September 2013 and February 2014,

respectively) to collect information such as the students' orientations (reasons for learning Chinese), perception of the difficulty of learning Chinese, and other background information. Post-course surveys were given to students at the end of the penultimate teaching unit (November 2013 and April 2014, respectively) to assess the students' orientations for continuing study, feedback on the motivational degree of tasks, perception of the difficulty of learning Chinese, course evaluation, and overall satisfaction.

The software SPSS 22 was used for data analysis. Repeated measures of the general linear model (GLM) were used to analyze the differences between items in the collected data. A paired t-test was used to investigate the changes of motivational orientations between the pre- and post-course surveys. A score of $p < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant. Using the data from the post-course survey, the correlations among orientations and several course variables (see the survey sections below) were also examined.

The post-course survey consisted of seven sections, two of which, orientation and learners' perception of the difficulty of learning Chinese, were also included in the pre-course survey. A description of the scales and items from the post-course survey follows.

(1) Orientation, or the reasons for learning Chinese

Ten items (see Appendix B) were adapted from scales used in relevant literature (Dörnyei, 1994; Wen, 1997). The selection of the items was based on previous qualitative data generated by former students who had taken the same course in the autumn semester of 2012 and the spring semester of 2013. This data has not been used in any other study. The students rated the extent to which the proposed reasons corresponded with their reasons for Chinese learning, using a five-point scale ranging from 1 (Totally disagree) to 5 (Totally agree).

Four orientations were identified in this study: knowledge orientation (two items), sociocultural orientation (three items), friendship orientation (two items), and instrumental orientation (three items). There were two items developed for the present study: "Chinese is an important language"; and "I am interested in/curious about China and its culture". These were included because many students emphasized these two reasons in previous semesters. Based on Dörnyei's Integrative Motivational Subsystem, the knowledge, sociocultural, and friendship orientations are seen as integrative orientations in our study.

(2) Task motivating degree

The question "To what degree did the following tasks/activities provided during the course make you feel motivated to learn Chinese?" was in the post-course survey; it was developed to get students' feedback on each task. Participants were asked to evaluate to what degree the tasks made them feel

motivated to learn Chinese on a five-point Likert-type scale (one being very low and five being very high). Space for comments or suggestions was also provided.

(3) Integration of cultural elements in tasks

To get feedback on the cultural elements integrated into each task, the students were asked to evaluate the motivating degree of the "integrated cultural elements" on the same scale as the second section.

(4) Perception of the difficulty of learning Chinese

Questions about learners' perceptions of the difficulty of learning Chinese were developed for this study and included in both pre- and post-course survey (in the pre-course survey: "How difficult do you believe learning the Chinese language to be"; in the post-course survey: "After completing the course, how difficult do you think learning Chinese is now"). The students were asked to rate the degree of the difficulty of learning Chinese they assumed and perceived before and after the course, on a five-point Likert-type scale (one being very difficult and five being very easy).

(5) Satisfaction

Three items were developed for this study and included in the post-course survey to access students' satisfaction in relation to their own effort and achievement. The first item ("I am satisfied with my effort, work, and performance during the course") was adapted from a previous study (Dörnyei, 1994). The two items devised to measure satisfaction with achievement levels (e.g., "I have achieved my goals in learning the Chinese language") were developed for the present study. The students rated the extent to which the statements described their own circumstances, using a scale ranging from 1 (Totally disagree) to 5 (Totally agree).

(6) Course evaluation

Three items were developed for this study and included in the post-course survey to get students' feedback on the entire course, the course content, and the teaching method (TBTL). For the entire course, the students were asked to score on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Very unsatisfied) to 5 (Very satisfied). For the content and the method, the students were also asked to score on a similar scale ranging from 1 (Very low degree) to 5 (Very high degree).

(7) Further enrolment/study

The item "I will continue learning Chinese in the future" used not for analysis but to filter participants. The students rated the extent to which they agreed with the statement, using a scale ranging from 1 (Totally disagree) to 5 (Totally agree). A score of 4 or 5 showed the participants' willingness to continue learning Chinese with a clear goal.

Group interviews - Following the collection and analysis of survey data, group interviews were conducted to gain insight into what caused the orientation changes in the given context. In this paper, data from three group interviews (12 participants in total, 6 male) in 2013 and two group interviews (13 participants in total, 6 male) in 2014 were analyzed and discussed. Participation in group interviews was voluntary. In 2013, three group interviews were conducted right after the last teaching unit in each class. In 2014, since there was only one class with a large number of students, two group interviews were conducted separately, one right after the last teaching unit, one the week after completion of the course. The group interviews were semi-structured, focusing on learners' feedback on the course design and the learning experience of the course with regard to factors including their satisfaction, their perception of learning Chinese, and others. The interviews were recorded and immediately transcribed by the first author. Some interviewees were asked for possible corrections or further explanation by email to ensure that the data accurately represented their opinions. The data were coded according to Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) meaning condensation method.

In the data generating process, the survey subjects were asked to write their names on the surveys, which were filled out in the presence of the teacher. The group interviews were also conducted by the teacher. However, the teacher did not have any power to influence the students' course results in the course, and the purpose of the research was clearly explained beforehand. These factors enhance the validity of this research. In the following section, the findings from the surveys and group interviews will be presented and discussed to answer the research questions directing our study. Both quantitative and qualitative findings are expected to be related to the two research questions.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1 Research Question 1: What are the important orientations of beginner learners for learning Chinese as a foreign language in a university-wide course?

This study identified four types of orientations, which were represented by ten designed items in the surveys. The knowledge orientation was ranked as the most important for learning Chinese in the given context, while the instrumental orientation appeared to be the least important. In the surveys, the students were asked to rate the extent to which the proposed reasons corresponded with their own reasons for Chinese learning. The mean of the ratings from three items representing instrumental orientation was calculated as the index for that item, as were the means of the ratings for the knowledge, friendship, and sociocultural orientations. All surveys were valid and participants' scores differed among items. In each table, the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation are shown for every orientation. To facilitate the comparison of each combination of learner orientations before the course, the p values of the repeated measures of GLM analysis are shown in Table 1 (N=120), as are the mean, standard deviation, and rank for each orientation.

Table 1

Comparisons among orientations from pre-course survey

Orientation	Rank	Min	Max	M	SD	1	2	3
1 Knowledge	1	1.00	5.00	4.43	0.65			
2 Sociocultural	2	1.33	5.00	4.01	0.64	<0.001		
3 Friendship	3	1.00	5.00	3.86	0.78	<0.001	.013	
4 Instrumental	4	2.00	5.00	3.71	0.52	<0.001	<0.001	.021

Note. Min = minimum, Max = maximum, M = mean, SD = standard deviation. This also applies to Tables 2-3

For the further comparison of each orientation at the end of the course, the P values of the repeated measures of GLM analysis are shown in Table 2 (N=76, only including the participants who wanted to continue learning Chinese). The mean, standard deviation, and rank for each task are presented below. There were no significant differences in scores between the friendship and instrumental orientations.

Table 2

Comparisons among orientations from post-course survey

Orientation	Rank	Min	Max	M	SD	1	2	3
1 Knowledge	1	3.50	5.00	4.62	0.48			
2 Sociocultural	2	3.00	5.00	4.33	0.52	<0.001		
3 Friendship	3	2.00	5.00	4.16	0.74	<0.001	.017	
4 Instrumental	4	2.75	5.00	4.08	0.48	<0.001	.001	.332

The students rated each orientation according to their individual situations. Our data shows that in the given context, beginner learners may have four orientations for learning Chinese. The knowledge orientation ranked highest (most important) in both pre- and post-course surveys, while the instrumental orientation ranked lowest (least important). That is to say, for the students, the knowledge orientation was the most important reason for learning Chinese, while the instrumental orientation was least important. No significant differences were found among the groups with different genders, nationalities, educational backgrounds, or previous experiences of learning Chinese.

Summarizing the results from both pre-course survey and post-course survey, the integrative orientations (knowledge, sociocultural and friendship orientation) play more important roles than the instrumental orientation. This result may be due to the particular context of this study. In this context, the learners were from multiple educational backgrounds, and the Chinese learning was not compulsory. For their own knowledge development and also based on their personal reasons for learning Chinese (in an elective course), the learners seemed positive toward to the language and culture to a great extent, and thus did not focus only on potential future instrumental gains.

4.2 Research Question 2: Is there any significant orientation change after a Chinese course using the TBTL method? If so, in what aspects and to what extent do these orientations change, and what causes the changes in the given context?

Research question 2 has two sub-questions. The data from qualitative perspectives are only related to the second sub-question.

4.2.1 Is there any significant orientation change after a Chinese course using the TBTL method? If so, in what aspects and to what extent do these orientations change?

To answer this question, we compared the data from both years' pre- and post-course surveys, which were completed by participants who wanted to continue learning Chinese. The P values of the T-test analysis are shown in Table 3 (N=69). The T-tests showed that participants scored sociocultural and instrumental orientations significantly higher after the course than they had before (Sociocultural: t = -2.01, p = 0.048; Instrumental: t = -6.07, p < 0.001). Comparisons of other pairs were not significant. However, the means of all the orientations were higher in the post-course surveys than they were in the pre-course surveys.

Table 3

Comparison between orientation scales in pre- and post-course surveys

Orientation	Pre		Post				
	M	SD	M	SD	Post-Pre	t	p
1 Knowledge	4.54	0.53	4.59	0.49	0.05	-0.83	.410
2 Sociocultural	4.19	0.54	4.32	0.53	0.13	-2.01	.048
3 Friendship	4.04	0.70	4.12	0.73	0.08	-1.02	.310
4 Instrumental	3.79	0.51	4.10	0.48	0.31	-6.07	<0.001

The findings illustrated that generally positive orientation changes occurred in the course, meaning learners' orientations, or goals, were enhanced in the learning process. The enhancement of orientations could be seen as an expression of the participants finding it more meaningful to study Chinese in connection with their goals, and their goals became even clearer after the trial course. Furthermore, learner motivation was also witnessed to have been somewhat enhanced in this study. As the course continued, the learners showed progressively higher levels of interest in Chinese language and culture. The majority of participants, 78.29%, attended almost every teaching unit. Furthermore, 83.51% participants (76 out of 91 who answered the post-course survey), expressed a willingness to continue learning Chinese, even though Chinese was an extra activity separate from their regular education. The enhancement of learner orientation and motivation both took place during the later period of the course.

4.2.2 What causes the changes in the given context?

Findings from both perspectives are used to answer this question in this section.

From the quantitative perspective, the correlations among the orientations and course variables, including task motivating degree, integration of cultural elements, learner perception of the difficulty of learning Chinese, satisfaction, and course evaluation, had been analyzed with the quantitative data from the post-course surveys, but needed further explanation from the learners' perspective. The correlations are shown in Table 4 (N=76). The mean of the ratings for motivating degree of the six tasks used in both years was calculated as the index for task motivating degree, as were the means of the ratings for integrative orientations, satisfaction and course evaluation. The correlation analysis shows that the five course variables are all significantly correlated to the increased orientations, which has proven our hypothesis on the influence of those course variables.

Table 4

Correlations among orientations and course variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Integrative orientations						
2 Instrumental orientation	.27*					
3 Task motivating degree	.39**	.18				
4 Integration of culture elements in tasks	.30**	.24*	.21			
5 Perception of the difficulty of learning Chinese	.09	.23*	.11	.05		
6 Satisfaction	.45**	.39**	.40**	.17	.12	
7 Course evaluation	.29*	.25*	.39**	.42**	.25*	.39**

Note. * is a correlation significant at the 0.05 level; ** is a correlation significant at the 0.01 level.

After analyzing the quantitative data, we found it important to seek insight as to the causes of the orientation changes by employing the qualitative perspective. The group interviews partially validate the survey findings. According to the learners, several internal and external factors might have influenced their learning goals and motivation in the learning process. The frequently mentioned internal factors were the increased self-efficacy and satisfaction, while the external factors were mainly related to the motivating course design, especially the TBTL method.

4.2.2.1 The increased self-efficacy and satisfaction

Self-efficacy is an important internal factor for learners' motivational behavior. Busse and Walter (2013) argue that low initial self-efficacy represents a challenge for beginner learners of languages or other subjects. Oxford and Shearin (1994) claim that many students "feel lost in the language class" (p. 21), because they do not have an initial belief in their self-efficacy. The CFL beginner learners in this study were no exception at the beginning of the course; as a result of their cultural beliefs, they considered learning Chinese difficult. Student 19 explained: "There is a Danish saying — that 'you might have been speaking Chinese,' meaning 'I have

no idea what you are saying.' So if you have that expression in our language, (it is) like having a picture of Chinese (as a difficult language to understand)."

However, we witnessed learner self-efficacy increasing during the learning process, mainly due to the change in the students' perception of the difficulty of Chinese learning. After learning some Chinese in the course, they found the language easier to learn and more logical than they had thought, and thus they believed more in their ability to learn it. Student 11 described: "I think the language is a lot easier now, and I actually think there is a possibility that if I keep learning that, I might someday be able to speak Chinese almost fluently, and I didn't (think so) before." The data from the surveys also support this conclusion. A T-test was used to compare the students' perception of the difficulty of Chinese learning before and after the course (from very difficult to very easy). The rating after the course (M=2.80; SD=0.81) was significantly higher (meaning the students thought learning Chinese was much easier than they had assumed) than the rating before the course (M=1.71; SD= 0.73) (N=69; t= -10.18; p <0.001).

Achievement or perceived progress is also a factor in enhancing learner self-efficacy and motivation (Schunk 1991). Student 11 told a story about how she developed a strong sense of self-efficacy after saying a Chinese sentence successfully: "When I signed up for the course, I thought, oh my god, this is going to be very difficult. (However), after the first class, I could go home and actually say a sentence. I felt that I was motivated to learn more, because I could already say something!" In Busse and Walter's (2013) study, there were declines in learner self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation led by the challenging learning tasks and general curriculum design. In this study, the main reasons for the increased self-efficacy and the change of learners' perception of the difficulty of Chinese learning may be related to the oral proficiency focus, the "meaningful, achievable, and success-engendering language tasks" (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 277), and the absence of an assessment (exam) in the course.

4.2.2.2 Learners' satisfaction with achievement, their own efforts and the entire course.

The perceived achievement was also strongly linked to learner satisfaction. Since it was an elective course with limited teaching hours, the students did not have high expectations, which might be why they were greatly satisfied with what they had learned and achieved, as well as with the course as a whole. Student 25 said: "When I heard that we would have 8 sections, I was a bit afraid that maybe we would learn like one word or two words, because it is not a lot of time. But I think that your use of the time, we learned much more than I expected…it is positive, and surprised me."

The students' satisfaction with their own efforts (regular attendance, active participation, and homework completion) was connected to their satisfaction with achievement and increased self-efficacy. Many students expressed a desire to learn

more Chinese or "sign up for the next course" after talking about their satisfaction, which showed that this influenced their continuing motivation to learn Chinese.

The internal factors above were interconnected and worked together to enhance learners' orientation and motivation.

4.2.2.3 The motivating course design: content, integration of cultural elements, and TBTL method

Several motivating features of the TBTL course were emphasized by the students. First, they noted the "relevant", "useful", and "achievable" content, including the topics and the input of the tasks. Second, they highlighted the integration of cultural elements in the tasks as a motivating feature. The students indicated that they were more interested in learning the language when they learned more about the culture. Student 22 said, "I didn't know we would learn about the culture. And I think it was very interesting. That is a very good thing for me to be motivated and learning Chinese." Student 2 also expressed satisfaction with the integrated cultural elements: "in general, I think it was pretty good, because it (the cultural element) was not separated. It was implemented in the tasks. If you can learn the language and some culture at the same time, you win." Supporting this notion, researchers (Dörnyei, 1994; Ho, 1998) also stress in earlier studies that integrating cultural elements into language learning can increase learners' motivation.

Third, the TBTL method was motivating because it allowed the students to interact with each other, enjoy cooperative work (e.g., group work), and use the language "in a situation". It has been suggested that meaningful learning mostly takes place through interaction with others in situated activities and participation in communities of practice (Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1998). Furthermore, research has also shown that a cooperative environment may lead to high levels of learner self-efficacy and higher learner motivation (Nichols & Miller, 1994). Busse and Walter (2013) find that a lack of opportunities to communicate is the main source of the decline in students' self-efficacy beliefs and levels of intrinsic motivation. In contrast, this study has provided evidence directly supporting a TBTL course design, and we believe the communicative TBTL method contributed to the positive orientation changes seen therein.

4.2.2.4 Challenges of helping beginners learn a foreign language via task-based teaching and learning

There were several challenges in helping beginners to complete the tasks in this course, such as beginner-learners' low linguistic knowledge and skill, learning originating in the nature of the Chinese language itself, limited institutional support for the course at a curriculum level (being an elective), and the effectiveness of cooperation and interaction in small groups being influenced by group cohesion and

member familiarity, all of which have been discussed in our previous study (Ruan, Duan, & Du, 2014, in press). This study found another challenge concerning a debate on the effectiveness of the TBTL method (in comparison with a traditional teacher-centered method).

As a motivating element in the course design, the TBTL method was criticized by one student in the group interviews and a few students from the course. In the group interview, based on past experience, Student 4 insisted that the teacher should be "the primary resource of knowledge" in the classroom, and preferred not to have much peer interaction. Her arguments were challenged by other group members who argued for why they preferred the TBTL method. Student 12 said: "Having to do with tasks or interact, you use the language. I think that is very good, because it makes it easier to remember what you learned in the course… if the teacher just standing right at the blackboard and talking, talking, talking, you, at a point, lose concentration, and after maybe 30 minutes, I don't listen all that much. So by being interactive, I actually follow more in the class." Student 13 described a problem with "the traditional way of learning" by saying it does not consist of as much cooperative work and variation as does TBTL method. He emphasized "that (the TBTL method) really made me much more interested in going to Chinese class."

The debate on the TBTL method also suggested that students' learning experiences and styles could influence their perceptions of learning. The students' enjoyment of peer interaction was strongly related to their past learning experiences and styles. In this course, most of the students, especially Danish students, had previously experienced group work or task/project-based learning, and thus they easily adopted the TBTL method. However, in other contexts, students might have experienced different instructional styles, and so they would likely have different learning preferences. Brown (1994) argues that "when learners' learning styles are matched with the instructional styles, their motivation, performance, and attainment will be enhanced" (as cited in Aliakbari & Mahjub, 2010, p. 2). The findings of this study suggest the importance of considering learners' learning experiences, styles, and preferences when designing a language course, especially one for learners with multiple backgrounds.

The students also mentioned some other factors, such as the teacher and the classmates, that had influenced their motivation to learn Chinese.

As discussed above, several internal and external factors may have contributed to the positive orientation changes in this study. For pedagogical implementations, we suggest using a communicative approach (e.g. the TBTL method) in language learning, because it provides learners with rich opportunities to communicate with each other, which may increase learners' self-efficacy and thus enhance their orientations and motivation. Integrating cultural elements into tasks and designing achievable tasks are two motivating strategies for the implementation of the TBTL method, especially at the beginning stage of language learning. However, there are some challenges in helping beginners learn via the TBTL method, such as

accounting for, learners' learning experiences or styles, and needing instructors' attention in various contexts.

5. Conclusion

This small-scale study mainly indicates that the levels of four identified orientations increased after a CFL beginner-level course in a TBTL environment, showing that the learners had clearer goals for their further study. The knowledge orientation played an important role in this university-wide foreign language learning course in a Danish context. According to the students, several internal and external factors, such as the learners' increased self-efficacy, students' overall satisfaction, and the motivating course design, contributed to the positive orientation changes. For pedagogical implementation, it is suggested that a communicative approach (e.g. the TBTL method) can be used to promote positive orientation changes and enhance learner motivation to a certain degree. However, this study also identifies challenges in helping beginners learn a foreign language via TBTL.

Because of the lack of access to other CFL courses in universities in Denmark, it was not possible for us to compare students of Aalborg with other students in different cities. Therefore, it is thoroughly recommended that further research be carried out in this realm. In addition, this study did not include learner self-efficacy or language-use anxiety as variables in the surveys. Future studies may shed light on the influence of these variables. It is also suggested that future studies on orientation or other motivational changes be expanded to include more instructional settings in various contexts.

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Appendix A

The six tasks used in both years

Task	Procedure and setting
1 Creating your own Chinese names	The students work in pairs to create each other's Chinese name with the help of a teacher-prepared material. Chinese family name culture is integrated in the task.
2 Connecting word cards into sentences	The students work in groups to connect word cards into sentences. Meanwhile, they listen to the teacher introducing herself using the words on the cards. The students must infer the meaning of the sentences afterwards according to the hints from the teacher. Greeting culture is discussed in the post-task phase.
3 Asking several classmates questions and reporting the results (used in various teaching units)	The students are required to individually survey several classmates and then report the results. Relevant cultural elements are discussed in each task.
4 Teaching your classmates to say the numbers on the poker cards in Chinese	Firstly, the students need to remember how to say the numbers on the poker cards (one or two) they hold in hands in Chinese. Then they are required to teach classmates around them to say the numbers on their poker cards in Chinese.
5 Role play: ordering food	The students plan and complete the task in small groups. Chinese, Danish, and other countries' cuisine cultures are compared and discussed.
6 Group work: teaching beginners Chinese language and culture	The students work in small groups. They are required to negotiate and plan the task over a certain time span. The students set realistic objectives and study what they want to. Some groups choose to focus on cultural learning.

Note. Task 2, 3, 5, and 6 are also presented in our previous study focusing on the same course in autumn semester of 2012 and spring semester of 2013 (Ruan, Duan & Du, 2014, in press).

Appendix B

Presented orientations from both pre- and post-course surveys

Orientation	Items
Knowledge	I want to broaden my outlook and increase my knowledge of the world.
	I like learning foreign languages and about cultures.
Sociocultural	I want to understand Chinese movies, TV, video, music, etc.
	I want to learn more about various cultures and people and gain more insight into the world.
	I am interested in/curious about China and its culture.
Friendship	I would like to meet Chinese-speaking people and converse with them in Chinese.
	I would like to make friends with Chinese-speaking people.
Instrumental	I may need it for future jobs/studies.
	It is an easy way to earn study credit (ECTS).
	I want to go to China to travel, study, work, or live.

Appendix B. Questionnaire for course evaluation used in Paper 1

Evaluation form of CI teaching

Chinese Language and Culture

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in this course offered by teachers from the Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning, Aalborg University. We would very much like to hear your experiences of and opinions about the course, which will greatly contribute to the further development of our work. We'd appreciate it if you could take 10 minutes time to fill in the form. Thank you.

Best regards from CI TEAM

Gender: ☐ **Female** ☐ **Male**

Name of institution or university program:
_____

Which semester: _____

Name of the course you participated in?
_____

Name of the teacher: _____

---

1. Why did you choose to participate in this course?

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. What were your expectations to this course in relation to its contents, teaching or studying methods, and achievements? And did the course live up to these expectations? Please elaborate.

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. Could you please exemplify your experiences of learning another culture and language other than your native and elaborate on what you have learned?

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. What has been the best experience in this course? And why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. How do you think of the contents of the course?

Very difficult   ☐
Slightly difficult ☐
Manageable   ☐
Rather easy   ☐
I don't know   ☐

_____

_____

_____

_____

6a. What do you think of the teaching method of this course?

Very boring   ☐
Slightly boring ☐
Fine   ☐
Interesting   ☐
Very interesting   ☐
I don't know   ☐

6b. How do you find these methods in comparison with other courses based on your experiences?

---

7. How do you think of the whole duration of the course/activity?

Too long   ☐
Fine   ☐
Too short   ☐
I don't know ☐

8a. How many hours do you usually prepare for the course?

0 - 30 min.   ☐
30 - 60 min.   ☐
1 - 2 hours   ☐
More than 2 hours   ☐
Do not prepare at all ☐

---

8 b. How do you prepare for class?

Learn characters / language ☐
Use the teacher's material ☐
Go online ☐
Do not prepare ☐
Other (please elaborate) ☐

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. How can you use what you have learned in this course/activity in your life now and in the future?

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. Do you think you will continue to learn Chinese language in the future? Why or why not?

No ☐
Maybe ☐
Yes ☐

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix C. Interview guidelines used in Paper 2

For the individual interviews with the students:

1. Did you think it was important to learn Chinese Area Studies/ Chinese language and culture, and why?
2. What did you think of culture and culture learning?
   2.1 How did you understand culture?
   2.2 What did you think the culture learning could benefit you?
3. What did you think of the teaching method, namely a PBL-inspired method, in this course, compared with the one used in last semester and other culture courses? How did it generally meet your learning preference and motivate you to learn?
4. What did you think of the team-based activities used in the course? How did you prepare for/experience in the activities? What could be improved?
5. What were the challenges you met in the course?

For the individual interviews with the teachers:

1. What did you think of the students' motivation in this course?
2. What did you think of culture and culture learning?
   2.1 How did you understand culture?
   2.2 What did you think the culture learning could benefit the students?
3. What did you think of the influence of the teaching method (i.e. a PBL-inspired method) on the students' motivation in this course?
4. How to support/ maintain students' motivation according to your experience?
5. What were the challenges and your teaching reflections?

SUMMARY

This PhD study explores the influence of teaching and learning methods on learner motivation in teaching Chinese as a foreign language in an intercultural (or Danish) context and illustrates how the learners are motivated to learn Chinese language and culture through task-based teaching and learning in a student-centred learning environment. Both qualitative and mixed methods approaches have been employed to examine learner motivation and the effects of certain teaching and learning methods (i.e. student-centred methods) in a given context. The findings have shown that a student-centred method, such as task-based teaching and learning or a method inspired by problem-based learning, can be employed as a motivating methodology to provide a supportive environment for language and culture learning (i.e., Chinese language and culture learning), particularly in an intercultural (or Danish) context. The findings further demonstrate that multiple other factors (e.g., affective and learning situation factors) may contribute to increased learner motivation and orientation in a student-centred learning environment. This study also calls attention to the students who learn foreign languages in elective courses, and emphasises the issues of context and the integration of language and culture.