ENGAGEMENT WITH CHINESE POPULAR CULTURE IN ADULT

MANDARIN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND SOCIALIZATION

by

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Abstract

Many studies in second language acquisition (SLA) have found that the incorporation of popular culture into classroom or self-learning can boost language learners' motivation. However, little attention has been paid to Chinese as an Additional Language (CAL) learners' usage of Chinese popular culture to learn Mandarin. This thesis seeks to explore how Chinese popular culture impacts CAL learners' motivation for learning Mandarin and their language socialization process during their engagement. By creating a new theoretical framework which is a combination of language socialization and entertainment psychology, this study employs qualitative case study methods to investigate ten adult CAL learners' experiences. Each participant was interviewed individually twice, before and after their two-week engagement with Chinese popular culture. Additionally, they were required to note down their pop culture activities and reflections during this period. This research found Chinese popular culture complemented learners' formal classroom-based learning and contributed to arousing and/or sustaining their motivation to learn Mandarin. In addition, CAL learners used semiotic resources in Chinese popular culture to construct their identities in three dimensions: appreciation, identification and participation.

There were three forms of social interactions associated with popular culture that mediated learners' language socialization: learners interacted with media characters, learners observed social interactions among characters and learners interacted with others about Chinese popular culture. In addition to teaching and self-learning, this study found that CAL learners favored peer socialization with Chinese friends to carry out this pedagogy of learning Mandarin

through Chinese popular culture. Yet, perceived (or real) propaganda in Chinese popular culture, issues of learners' heritage identity and preferences, and the informal, fragmented, and sometimes even archaic language found in popular culture suggest that a pedagogy drawing on popular culture, while promising, is far from straightforward and must be considered carefully. This study suggests that Mandarin teachers should facilitate class discussions of Chinese popular culture, and extracurricular activity planners should facilitate individual peer socialization between a Chinese learner and a Chinese peer. Finally, textbook writers could consider establishing corresponding websites for textbooks, on which learners can access resources about Chinese popular culture, and can discuss popular topics in Mandarin.

Preface

This thesis is the original work of the author Sumin Fang. Ethics approval was required for this research and was approved by the UBC Behavioral Research Ethics Board (BREB) on January 14, 2015. The BREB number is H14-03004.

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Dedication

To my grandmother and my parents.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1   Overview

With the growing impact of China in the global sphere of politics and economy, the number of adult Chinese as an Additional Language (CAL) learners is increasing around the world. People's Daily, the official newspaper of the Chinese government, reported that there were more than 100 million CAL learners outside China in 2014 (Wu, Kong, & Yin, 2014). Yet, despite such a large number of learners, Mandarin has still been regarded as a challenging language for adult Anglophones to acquire in the UK, Canada and America, and many learners encounter great difficulties even in their initial learning stage (Chiang, 2002; Duff et al., 2013; Huang, 2000; Hu, 2010). Similarly, the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) of the US Department of State ranked Mandarin as one of the five most difficult languages for adult English speakers, suggesting 2,200 class hours to reach a high level of proficiency in it (as cited in Stevens, 2006).

In order to cope with learning difficulties in Mandarin, CAL researchers have proposed various creative strategies such as learning to read Chinese characters through phonetic principles of Chinese radicals (e.g., Chen, Shu, Wu, & Anderson, 2003) and utilizing smartphone applications to learn Chinese idioms (e.g., Godwin-Jones, 2011; Wong, Chin, Tan, & Liu, 2010). In addition, the existing studies in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) suggest that popular culture is widely used to motivate adult learners to learn an additional language and help maintain their interests, for example, in the case of Japanese, Spanish and English as second or additional languages (e.g., Duff & Zappa-Hollman, 2013). However, relatively little research has examined if and how adult CAL learners utilize Chinese popular culture to learn Mandarin in their language socialization processes.

The purpose of this study is to investigate what role Chinese popular culture plays in the extracurricular language socialization processes of adult CAL learners in Canada. This study seeks to discover how some CAL learners proactively utilize Chinese popular culture to learn Mandarin and Chinese culture in their private time, and how their usage facilitates their language acquisition and intercultural competence. By investigating these questions, this study seeks to provide suggestions for textbook writers, classroom teachers, extracurricular activity planners and CAL students in terms of better utilizing Chinese popular culture in teaching and learning Mandarin. Specifically, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. How does Chinese popular culture impact adult CAL learners' learning motivations?

2. How is Chinese popular culture related to learners' second language socialization in Mandarin?

3. What are some of the implications of incorporating popular culture in language teaching and learning for textbook writers, Mandarin teachers, extracurricular activity planners and CAL learners?

In order to answer these questions, this study employs a multiple case study approach to investigate ten adult CAL learners in Canada. Since language socialization processes are unpredictable and diverse with individual language learners (Duff & Talmy, 2011), this study conducted two semi-structured in-depth interviews and obtained a self-written report to investigate their individual cases. Inductive thematic analysis has been employed to analyze the data.

The highlights of the study lie in the interdisciplinary nature of the research and distinctive factors of SLA in Chinese contexts. This study adopts theories in both SLA

(predominantly language socialization and related sociocultural approaches to learning) and media studies (theories of entertainment psychology) to analyze data.

1.2 Significance of the Study

This study aims to explore what forms of Chinese popular culture CAL students tend to appreciate in Chinese culture. In addition, this study investigates how the students utilize popular culture for the purpose of learning about Chinese culture and language. For Mandarin teachers in North America, the research findings may serve as an inspiration to adopt more interesting and engaging teaching practices involving Chinese popular culture and give more effective guidance for students' out-of-class exploration of such culture. For textbook writers, CAL learners' perspectives in this study will inform them about how they might incorporate Chinese popular culture in Mandarin textbooks. In addition, extracurricular activity planners of Mandarin and Chinese culture programs can prepare more tailored cultural activities for adult CAL learners in North America. Finally, CAL learners might draw on some successful experiences of CAL participants in this study, who combine the learning of Chinese language and culture with entertainment (popular culture) and pleasure in various ways.

1.3 Terms and Definitions

Storey (2009) implied that it was hard to define popular culture due to the difficulties in pinning down the two terms *popular* and *culture*. He listed six different perspectives to define popular culture from the perspectives of critical cultural studies. Duff and Zappa-Hollman (2013) also defined popular culture in their article on popular culture and language teaching. Based on their summaries, this study defines popular culture in terms of three characteristics: it is usually disseminated by mass media such as radio, newspaper, television and Internet; it is favored by a

massive number of people; and it emerges and disappears in a relatively short period of time (compared to classic cultural works) (Duff & Zappa-Hollman, 2013; Storey, 2009). By this definition, popular culture includes contemporary and prevalent movies, television drama shows, pop music, commercials, computer games, talk shows, popular novels and so on.

The term "Chinese popular culture" in this study is not merely restricted to cultural products produced and disseminated widely within the People's Republic of China (PRC), but also in Greater China or the Chinese diaspora (Duff, 2014), including Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong and so on. Singapore and Taiwan are included because much popular culture produced in these two places is in Mandarin. Popular culture of Hong Kong is taken into account for several reasons. First, many heritage learners of Mandarin in Canada are Cantonese speakers who have family members from Hong Kong. Second, popular culture in Hong Kong has been embraced by not only Cantonese speakers, but also a huge population in Mainland China. Third, due to the close collaboration between Hong Kong and the Mainland nowadays in producing popular culture, it is hard to distinguish what is "purely" Hong Kong or Mainland popular culture.

The term "CAL learners" refers to those who learn Mandarin as an additional language. In this study they have been divided into two groups: heritage and non-heritage learners. It is necessary to distinguish the two groups because much literature in CAL suggests that the two groups of learners have significant differences in terms of motivation, identity construction and cross-cultural competence (e.g., Duff, 2014; Duff et al., 2013; Duff & Li, 2009; He, 2006; Li & Duff, 2008; Xiao, 2006). The term "heritage CAL learners" refers to those learners who have observed and even participated in social interactions in Chinese languages, including Mandarin, Cantonese and other dialects, with parents, siblings and relatives from their social networks

related to their shared Chinese ancestry (Duff, 2014). In other words, from Valdés' (2000, 2005) perspective, heritage CAL learners in North America grow up in a family where some Chinese language(s) is/are used, and they can speak or at least comprehend the language(s) to some extent. Therefore, in many cases, heritage CAL learners are bilingual in English and Chinese. Accordingly, non-heritage CAL learners are defined as Mandarin learners who have had neither Chinese family members nor ancestors, and they learn Mandarin from resources outside family contexts, including classroom teaching and/or textbooks.

1.4   Thesis Outline

This thesis is organized into the following chapters: Chapter 2 Literature Review, Chapter 3 Methodology, Chapter 4 Chinese Popular Culture and CAL Learners' Motivations, Chapter 5 Chinese Popular Culture and CAL Learners' Language Socialization, Chapter 6 Affordances and Constraints of the Pedagogy, and Chapter 7 Discussion, Conclusion, and Implications.

In Chapter 2, I begin by conceptualizing the multidisciplinary theoretical framework of this study. I explain why language socialization is adopted as the main theoretical framework of my study. Since language socialization is mediated by social interactions, I also introduce theories from entertainment psychology to the theoretical framework to help explain the existence of three forms of interactions during learners' engagement with Chinese popular culture, not all of which are direct or face-to-face, contrary to most language socialization research.

In Chapter 3, I explain the research methodology of this study. I illustrate sampling, recruitment, profiles of participants, methods of data collection, data analysis method, ethical considerations, and my own positionality as a researcher.

Chapter 4, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 are reports of the findings in this study. Chapter 4 seeks to answer Research Question #1 about learners' motivations during their engagement with popular culture. CAL learners' motivations to engage with Chinese popular culture are distinctive and complicated. The pleasure that CAL learners derive from Chinese popular culture cannot simply be replicated or reproduced in the classroom; thus, I argue that Chinese popular culture should complement rather than replace Mandarin teachers' classroom teaching. Furthermore, CAL learners' motivations for Chinese popular culture and motivations for learning Mandarin often mutually impact each other. In addition, I discuss learners' identity construction and usage of popular culture in three dimensions: appreciation of Chinese popular culture, identification with media characters in popular culture, and participation in using Chinese language and popular culture. Correspondingly, a three dimensional model is proposed for the analysis of their identities.

In Chapter 5, I explore CAL learners' language socialization process in order to answer Research Question #2. I discuss three types of social interactions in the process: firstly, learners' experiences of vicarious (or, according to the theory I present, "illusionary") interactions with media characters in popular culture; secondly, learners' observation of social interactions among media characters; thirdly, learners' usage of popular culture to provide topics about which they can interact with other people. Then, I discuss how multimodality such as facial expression, body language and voice in Chinese popular culture assists learners' meaning-making about language and culture. Moreover, I argue that Chinese popular culture provides a corpus of pragmatic and other linguistic aspects for learners.

With regard to Chapter 6, I explore affordances and constraints affecting the pedagogy of learning Mandarin through Chinese popular culture. I present three contexts to implement this pedagogy: Mandarin classes, self-learning and peer socialization. One-on-one peer socialization is especially recommended among them. I also discuss three complicated factors that impact practicing this pedagogy. Firstly, perceived elements of propaganda in Chinese popular culture might negatively impact learners' motivations to learn Chinese culture and language. Furthermore, heritage learners' identities may lead them to appreciate subcultures of Chinese popular culture (e.g., Cantonese popular culture) and dialects of Chinese languages (e.g., Cantonese), not necessarily Mandarin. Thirdly, informal and fragmented Mandarin in Chinese popular culture often causes learning barriers for CAL learners.

In Chapter 7, I first summarize the findings and move on to discuss three interesting phenomena in my research. First, among all genres of Chinese popular culture, martial arts movies and a reality shows (in which celebrities took their children to live in less developed rural areas for several days) were favored most by my participants. Second, low proficiency learners also used popular culture to learn Mandarin because current digital technology enabled them to look up new words, quiz themselves and review learnt content much more easily than before. Third, some participants reported positive longitudinal effects of using popular culture to learn an additional language. Finally, I give suggestions to teachers, extracurricular activity planners and textbook writers.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I begin by presenting five necessary theoretical concepts in my study: (1) language socialization, (2) interactions in media usage, (3) motivation for learning an additional language and for engaging with popular culture, (4) investment, identity and identification with media characters, and (5) cultivation effects.

I move on to review advantages of the pedagogy of using popular culture for language acquisition purposes. However, one of the significant disadvantages of implementing this pedagogy is that students may internalize stereotypes in popular culture (Kubota, 2011).

Finally, I expand on the current literature in SLA which suggests that there are two major ways of implementing this pedagogy in real life (Choi & Yi, 2012; Murray, 2008). Either teachers can incorporate popular culture into language classrooms, or students can learn an additional language through popular culture by themselves.

2.2 Theoretical Concepts

In this section, I present five key concepts that informed this study.

2.2.1 Concepts of Language Socialization

A language socialization theoretical framework is suitable for this study because it focuses not only on learners' language acquisition, but also on cultural and other knowledge "learned in and through language" (Duff & Talmy, 2011, p. 95). In other words, language socialization analyzes language learners' "interactive and linguistic *processes* of socialization" (p. 100) at both "macro/sociological" and "micro/linguistic" levels (p. 103). Both levels are

salient in the context of CAL learners' engagement with popular culture due to the reason that they inevitably learn about Chinese culture and ideologies at the macro level as well as the language at the micro level at the same time.

In this study, language socialization is researched as a process. Originating in linguistic anthropology, language socialization initially looked at social interactions in children's first language acquisition from linguistic perspectives, for example, the way that affective and other stances are expressed in the language (e.g., Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). Duff and Talmy (2011) point out that theories of language socialization have been developed and extended since the earlier first-language studies: one direction of the research is to study language socialization as part of language learners' multilingual trajectories, and thereby language socialization itself becomes a research subject. Although this study does not employ an ethnographic or longitudinal, observational approach found in much of the earlier language socialization research, it nonetheless draws on the principle that it is largely by means of learners' engagement (interaction) with language and other cultural practices produced by more proficient speakers that learners develop greater proficiency in the language and knowledge of the culture. This study therefore adopts Duff and Talmy's broader conceptualization of language socialization, and researches how Chinese popular culture impacts the processes of learning Mandarin among CAL learners.

However, language socialization alone does not seem sufficient for this study. Language socialization, as noted above, is mediated by social interactions between newcomers and experts in a particular community of practice (Duff, 2007; Duff & Talmy, 2011). Yet, when language learners engage with popular culture, these interactions seem to be invisible. In fact,

entertainment psychologists investigate how viewers interact with characters in popular culture on screen. Thus, an interdisciplinary theoretical framework which incorporates media theories can better shed light on what social interactions mediate CAL learners' language socialization, and how. This incorporation is described in the next section.

2.2.2 Social Interactions in Media Usage

The introduction of media theories that recognize the agency of the audience can help explain social interactions that mediate learners' language socialization process. In terms of interactions between the media and the audience, one of the most representative theories in entertainment psychology is Parasocial Interaction (PSI) theory. PSI theories have used empirical evidence to confirm the psychological interactions between viewers and media characters (e.g., Horton & Wohl, 1956; Giles, 2002; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985).

For example, Horton and Wohl (1956) found that while watching different TV programs, audience members felt characters on screen were accompanying them and talking to them. McQuail, Blumler and Brown (1972) found that viewers reported feeling like they were at the scene and wanted to do something to help the characters after watching a car accident in a TV soap opera. More recently, Stern, Russell and Russell (2007) discovered that some audience members considered their favorite media characters as genuine friends in life. Labrecque (2014) cited Auter (1992) to argue that characters on screen gave verbal and non-verbal cues to guide TV viewers to perceive that they were interacting with the viewers. The cues include "use of a subjective camera angle (i.e., the camera serves as the eyes of the audience), establishment of eye contact with viewers, and direct addresses of viewers (visually and verbally)" (Labrecque,

2014, p. 136). The aforementioned research suggests that there are particular kinds of social interactions between audience members and media characters on screen.

In the CAL context, PSI theories can be used to uncover one type of social interaction that is often neglected: the interactions between language learners and media characters in popular culture. Beginning-level CAL learners are typically newcomers in terms of Chinese language and culture, whereas media characters serve as experts in these fields. Through parasocial interactions when learners engage with popular culture, learners are socialized by the Chinese speakers on screen into Chinese culture and language.

Another type of social interaction is language learners' observation of interactions among media characters in the popular culture. It is undeniable that audience members are always observing social interactions in the popular culture throughout their engagement with media. Since media characters' interactions in popular culture typically reflect "human nature, social relations, and the norms and social structure of society" (Bandura, 2001, p. 281), such interactions can be seen as interactions among experts in the community of target language users. Thus, they mediate newcomers' (language learners') language socialization.

A third type of interaction in CAL learners' engagement with Chinese popular culture happens when they discuss topics from or about popular culture with other people, particularly their Chinese friends. Once more, as relative novices, learners are able to have social interactions with experts (Chinese friends) to learn about Chinese language and culture. Popular culture again provides learners with affordances for language socialization.

The abovementioned three types of social interactions validate the adoption of a language socialization framework for my current research purpose. In additional to interactions, CAL

learners' motivations for learning Mandarin and for engaging with Chinese popular culture also impact their language socialization process. These two motivations will be conceptualized in the following section.

2.2.3   Motivations for Learning Languages and for Engaging with Popular Culture

The success of the pedagogy of utilizing popular culture to learn an additional language depends on the coexistence of two types of motivations: motivations for learning an additional language and motivations for engaging with the popular culture. If CAL learners do not like any Chinese popular culture, they will not consider practicing this pedagogy. On the other hand, if they do not have the motivation to learn Mandarin during their engagement with Chinese popular culture, they become ordinary audience members, not necessarily language learners (although there may be some implicit internalization of new expressions which are then diffused through their social networks). Accordingly, their engagement becomes purely an enjoyment of popular culture, which is not pedagogical. Since these two motivations are conceptualized in SLA and entertainment psychology differently, they will be discussed with respect to theories from the two fields.

Current studies in SLA drawing on sociocultural perspectives tend to consider motivation as a moment-to-moment fluid concept (e.g., Duff, 2012; Ushioda, 2009). Duff (2012) argues that a language learner's motivation is closely associated with his/her identity and agency in a specific time and space. Ushioda (2009) also argues that language motivation is "emergent from relations between real persons, particular social identities, and the unfolding cultural context of activity" (p. 215). In other words, a language learner's motivation is impacted when she/he constructs social identities in activities which are embedded with cultural values, conventions

and knowledge. This statement of motivation can be applied to the learners' engagement with popular culture because popular culture represents cultural values, conventions and knowledge for learners. As a result, language learners utilize semiotic resources in popular culture to construct their identities during their engagement with it. In this way, their engagement impacts their motivation to learn the target language.

However, in order to promote the pedagogy discussed in this thesis, it is also important to understand what psychological mechanisms motivate people to engage with popular culture. With the knowledge of why and under what circumstances people seek entertainment, it will be much easier and clearer for Mandarin teachers, extracurricular activity planners or textbook writers to facilitate the pedagogy. These questions happen to pose the central problems in the field of entertainment psychology (e.g., Oliver & Raney, 2011; Vorderer, Steen, & Chan, 2006).

Oliver and Raney (2011) argues that people's motivation for enjoying popular culture is a multidimensional experience. In an effort to pin down the dimensions, Vorderer et al. (2006) cites Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory, and proposes a three dimensional model of motivation for popular culture: dimensions of *autonomy*, *relatedness* and *competence*. An audience member's motivation may not be connected with all three dimensions, but it is very likely that their motivations can be explained by one or more among the three dimensions. *Autonomy* refers to audience members' seeking of popular culture as a result of their exercising of agency. For example, they make choices about what popular culture they would like to spend time on. *Relatedness* is based on the human desire to connect and even identify with other people during one's engagement. For instance, viewers seek a particular TV show when they strongly identify with one particular character in it. *Competence* originates from the basic human need

and desire to build particular skills and/or acquire specific knowledge. For example, many students love to play video games due to their desire to master challenges and outperform others in competitions. Another example is that some audience members seek documentaries about varieties of weapons as a result of their motivation to acquire specific knowledge that ordinary people do not necessarily have. Overall, a person's motivation for popular culture is fluid (Oliver & Raney, 2011) because one or more of the dimensions evolve across space and time in his/her life.

People's motivation for language acquisition and motivation for engaging with popular culture often overlap with each other because both of them are conceptualized as contingent experiences. Thus, they can be applied to analyze CAL learners' discursive and even seemingly conflicted experiences of popular culture engagement and Mandarin acquisition.

2.2.4   Investment, Identity and Identification with Media Characters

Norton (2000) used the notion of investment to explain language learners' efforts at mastering the target language. She argues that learners make efforts to learn the target language during a given period and in a particular place in order to acquire symbolic and material resources, and realize their desire for imagined identities. Imagined identities refer to particular social identities in learners' imagination, which are associated with more cultural capital and social power in a specific context. In other words, learners' investment in the target language is contextualized, and closely related with symbolic and material resources, learners' imagination, and identity construction.

Norton's notion of investment is applied and extended in my study. Given that CAL learners engage with Chinese popular culture as well as learn Mandarin, they actually make two

forms of investment at the same time: investment in Chinese popular culture and investment in Mandarin. These two forms of investment correspond to two forms of motivation discussed in the previous section. I think the difference between investment and motivation in learners' engagement with popular culture is that investment refers to learners' actual efforts in learning and understanding language and culture, whereas motivation refers to learners' reasons and justifications to do so. Norton's conceptualization of investment can be applied to learners' engagement with popular culture because audience members also utilize semiotic resources in popular culture to construct imagined identities in particular contexts, a notion that is supported by identification theories in entertainment psychology (e.g., Cohen, 2009; Joyce & Harwood, 2014; Maccoby & Wilson, 1957).

Identification refers to viewers' perceptions of themselves to have a shared identity with the character that they identify with in popular culture (e.g., Cohen, 2009). While reviewing the literature of identification theories, Cohen (2009) argued that identification with media characters is fundamentally a construction of identities. When a viewer imagines him/herself to be a specific character in specific popular culture, usually the character has a desirable identity associated with greater cultural capital and social power. In other words, the viewer utilizes semiotic resources in popular culture to construct a desirable personal identity in his/her imagination. Identification with media characters also involves symbolic resource usage, people's imagination, and identity construction. In this sense, Norton's notion of investment can also be used to analyze CAL learners' investment in popular culture and identity construction.

In addition, identification theories link language learners' investment in popular culture with their investment in the target language by explaining how their engagement impacts their

language socialization process. When someone identifies with a particular character, he/she might imitate the character's language, behavior, facial expression and costume (Cohen, 2009). In this way, language socialization happens. For example, Maccoby and Wilson's (1957) empirical study with 269 seventh-grade children found that children had a much better memorization of the language and behaviors of the characters that they identified with in movies. They purposefully mimicked their favorite characters' lines, speech styles and behaviors. Children's acquisition of language from movies in their study provides data to support the argument that learners' investment in popular culture can take effect on their investment in the target language. These two forms of investment interplay with each other, which in turn impacts people's language socialization process.

2.2.5   Cultivation Effects and Language Socialization

In media studies, one of the classic theories on media effects, cultivation theory, is developed based on the long-term effects of media on viewers' perceptions (e.g., Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002). Gerbner and his colleagues use empirical data to argue that the longer TV viewers engage with TV programs, the closer their perceptions of the world are likely to be to the media's descriptions. For example, heavy viewers of TV news were found to have more concerns about violent crimes than light viewers (Romer, Jamieson, & Aday, 2003). In addition, Morgan and Shanahan (1996) employ meta-analysis on two decades of research on media's cultivation effects since Gerbner and Gross' (1976) study, and support the validity of cultivation theory.

Applying this theory to study learners' language socialization process, we may predict that learners' longitudinal engagement with popular culture tends to have a stronger socialization

effect than short-term engagement. It is because they are more likely to internalize worldviews from popular culture. Although my study does not generate data about the long-term effects of CAL learners' engagement with Chinese popular culture, this theory can help predict some prospective long-term effects. In addition, this theory can also be used to explain why people internalize some stereotypes in popular culture. After long-term engagement, it may be hard for viewers to make a distinction between social realities and stereotypes.

However, it is noteworthy that some research suggests that long-term cultivation effects do not appear obviously with every individual viewer under all circumstances (e.g., Potter & Chang, 1990; Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). Currently, many communication scholars found that cultivation effects tended to be strong when particular groups of audience engaged with specific genres or topics of media contents (e.g., Wilson, Martins, & Marske, 2005). Wilson et al. (2005) found that among parents, heavy viewers of news stories on child abduction were more concerned about safety in their neighborhood than light viewers. It is not hard to understand that parents tend to seek media information on topics about children's health and safety. Therefore, they are more likely to be impacted by stories about kidnapping of children. This study implies that people's agency and choices may moderate long-term cultivation effects.

Moreover, agency's impact on cultivation effects overlaps with research on learners' agency in language socialization studies and SLA more generally. Duff (2012) argues that agency plays a major role in additional language acquisition. Therefore, if and to what extent Chinese popular culture socializes CAL learners into Chinese culture (or language) in the short-term and long-term should be discussed from the dual perspectives of cultivation effects, as well as learners' own agency.

In the next section, I will discuss the studies on benefits of this pedagogy in the existing literature.

2.3   Advantages of Learning Language through Popular Culture

Language teaching/learning pedagogy involving popular culture has the potential to provide an immersive and convenient language learning environment, bring pleasure to students, offer students more affordances to talk with L1 speakers of the target language and construct their own identities, and assist them to learn pragmatics in different contexts.

2.3.1   Immersive and Convenient Language Learning Environment

It is well attested that a considerable amount of meaningful exposure to, and engagement with, a target language is needed for second language acquisition and socialization to occur (Atkinson, 2011). Accordingly, many language learners therefore seek to immerse themselves in the target-language culture by studying abroad. However, there is no guarantee, even when abroad, that learners will gain significant exposure to, and interaction with, members of the host community and thus the target language and culture (Kinginger, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2013; Victors, 2014). Factors such as intense political relationships between one's own country and the host country (e.g., Kinginger, 2008), the interplay of racial and gender discrimination (e.g., Polanyi, 1995), and unsuccessful personal relationships with local peers (Victors, 2014) can all negatively impact sojourners' actual access to the target language and culture during their study abroad. In other words, sojourners can be excluded or marginalized from the community of practice that they desire membership in. However, access to popular culture in the target language is considerably easier, because learners are at least able to observe, almost without limit, how the target language is used in its culture, often from the convenience of their own

homes, computers or mobile devices. Such engagement can create an immersive language

environment for learners (Wang, 2012).

2.3.2　Pleasure from Engaging with Recreational Popular Culture

Research on students' pleasure from learning has mainly focused on the pleasure from

reading. Researchers argue that pleasure from reading books motivates students to read more

(e.g., Gallik, 1999; Janopoulos, 1986). However, Alvermann et al. (2007) discovered that

voluntary reading among adolescent readers in their leisure time was very limited. Therefore,

they encouraged students to read popular culture texts and discussed their readings in their media

club. After that, researchers saw a significant extension of time that students spent on reading

after class. Likewise, Gallik (1999) found in surveys that almost half of the college students read

newspapers and magazines for recreational purposes in their leisure time. In short, pleasure from

reading popular culture texts motivates both adolescent and adult students to spend more time on

reading.

One of the most common motivations for adopting the pedagogy of using popular culture

in education is grounded in the belief that students obtain fun from their engagement. Nowadays

many teachers and researchers are beginning to realize the advantages of using popular culture in

classrooms. Popular culture has been widely utilized by educators, not merely in language

education (e.g., Cho & Yi, 2012), but also in other educational fields such as sex education (e.g.,

Ashcraft, 2003), religious education (e.g., Cheung, 2006), and music education (e.g., Green,

2006). Using popular culture for educational purposes is defined as "public pedagogy" (Giroux,

2000). This argument is confirmed by Wright and Sandlin's (2009) literature review of popular

culture and adult education, in which they summarized that this pedagogy "focus[es] primarily on how learners derive pleasure from popular culture" (p. 127).

In the field of language and literacy education, researchers suggest that teachers should utilize students' motivation for fun-seeking to better facilitate their literacy development. Alvermann and Heron (2001) argue that literacy education should provide the opportunities for students to acquire literacy through popular culture while having fun at the same time.

2.3.3 Relate to Others with Topics from Popular Culture

Much literature in SLA also suggests that popular culture provides language learners with relevant topics which interest them (e.g., Cheung, 2001; Choi & Yi, 2012; Morrell, 2002; Wang, 2012). A Chinese university student, who used American popular culture to learn English in Wang's (2012) study, said that "[popular culture] has plenty of popular topics, such as crime, cosmetology, hi-tech, time-travel, behavioral analysis and so on. …I'm so fed up with reading classical literature, and hearing political and economic news reports, which are so boring and have nothing much to do with my future" (p. 342). This example shows how adult language learners exercise agency to invest in varieties of topics in the target language, particularly topics relevant to their daily lives or careers.

From the perspective of critical cultural studies, popular culture seeks to create and incorporate relevant topics in the public discourse due to its commercialized nature. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer argue that popular culture is produced by the culture industry to pursue maximized profits (Storey, 1999). Thus, in popular culture, it is not surprising that pleasant topics in people's daily lives such as romance, friendship and career appear more

frequently than serious topics including starvation, the spread of AIDS and environmental pollution.

Knowing about the relevant topics from popular culture plays a significant role in students' SLA process. Through engagement with popular culture, people can learn what topics are widely being discussed in the public. They can start casual conversations with others through these topics. These topics provide affordances for second language learners to participate in the communities of practice they seek greater membership in. For example, during her six-month observation in a social sciences class in a Canadian mainstream high school, Duff (2002) found that the teacher and local students frequently cited popular culture in their interactions. Lacking knowledge of local popular culture, English as a second language (ESL) students in the same class kept silent on these occasions. Although many of them had achieved a high level of proficiency in English, they were still unintentionally excluded from class participation. This study finds that improving language proficiency alone does not guarantee that learners will enjoy smooth communication with native or near-native speakers or even sufficient chances to use the target language in real life. Since the ultimate goal of learning an additional language is to communicate through that language, the ability to understand and discuss relevant topics is also valuable.

2.3.4 Identity Construction and Popular Culture Usage

Popular culture provides semiotic resources for students to observe other social identities, and experiment with their own (e.g., Alvermann & Heron, 2001; Choi & Yi, 2012; Fukunaga, 2006; Lam, 2004; Moffatt et al., 2008; Simon, 2012; Ibrahim, 1999). Moffatt et al. (2008) provided a good example of how students used semiotic resources in popular culture to observe

and think about social identities. First, they conducted a discourse analysis of one particular story titled *Fairytale Land Revisited* from the *Archie* comic book series. They found that within this one story, four discourse themes co-existed: "Patriarchal Discourse, Feminist Discourse, Girl Power/Mixed Message Discourse, Heterosexist Assumptions/GLBQ Possibilities" (p. 111). Researchers then showed representative texts illustrating these four themes to 47 students and asked for their comments on masculine and feminist identities of the characters in the story. Surprisingly, around 60% of the participants illustrated complicated and inconsistent understanding of these two gender identities because they aligned with certain patriarchal and certain feminist discourses simultaneously. This study has at least two implications. First, popular culture texts themselves contain discursive constructions of social identities. Second, students can perceive and conceptualize social identities discursively.

Popular culture also offers semiotic resources for students to construct their own identities. Current literature about this topic in SLA can be divided into two groups: the first group includes literature on how popular culture empowers language learners' non-mainstream identities within their education system (e.g., heritage and/or racial identities) (e.g., Choi & Yi, 2012; Ibrahim, 1999); the second group includes studies on how students' investment in circulating, appraising and even producing semiotic resources in popular culture enables them to enact other more valued identities outside school contexts (Lam, 2004; Simon, 2012).

Choi and Yi's (2012) study is an example of the first group of studies. It illustrated how semiotic resources in popular culture contributed to learners' confidence in their Korean heritage identities in a Korean language course. Choi and Yi invited individual Korean American adult learners to choose their own idols from Korean popular culture and do presentations about the

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idols to the whole class. Researchers found that through familiarizing themselves with the achievements of Korean popular icons, students became more confident in their heritage Korean identity. In addition, they became more motivated to learn the Korean language. Similarly, Ibrahim (1999) illustrated a case of how students utilized semiotic as well as linguistic resources in popular culture to empower their marginalized racial identities. His participants were French-speaking African immigrant students in a Canadian high school. They reported that they were marginalized at school because of their race and French-accented English. As a result, they chose to identify with hip-hop and rap artists in African American popular culture, and sought to learn and speak African American stylized English. In this way, semiotic and linguistic resources in popular culture enabled them to embrace their blackness in Canadian society.

The other group of studies focuses on students' *intellectual labor* during their engagement, which in turn enables them to acquire other valued identities beyond the classroom (e.g., Black 2006; Lam, 2004; Simon, 2012; Thorne, Black, & Sykes, 2009). Intellectual labor refers to students' genuine investment in terms of circulating, appraising and even artistically reproducing and creating semiotic resources of popular culture. Through such efforts, students "claim[ed] a discrepant intellectual identity—as artist, expert, and aesthete" (Simon, 2012, p. 521) of specific popular culture topics or genres. For example, in order to decode hybrid texts in *anime* (a genre of popular culture), students needed to master comprehensive literacy skills (Alvermann & Heron, 2001; Fukunaga, 2006; Lam, 2004). In addition, Lam (2004) reported that Lee, a Chinese immigrant student in America, established an online *anime* community to circulate and appreciate *anime*, and interacted with worldwide *anime* fans. Due to his intellectual and social labor in the genre of *anime*, he was highly respected as a Webmaster in the digital

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space outside class. In addition to labor in terms of promoting and appraising popular culture, Simon (2012) reported a case of an adolescent student Yusef, who made an intellectual effort in creating quality graphic novels by himself. Through such effort, Yusef enacted a new identity, artist of graphic novels, which was different from his identity as a student with disciplinary problems at school.

The construction of new identities outside classroom such as aesthete, expert and artist of popular culture has been found to have positive impacts on students' language and literacy (Fukunaga, 2006; Lam, 2004; Simon, 2012). Fukunaga (2006) found that adult *anime* fans in America, who were Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL) learners, learned to distinguish polite manners and formal speech from casual speech styles at home in Japanese. In addition, they also learned cultural knowledge such as *ijime* (bully), *katei houmon* (teacher's home visit) and *juken jigoku* (examination hell) from *anime*. Even for English language learners, Lam (2004) reported that Lee socialized with worldwide *anime* fans in English, which helped his English language acquisition. These outside-classroom identities enabled students to legitimately use the target language for meaningful communication with other speakers. In this way, their second language acquisition was no longer constrained by school settings, but was rather situated in broader social contexts (Thorne et al., 2009).

In short, through their engagement with popular culture, students witness social identities, and use available semiotic resources to construct identities with more cultural capital and social power.

2.3.5   Multiple Modes and Pragmatics in Popular Culture

Doherty (2014) conceptualizes two major reasons for the benefits of TV dramas for learners' language socialization. He argues that multiple modes in TV dramas facilitate learners' meaning-making in relation to the language and culture in the shows. In addition, TV dramas provide a corpus of pragmatics to learners. These two arguments will be discussed in detail below. His review is even more relevant to my study because most of my participants engaged with Chinese TV dramas, reality shows and movies.

Doherty's (2014) argument about multiple modes in TV dramas is also supported by Monika Bednarek (e.g., 2010, 2011, 2012), a linguist who specializes in language in television. In her book titled *The Language of Fictional Television: Drama and Identity* (Bednarek, 2010), she argues that television dramas mobilize various modes to facilitate audience members' understanding of the language in TV. For example, within the background of TV dramas, she suggests that there are modes including "setting, props, costumes, codes of dress, movement, spatial relations, placement of objects ...and sound" (p. 149). With respect to dialogues among characters, she contends that there are multiple modes to assist viewers' meaning-making of the language: "verbal behavior (evaluative and emotional language, speech act sequences)," "nonverbal behavior (hand/arm gestures; head movements/gaze; facial affect," and "expressive resources (e.g., stuttering/repetition, interruption, pauses, sighs" (p. 151). Although many language textbooks are undoubtedly equipped with CDs or DVDs, there is a wider range of modes in popular culture than in most textbook sets for learners to make meaning of the language. Thus, popular culture can be used to facilitate learners' language socialization due to these multiple modes of communication.

Doherty (2014) also argues that learners accumulate a corpus of pragmatic expressions and other aspects of linguistic knowledge during their engagement with popular culture. This argument is based on Ellis' (2012) study. Ellis implies that language acquisition, regardless of L1 or L2, is a process of making linguistic generalizations based on one's own corpus of contextualized language usage. The corpus is accumulated from learners' contacts with the language over time. In many cases, L1 speakers are more likely to perform with pragmatically appropriate language (or at least language that conforms to their environments) because they accumulate and keep updating a large data set of the language through their family upbringing, school education, communication with colleagues, and engagement with popular culture. The large linguistic corpus in their minds provides L1 speakers with more choices of wording, and assists them to become more pragmatically competent, which, in effect, is one of the main goals of language socialization and learning. Based on this line of reasoning, Doherty suggests that learners of additional languages (i.e., beyond their L1) should also sufficiently utilize popular culture to accumulate their corpuses of pragmatics in the target language, in addition to learning from textbooks and classroom teaching.

2.4   Problems of Learning Language through Popular Culture

Most of the aforementioned studies promoted the pedagogy of using popular culture for educational purposes; therefore, they seldom reported the negative side effects of this method. However, it does not mean that the disadvantages of the method are negligible. On the contrary, literature on *akogare* (defined below) in critical applied linguistics research informs us about one of the severe social consequences of this particular pedagogy: stereotypes in popular culture can socialize learners to perpetuate stereotypes in real life.

The term *akogare* ("desire" in Japanese) refers to Japanese females' romanticized desire for Caucasian male English native-speakers as partners (e.g., Kelsky, 2001; Kubota, 2011; Takahashi, 2013). Takahashi (2013) found that many Japanese females, particularly English learners, wanted to develop a romantic relationship with white western men. Kubota (2011) discovered that some Japanese women's motivation for learning English was to increase their chances to have such relationships. Therefore, an English language school owner in her study admitted that he purposefully recruited young white male English native-speakers to attract these Japanese females. This example shows that English learners' discriminative desire for teachers from particular backgrounds led to the language school's discriminative recruitment policy in terms of race and gender.

Current research on *akogare* has attributed this desire to the portrayal of racial stereotypes in popular culture (e.g., Kelsky, 2001; Takahashi, 2013). For example, Takahashi (2013) interviewed several young adult Japanese women who were learning English in Australia. They discussed their crushes on Caucasian male Hollywood celebrities such as Brad Pitt and Tom Cruise. More shockingly, one female participant, Yoko, described her impression of America from her engagement with Hollywood movies as a *white* society. She said, "White people. White men, White women, White society. How can I put it? Like the one that appear[s] in American movies. A traditional image" (p. 39). This comment implied that Caucasian-dominated stereotypes in American popular culture socialized English learners in Japan into believing and accepting such stereotypes as social reality in their imagined community, America.

It is not hard to understand this language socialization effect because cultivation theory suggests that long-term engagement with popular culture tends to cultivate viewers' perceptions

to be close to media descriptions. Since varieties of ideologies and stereotypes coexist in popular culture (Moffatt et al., 2008; Storey, 2009), using popular culture to learn an additional language, especially for a long term, is likely to perpetuate stereotypes among additional language learners, and lead to social discriminative problems such as *akogare* in Japan.

2.5   How to Carry Out this Pedagogy in Practice

The existing literature in SLA has mainly explored two basic ways to practice the pedagogy of utilizing popular culture for explicit language learning purposes: teaching with popular culture (e.g., Bueno, 2009; Choi & Yi, 2012) and self-learning with popular culture (e.g., Fukugana, 2006; Murray 2008; Wang, 2012).

Bueno (2009) demonstrated the former with her detailed class design to help adult Spanish learners digest one specific movie in Spanish. Before the class, Bueno (2009) assigned movie guides and relevant literature such as poems and biographies for students to understand the historical background of the movie. In class, after playing clips of the movie, she facilitated class discussion of the main characters and then role playing of the characters of the movie. She also organized interpretation exercises to help students learn the language in the movie. After class, students answered comprehension questions based on the movie contents, did grammar exercises, and read the movie transcript. Bueno contended that her teaching method enabled students to deeply understand the film, and develop cross-cultural competence and media literacy.

In contrast, Choi and Yi (2012) adopted an individualized curriculum to utilize Korean popular culture to teach Korean to heritage learners. In the beginning of the Korean language course, each student went to talk to the instructor about their prospective presentation topics on

an icon from Korean popular culture. Accordingly, instructors helped students find relevant reading materials and answered their questions before their presentation. In the presentations, presenters taught specific vocabulary about this topic to peers, and facilitated class discussions about the figures. Researchers discovered that students were motivated by this personalized curriculum, and their heritage identities were empowered through popular culture.

Compared with the introduction of popular culture to the entire language class, self-learning is another way to utilize popular culture (e.g., Fukugana, 2006; Murray 2008, Wang, 2012). Murray (2008) described how adults in Japan purposefully used American popular culture to learn English outside of class. They watched movies with English and/or Japanese subtitles several times, took notes of pragmatics and vocabulary, looked things up in the dictionary, and memorized lyrics of their favorite English songs. Most interestingly, there was an illusionary interaction between the audience member and the media character in this study from the perspective of Parasocial Interaction theory (PSI). A female learner, Mable, described that she had a crush on a specific character in an American TV show, so she wrote a diary to generate a hypothetical dialogue with that character in English. She said, "I really liked the man, …I wrote the diary, but just like a letter to him everyday" (p. 12). She also considered this type of diary-writing as a good strategy to improve her English. This observation is similar to the phenomenon of *akogare* described earlier.

2.6   Summary and Research Gaps

In this chapter, I first presented some key concepts in my theoretical framework. Language socialization is the major framework of my study because it is used to analyze how CAL learners learn Mandarin at the micro level (e.g., words and phrases) as well as learn about

Chinese culture at the macro level during their engagement with Chinese popular culture. Since language socialization is mediated by interactions, albeit in a different manner in this work, my study incorporates Parasocial Interaction Theory (PSI) to explore interactions between audience members and media characters. Moreover, language learners also observe interactions among media characters, and they interact with other people in their own social networks about popular culture. I then discussed learners' motivation for learning the additional language and audience members' motivation for engaging with popular culture. These concepts were followed by a review of the concepts of investment, identity and identification theories. Following that discussion, I introduced cultivation theory to explore long-term socialization effects of popular culture.

Secondly, I reviewed the existing literature on advantages of the pedagogy suggesting that it makes language learning immersive and convenient. Students can have fun with popular culture, and can also better relate to L1 speakers with shared topics from popular culture. They use semiotic resources in popular culture to construct more powerful identities. Multiple modes in popular culture assist learners in the meaning-making process. Learners can also accumulate mental corpora of the target language from popular culture. However, one of the significant side-effects of this pedagogy is that learners might internalize and reproduce stereotypes of popular culture.

Thirdly, I reviewed the current practices of this pedagogy. Teachers can use multiple methods to help students learn language from movies or introduce personalized curriculum into language teaching classes. Learning an additional language through popular culture autonomously also shows positive results.

However, little existing literature on this pedagogy has been specific about CAL learners. Furthermore, few studies on language socialization have adopted an interdisciplinary theoretical framework to explore language socialization in media-usage contexts. Thus, my study, described in the following chapters, seeks to fill these research gaps.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I illustrate the methodology of this research. This includes an explanation of my research design, case sampling, criteria for participation, recruitment of participants, methods of data collection, data analysis, participants' profiles, ethical considerations and, finally, a discussion of my own positionality as a researcher.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative multiple case study approach. Qualitative case study allows researchers to probe in-depth and analyze the complexity of contextualized human behavior, including under-researched topics such as this one. It can also help generate new research questions and perspectives based on detailed analyses of individual cases (Duff, 2008). My study seeks to explore the under-studied area of the usage of popular culture by learners in Canada to acquire Mandarin. Thus, my adoption of this method is based on the exploratory nature of my research questions, which are as follows:

1. How does Chinese popular culture impact adult CAL learners' learning motivations?

2. How is Chinese popular culture related to learners' second language socialization in Mandarin?

3. What are some of the implications of incorporating popular culture in language learning and teaching for textbook writers, Mandarin teachers, extracurricular activity planners and CAL learners?

The interdisciplinary theoretical framework of this study might seem somewhat contradictory—fundamentally social versus psychological—and each theoretical orientation has its own methods. Language socialization research generally adopts qualitative case studies, including ethnography, interviews, and discourse analysis, as its primary research design to understand the process of enculturation and language development (Duff, 2008; Duff & Talmy, 2011). On the other hand, theories in entertainment psychology rely mainly on quantitative methodologies such as surveys (e.g., Joyce & Harwood, 2014).

My study uses individual qualitative interviews for its multiple case studies rather than quantitative methods (or even longitudinal observational methods) for the following reasons: first, the topic of this study is under-researched, so it is hard for quantitative methods to pin down the variables. Rather, using in-depth interviews can provide data for testing and measuring possible variables by quantitative methods in future research (as well as data for additional qualitative research). Second, as was discussed in the theoretical framework, people's motivation for and investment and engagement in additional language acquisition and popular culture must be highly contextualized. Thus, gaining an in-depth understanding of learners' repertoires, learning trajectories and motivations in their specific contexts is more meaningful than taking all of them into account under the same generic category of adult language learners. In short, individual qualitative interviews for multiple case study were deemed both suitable and manageable for this study. Finally, traditional language socialization research generally involves extensive first-hand observation of interactions between newcomers and experts in the community of practice by the researcher and analysis of their discourse; in this study, in contrast, I look at language socialization more as the subject of inquiry, as opposed to a method for

conducting research, in part because interactions between viewers and media mostly do not involve visible interactions between the media and viewers.

3.3   Case Sampling

A snowball sampling strategy is employed in this study. Since this study was exploratory, I chose cases that were distinctive (i.e., illustrating a range of learner backgrounds and experiences) so that they could reveal a potentially diverse set of dispositions toward popular culture and thereby inform further studies and generate new perspectives. Furthermore, due to the reason that not every adult CAL learner uses Chinese popular culture to learn Mandarin, I had to look for available volunteers. Therefore, snowball sampling helped me find such cases more easily.

Snowball sampling is often criticized because it can lead to a selection of homogenous cases (Duff, 2008; Yin, 2009). This is because researchers recruit new participants through existing participants' networks and they may share many similarities. However, since I was able to recruit and obtain in-depth accounts from a total of ten participants, I had several choices for selecting distinctive cases, and comparing their findings for the purpose of this study.

3.4   Criteria for Participation

Ten participants were recruited by following the criteria listed below, which is adapted from my ethical review application (see Appendix B):

(a) *Participants were Mandarin learners in Canada. Native speakers of Mandarin were excluded.* It was not necessary that they were learning Mandarin during my data collection period as long as they had experiences of formal classroom learning of Mandarin, revealing their past or current investment in learning the language as well as possible

implications for formal instruction. Because my study focuses on learners' language socialization processes, as long as participants had gone through such a process, their experiences were deemed relevant. Both heritage- and non-heritage learners of Mandarin were eligible.

(b) *Participants used Chinese popular culture not only for entertainment purposes, but also for learning Chinese language and culture.* The rationale for this criterion was that if participants did not have the explicit goal of learning language and culture during their engagements with the popular culture, they were simply ordinary audience members or consumers of entertainment, not necessarily language learners. In that case, their experiences should be studied in the field of media studies, not SLA.

(c) *This study focuses on adult CAL learners, so participants needed to be more than 19 years of age.* I am interested in studying adult learners because I have mainly dealt with adult CAL learners while teaching Mandarin in a professional capacity. Furthermore, these learners could provide informed consent on their own, for ethical review purposes (see Appendix C for consent form).

3.5   Recruitment of Participants

I recruited participants who matched the above criteria in a coastal city in Western Canada from January to February, 2015: First, I started my recruitment at a local university because it had a large population of adult CAL students. I posted recruitment posters at various spots in the university, including libraries, learning centers, student union buildings, and the Department of Asian Studies. I waited for about two weeks. Unfortunately, no participants responded through this method.

In the next stage, I decided to adopt several strategies at the same time in order to find appropriate volunteers. I approached my friends who were CAL learners and who had previously told me that they used Chinese popular culture to learn Mandarin before I started to prepare for this study. Some of the acquaintances agreed to participate. I found Gordon, Kate and Victor (all pseudonyms) in this way. In addition, I talked about my project to as many acquaintances as I could, and asked them to recommend suitable participants. Kathy and Lindsay contacted me through my network of friends. Moreover, I talked to Mandarin teachers who worked in this city and asked them to circulate my recruitment letter. Through this method, several CAL students started to contact me to either become participants, or recommended their friends. I found John, Julia, Alice, Dennis and Phillis using this method.

In order to thank each participant for their participation in my study, I gave them a $20 gift card to the university's bookstore at the end of the first interview. After filling out the form (part of Step Two of the study, described below) and having the second interview, each participant received another $20 gift card from me. In addition to the gift cards, in order to attract sufficient volunteers for my study, I offered to give an hour of Mandarin tutoring to each participant. None of the participants asked for formal tutoring, although many of them asked me general questions about learning Mandarin and searching for resources of Chinese popular culture.

3.6 Methods of Data Collection

There were three steps involved in participation in this study. Each participant needed to devote at least five hours in total for this study, which included taking part in these three steps described below.

(1) Step One (S1): the first individual interview lasted approximately one hour (see Appendix D for sample questions). This interview took place in locations which were convenient for participants. This interview was designed to obtain the background information of participants, their Mandarin learning trajectories and habits of engaging with Chinese popular culture. If they did not have their own preferred Chinese popular culture to engage with for Step Two, I gave them recommendations of various genres of Chinese popular culture at the end of the first interview.

(2) Step Two (S2): participants were asked to spend at least two hours in total during a two-week period engaging with Chinese popular culture in their spare time and at their preferred locations. Additionally, they were required to note their learning of Mandarin and Chinese culture in a prepared form (see Appendix E), and then spend around one hour in total taking notes of their activities. They decided what particular Chinese popular culture to engage with completely on their own although I offered some suggestions about genres and programs to consider (see below). The contents of Chinese popular culture were not assigned for participants because requiring them to view the same contents would not allow the adult learners to exercise their own agency based on their own interests. As my literature review suggests, preference for popular culture is highly individualized. On the other hand, as I will report later, participants' notes shed light on their motivations for specific Chinese popular culture, particular interests in Mandarin language and their identity construction. I could then ask deeper and more individualized questions in Step Three based on their self-report notes.

(3) Step Three (S3): after reading each participant's notes, I conducted the second individual interview with each participant for an hour again. In this interview, I asked about their

choices of specific Chinese popular culture, findings from their engagement and their reflections on the method of using Chinese popular culture to learn Mandarin (see Appendix D for sample questions).

The data collection was designed in three steps rather than only interviewing participants once due to several reasons. First, participants might not have engaged with popular culture for a significant amount of time before this study. Therefore, they might not be able to provide detailed data about their engagement or preferences. Noting down their experiences of engagement with popular culture over a two-week period assisted them in having fresh reflections of their feelings and activities. Second, the requirement of noting their practices in detail and returning for a second interview with me helped me to filter those participants who claimed to have particular engagements with Chinese popular culture but actually did not do the activities as requested. Data from this type of participants would limit the credibility of this study.

S1 and S3, as noted above, involved interviews. Both interviews were semi-structured so as to delve into participants' experiences in some depth. Both interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. In all three steps, I told my participants that they were free to choose either English or Mandarin to communicate. Such arrangement was the result of the concerns that some participants might feel more comfortable to speak English instead of Mandarin, or some participants might want to practice their Mandarin (which might also encourage them to participate in the study). It turned out that all the participants chose to speak English most of the time except when they mentioned Mandarin names for people, music or videos, or specific phrases or sentences that they learned from Chinese popular culture.

I recommended five different genres of Chinese popular culture in S2 in order to investigate which genre was favored most by my participants for Mandarin learning purposes (see Appendix D). Specific contents in each genre were based on my own perceptions of what was popular in China since it was hard to pin down, for example, which particular reality show was more popular than other reality shows. For movies, I recommended the comedy *Lost in Thailand* (*Taijiong* in Mandarin Pinyin. *Pinyin* is the phonetic system for Chinese characters). I thought comedies might be appreciated by a broader audience than other genres of cinema. In addition, this movie was available on *YouTube* with quality bilingual (English and Chinese) subtitles. I also recommended a song of *Phoenix Legend* (*Fenghuang Chuanqi* in Mandarin Pinyin) based on my belief that they were a widely recognized group of singers. With regard to reality TV shows, I suggested a reality TV show *Where Are We Going, Dad?* (*BaBa Qu Na'Er* in Mandarin Pinyin). This show was about male popular culture celebrities' trips with their children to less developed villages. Since the themes in the show were simple, including searching for food, cooking, playing games and sleeping, I thought that it might not be too hard for CAL learners to understand the interactions in the show. Moreover, this show had celebrities from Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, so I thought that they would help the heritage learners to identify with the show more deeply, compared to the other shows with characters solely from the Mainland. The Internet novel of *The Legend of Zhen Huan* (*Zhen Huan Zhuan* in Mandarin Pinyin) was another suggestion due to the fact that its TV drama version had been very popular across China and was also broadcasted in Japan, U.S. and South Korea. Prior to this study, I had noticed that quite a few CAL learners watched this show, and I was curious to find out if they would be motivated to move on to read its original novel, which would also be beneficial for

their socialization into Chinese language and culture. Last but not least, I recommended the website *FluentU,* which incorporates many resources for the self-learning of Mandarin through popular culture. I could have offered additional suggestions but I did not want to overwhelm participants with too many choices, on the one hand, or with too few, on the other. I also wanted them to feel free to explore other media of their own choosing.

Before I started data collection, all participants were assured of their rights to withdraw from participating in the study at any time. Only one male participant, John, withdrew from participating further after S1. He said he was very busy during the data collection period, and he found that this study would be too time-consuming. Therefore, I had 19 interviews and nine self-reported notes from S2 in total.

3.7   Participant Profiles

All participants are referred to by pseudonyms chosen by me. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 give a brief outline of participants' profiles. Table 3.1 presents their age, gender, home country, first language, and heritage or non-heritage identity. The ten cases are listed alphabetically. I discuss the set of participants further below.

Table 3.1 Participant Profiles

Name	Gender	Age	Home country	L1/other language	Mandarin heritage /non-heritage
Alice	F	24	Canada (born in Korea)	English Korean	non-heritage
Dennis	M	20	Ecuador	Spanish	non-heritage
Gordon	M	41	Canada	English	non-heritage
John	M	22	Canada	English	heritage (Hong Kong grandparents)
Julia	F	23	Canada (born in Korea)	English Korean	non-heritage
Kate	F	29	Canada	English French	non-heritage
Kathy	F	27	Canada (born in Hong Kong)	English Cantonese	heritage (Hong Kong parents)
Lindsay	F	20	Canada (born in Taiwan)	English	heritage (Taiwanese parents)
Phillis	F	19	Canada	English Cantonese	heritage (Hong Kong parents)
Victor	M	23	Thailand	English Thai	heritage (Taiwanese father, Thai mother)

As Table 3.1 shows, I had six female and four male participants, with an average age of 25 years. Except for Gordon (41 years old), the participants were all under 30 years old. Five learners were heritage learners, and five were non-heritage learners.

Since participants' Mandarin proficiency is closely associated with their ability to understand the Chinese language(s) used in Chinese popular culture, I asked participants to self-assess their proficiency by the criteria in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Language Self-Assessment Grid (Council of Europe website, www.coe.int). This grid was developed by the Council of Europe, and is attached to this thesis as Appendix A. I sent this document to each participant before the first interview. In this document, there were six

levels of proficiency from the lowest, A1, to the highest, C2. Participants were required to assess

five aspects of their proficiency in Mandarin: Reading (R), Listening (L), Spoken Interaction

(SI), Spoken Production (SP), and Writing. In addition to their proficiency, I also summarize

their previous visits to, or sojourns in, China, and the length of time they had spent learning

Mandarin in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Mandarin Learning Trajectories

Name	Visits to or sojourns in the Greater China Region	Length of time learning Mandarin (months/years)	Proficiency in Mandarin (self-assessment)
Alice	Briefly visited Beijing and Shanghai	5 months	R: A2; L: A2 ; SI: A2; SP: A2; W: B1
Dennis	No visits	4 months	No response to the assessment
Gordon	Worked in Sichuan Province for 2 years and Taiwan for 5 years	On and off 12 years	R: B1; L: A2; SI: A2; SP: A2; W: A1
John	Briefly visited Taiwan	On and off 5 years	R: B1; L: B1; SI: B1 SP: B1; W: A2
Julia	Studied and worked in Beijing for 1 year	Consecutive 4 years at the university	R: B2; L: B1; SI: B1; SP: B1; W:B2
Kate	Studied and worked in Beijing for around 1 year	On and off 1.5 years	R: A1; L: A2; SI:A1; SP:A1; W: A1
Kathy	Born in Hong Kong, and later travelled back and forth between Hong Kong and Canada for K-12 education	On and off 21 years	R: B2; L: C1; SI: C1; SP: C1; W: B1
Lindsay	Grew up in Taiwan and finished primary school there	On and off 12 years	R: A1; L: B1/B2; SI: A2; SP :A 2; W:A1/A2
Phillis	Briefly visited Hong Kong	On and off 1.5 years	R: A2; L: B1; SI: A2; SP: A2; W: A2
Victor	Visits Guangdong Province every year	On and off 7 years	R: A2; L: B1; SI: B1; SP: A2; W: A2

As shown in Table 3.2, Kathy was the only person who assessed herself as an advanced learner of Mandarin (at the C level of proficiency on the CEFR scale). She was also the learner who had learned Mandarin for the longest period of time (on and off for 21 years). The other nine participants either described themselves as being at the beginner or intermediate levels of proficiency.

In order to give a brief introduction to each participant, I will present their reasons for learning Mandarin, their learning trajectories, and their main reflections on learning Mandarin through Chinese popular culture. The ten participants are introduced in alphabetic order.

3.7.1   Alice

Alice immigrated to Canada from Korea when she was a teenager. When she participated in this study, she was an undergraduate student who was majoring in science. She watched many Hong Kong movies when she was a child. Around half a year prior to the study, she decided to learn Mandarin because she became interested in the performance of the Chinese male actor Ge You. Alice considered Ge You to be a talented actor, so she wanted to be able to understand his movies. She reported having watched some of his movies five to six times, and learned a considerable amount of Mandarin through them.

3.7.2   Dennis

Dennis was the only participant from South America in this study. He was also the only participant who had never visited any place in the Greater China Region. He took a short-term Mandarin class at a Confucius Institute in Ecuador. His teacher was also an Ecuadorian who, he said, spoke good Mandarin. Since he had little contact with Chinese people, Chinese popular culture provided him the opportunity to listen to Mandarin and to understand Chinese culture. He

was an undergraduate student at the time of this study, but he had already established his own company. He said that he wanted to sell fruits from Ecuador to China in the future, so he wanted to learn Mandarin well.

3.7.3 Gordon

Gordon, also Canadian-born but 12 years older than Kate, had just finished his graduate degree in education. He was also a non-heritage Mandarin learner. He was selected as another focal case because Chinese popular culture had changed his life trajectory. Originally, he planned to go to Japan after his university graduation. Yet, after watching the Oscar-awarded Chinese movie *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (*Wo Hu Cang Long* in Mandarin Pinyin), he decided to go to work in China. He worked as an English teacher for two years in Mainland China and for five years in Taiwan. During these seven years, he learned Mandarin on and off from Mandarin teachers, Chinese friends and through popular culture.

3.7.4 John

John was an undergraduate student, who was born in Canada in the third generation of Hong Kong immigrants. Although his grandparents still spoke Cantonese, his parents only spoke English at home. His mother was born in Canada and his father immigrated to Canada at an early age. John started to learn Mandarin for extra credit in Grade 10 for one year. In his Chinese class, he reported that his peers talked a lot about Chinese popular culture, which also made him interested in it. He wanted to initially learn Cantonese, but his friends said that Mandarin was more important. Therefore, he self-learned Mandarin through Chinese popular culture for the next two years. When he entered university, he took Mandarin classes for two years, and planned

to do a PhD on politics in the Greater China Region in the future. Thus, he aimed to master

Mandarin not only to live in the region, but also to do research about this region.

3.7.5   Julia

Julia was born in Korea and immigrated to Canada when she was an elementary school

student. She majored in Chinese language at university. She started to learn Mandarin from her

first year at the university so as to prepare for prospective visits to China, and had learnt it for

four consecutive years. She described that she felt familiar with many Chinese characters (i.e.,

the orthographic script system) because she had learned characters in Korea. She loved Chinese

popular songs and romance movies.

3.7.6   Kate

Kate was a 29-year old, Canadian-born, non-heritage learner of Mandarin who was about

to finish her undergraduate degree. She chose to have training in martial arts when she was a

teenager. In her training class, her Chinese friends recommended martial arts films to her. In

2011, she went to Beijing for martial arts training for one year. She lived with a Chinese

roommate and they watched a lot of Chinese TV dramas together. She also started to take

Mandarin classes at a university for one semester in Beijing. After coming back to Canada, she

took beginner-level Mandarin for one year at her university and hired a tutor to help her with

Mandarin after that. Meanwhile, she actively participated in Asian clubs at her university, where

she spent time with Chinese friends and enjoyed Chinese popular culture.

3.7.7   Kathy

Kathy was born and raised in Hong Kong at the age of six. After that, she travelled back

and forth between Canada and Hong Kong for K-12 education. She finished both her

undergraduate and graduate education in Canada. She planned to go to Beijing soon after the study to work as a teacher in a Canadian offshore school. She had only taken three years of Mandarin classes at a weekend school when she was a child in Canada. Later, she learned Mandarin through popular culture from Mainland China and Taiwan by herself. She reported that she was able to learn very quickly.

3.7.8 Lindsay

Lindsay was born in Taiwan and finished elementary school before she immigrated to Canada with her family. She learned Mandarin because she thought she might go back to work in Taiwan in the future. She majored in music at her university, and was not particularly interested in popular culture in either English or Mandarin. When she listened to music, she preferred instrumental music. For this study, she chose to engage with a reality show. She reported that this show helped expose her to varieties of accents in Mandarin.

3.7.9 Phillis

Phillis was an undergraduate student in business school. She was also a heritage learner, but was born in Canada. Her family emigrated from Hong Kong. She was very interested in Hong Kong's popular culture, particularly music. In her spare time, she actively participated in the local Cantonese community's activities, where she practiced her Cantonese and learned more about the latest Hong Kong's popular culture. She was sent to Mandarin weekend school by her parents at the age of five. After one year, she dropped out of the class. In university, she chose to learn Mandarin for one semester because her curriculum required her to learn an extra language, and she wanted to get involved in business trade with Mandarin-speaking Chinese people. This

study includes Phillis' case as a specific example of how heritage learners' identities impact the way they engage with popular culture.

3.7.10   Victor

Victor was an undergraduate student who majored in sociology. He was a Mandarin heritage learner born in Thailand. His father was from Taiwan. He was sent to Mandarin weekend school in Thailand from the age of six to nine. After that, he was first sent to an international school in Bangkok, and later a boarding school in Britain for a few years, where Mandarin was not offered. As a teenager, he was sent to Singapore, where he took Mandarin classes again. After graduation, he came to study at a university in Canada, and started to relearn Mandarin by taking Mandarin classes and engaging with Chinese popular culture. His father had urged him to learn Mandarin when he was a child, but he was very resistant. At the time of the study, he realized the potential career opportunities connected with learning Mandarin because he wanted to do business with Chinese people.

3.8   Data Analysis

In the initial stage, after transcribing all the interview data, I summarized my participants' engagements with popular culture based on the two interviews and their self-notes, as shown in Table 3.3. In this table, I mainly focus on the specific popular culture contents with which they claimed to have engaged. In addition, I selected some keywords (shown in italics below) directly from the excerpts of the two interviews or self-notes, which implied participants' emotions, thinking or behaviors associated with popular culture. By doing this, I hoped to have a brief and general idea of what each participant did and thought during different stages of my study. In the table, Step One (S1) lists participants' previous habits or preferences of engaging with the

Chinese popular culture that they talked about in the first interview. Step Two (S2), self-notes, and Step Three (S3), the second interviews, were merged together because S3 was based on S2, and thereby S2 and S3 complemented each other in terms of illustrating participants' two-week engagements. For reasons of space, and because most participants mentioned the English translations of the titles of shows they had watched, only English titles are included in this table.

Table 3.3 Summary of Participants' Engagement with Chinese Popular Culture in Three Steps

Name	S1 about previous experiences: popular culture contents and participant's keywords	S2 & S3 about two-week engagement: popular culture contents and participant's keywords
Alice	● Liked Leslie Cheung and Hong Kong movies in Grade 6 and 7 ● Now likes the Mainland China's actor Ge You and his Movie *Gone With Bullets*: *good actor, respectful* ● Likes Chinese directors Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige, Jiang Wen ● Historical TV drama *The Legend of Zhen Huan*: *courtesy and costumes at that time, how they spoke*	● Movie *If You Are the One* 1 and 2: *childish, immature man and responsible, careful woman, materialism in Chinese society*
Dennis	● Little contact with Chinese popular culture: *don't know where to find it*	● Historical movie *Sacrifice*: *beyond my current skills [to understand the Mandarin in it], loyalty and family* ● Movie *Lost in Thailand*: *huge emphasis on competition* ● Website *FluentU*: *great tool, good*
Gordon	● Movie *A Touch of Sin*: *horrific incident, tragedies, raw side of Chinese culture* ● Website *FluentU*: *a neat way to [learn Mandarin]* ● Taiwanese talk show *WTO Sister Show*: *funny, cute, identify with foreigners in it* ● Website and application *ChinesePod*: *realistic interactions* ● Movie *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*: *touching performance, a human story*	● Taiwanese talk show *Kangsi Coming*: *deal with relationships frequently, learn how to say things, compare how to say "marry someone" in Mandarin and English* ● Taiwanese talk show *WTO Sister Show*: *simple vocabulary, speak slowly, learn about the meaning of "qiguaide ganjue"(strange feeling), "maoxian" (adventure), and "xiaosan" (the person with whom a spouse has an affair outside marriage)*
John	● Taiwanese romance TV dramas：*relaxing and learning Chinese, overly exaggerated, unrealistic, a reflection of yourself aesthetically*	● Not Applicable (did not participate in S2 or S3)
Julia	● Like Chinese popular music: lyrics are poetic ● Chinese dramas: learn everyday phrases, ● Prefer modern dramas than historical dramas ● Mythological movie *Journey to the West*: *funny*	● Taiwanese movie *You Are the Apple of My Eye*: *really like the theme song, Chinese "gaokao" (university entrance exam)* ● Reality show *Where Are We Going Dad?*: *how adults and children speak Mandarin differently, "spoiled" children*

Name	S1 about previous experiences: popular culture contents and participant's keywords	S2 & S3 about two-week engagement: popular culture contents and participant's keywords
Kate	• Historical TV drama *The Legend of Zhen Huan*: *depressing, sad, social class in ancient Chinese society* • Movie *Red Cliff*: *a country's unity and separation* • Jackie Chan and martial arts movies: *proud to recognize him*	• Documentary *A Bite of China*: quality bilingual translations • Movie *Lost in Thailand*: *yelling and arguing, Chinese form of humor and romance* • Reality show *Where Are We Going, Dad?*: *simple, genuine, learn about children upbringing in China, learn phrases like "gongji" (rooster), "wo buyao" (I don't like it)*
Kathy	• Still watch Chinese TV (Mandarin-speaking shows) from time to time • Historical dramas *Legend of Lu Zhen*: *appealing, entertaining, went online to read articles about the history of this period, learn Mandarin as an ongoing life skill* • Historical drama *The Sound of Desert*: *read online novels of the show*	• Reality show *Running Man* (Chinese version): *not sure about the meaning of the Mandarin word "youxi" (literally, it means "have drama," but actually it means "have hope"), the Legend of White Snake and Leifeng Pogoda* • Historical TV drama *The Empress of China*: *become more interested in the story, fascinated by the hairstyles and costumes, would like to read more about the history*
Lindsay	• Not very "into" popular culture either in English or Chinese • Really likes classic instrumental music	• Reality show *Where Are We Going Dad?*: *animation effects in the show makes it easier to understand, different accents*
Phillis	• A lot of Chinese music from Hong Kong: *music is a big part of my life, eight hours a day* • A lot of Hong Kong TV dramas such as *Black Heart White Soul*: *relaxing, knowing about people's culture, learn to see Chinese characters, not into Taiwanese or Mainland China's [popular culture]*	• Movie *Don't Go Breaking My Heart* 2: *a lot of colloquial Mandarin, difficult to understand, sounded harsh, i.e. "ni gei wo guolai" (Come over!) does not make sense in either English or Cantonese* • YouTube video *Cantonese vs. Mandarin*: *different ways to say the word "taxi" in Cantonese and Mandarin*
Victor	• Popular music singers such as Jay Chou, Leehom Wang, Jolin Tsai: *have my brain subconsciously be familiar with the language* • Website *FluentU*: *really helpful* • Historical TV dramas: *rich history embedded in the language* • TV drama *Scarlett Heart 2*: *speak clearly, story not too complicated, learn many ways to say "you like someone" or "you don't like someone"*	• Taiwanese talk show *Kangsi Coming*: *a lot of Taiwanese slangs, difficult to follow, topics such as beauty, make-up, relationships, superficial in social life, materialistic* • TV talent show *The Voice of China*: *a lot of technical terms describing singing performance, hierarchy in Chinese society* • Taiwanese movie *You Are the Apple of My Eye*: *much slang, pronunciation of Mandarin sounded weird (due to difference between Taiwanese and Mainland Mandarin), physical punishment of students in Taiwan*

In the next stage, I grouped participants based on their language proficiency, heritage and non-heritage background, habits and preferences regarding Chinese popular culture. I compared cases and selected five focal participants from these ten people. My grouping is listed in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Grouping of Ten Participants

Group	Names	Commonalities
A	Kate, Alice and Dennis	Non-heritage learners, beginning proficiency level
B	Gordon and Julia	Non-heritage learners, intermediate/advanced proficiency, a certain degree of self-learning abilities and dispositions, many resources of Chinese popular culture
C	John, Victor and Phillis	Heritage learners, beginning to intermediate proficiency, discursive constructions of identities
D	Kathy and Lindsay	Heritage learners, many years of K-12 education in the Greater China Region, intermediate to advanced proficiency

I excluded Group D (Kathy and Lindsay) from my focal participants because their advanced proficiency was largely due to many years of K-12 education in Hong Kong or Taiwan in their youth. It might be too late or inapplicable for many adult CAL learners in North America to have such extended and cumulative Chinese education and socialization. Thus, Kathy and Lindsay's experiences might not generate very practical implications for other learners.

In Group A (Kate, Alice and Dennis), Alice's experiences were very similar to Kate's, as both of them had finished watching *The Legend of Zhen Huan*, and had feminist perspectives. Dennis did not provide much data due to his having little contact with Chinese popular culture. I chose Kate as a focal participant from Group A. As noted earlier, Kate's case was interesting because she had participated in Chinese cultural activity (martial arts practice) and engaged with Chinese popular culture before she made her investment in learning Chinese language.

In Group B, I noticed that both Gordon and Julia were able to look up new Chinese characters and words in various applications, found abundant resources about Chinese popular culture, and reached intermediate (self-reported) proficiency levels in Mandarin. I chose Gordon

over Julia because engaging with Chinese popular culture to learn Mandarin played a more important role in Gordon's current learning trajectory, whereas Julia still relied mostly on formal classroom teaching. Furthermore, Gordon had more opportunities to use Mandarin than Julia. He participated in online forums to discuss Chinese popular culture in Mandarin with other Mandarin speakers. He also reported that his Mandarin now contributed greatly to his career as an English teacher for Chinese immigrants in Canada because he was able to communicate with parents and students in their language.

Since each person had some unique experiences and perspectives, particularly in terms of constructing their language learner identities, I chose all three people from Group C. John was the only participant among ten who reflected on how the identity of Asian male impacted his learning trajectory. This kind of case (and theme) has rarely been discussed in CAL literature. Victor was selected as a focal case due to his contradictory and complex motivations for learning Mandarin. He said he was interested in Mandarin due to its historical roots, but he also mentioned that Chinese tourists' negative social image in the world influenced people's perceptions of the Chinese language. He felt that his father forced him to learn Mandarin when he was young, but now he wanted to learn it because he wanted to do business in China. Phillis was the only heritage learners who insisted on using Cantonese popular culture to learn Mandarin rather than using Mandarin-speaking popular culture. Nevertheless, she watched the movie *Don't Go Breaking My Heart* 2 in Mandarin for my study (this movie was a collaborative film, jointly produced by Hong Kong and Mainland China, and thereby was available in both Cantonese and Mandarin). It seemed that she did not have a positive experience. Throughout the two interviews, she explicitly claimed her heritage identity, although she was born and grew up

in Canada. Phillis provided an opposite case to John's, who was also a heritage learner born and raised in Canada with Hong Kong family members, but chose to embrace Taiwanese popular culture.

In this way, I selected Kate, Gordon, John, Victor and Phillis as my focal participants, and further investigated these five cases. Although Alice, Dennis, Kathy, Lindsay and Julia were not focal cases but were secondary cases, I also analyzed their data and include some of their comments in order to strengthen my arguments. Inductive thematic analysis of data was employed in data analysis. Roulston (2010) points out that inductive reasoning and thematic analysis are commonly used in qualitative research. Accordingly, I went back to read participants' interview transcripts and self-notes, and manually coded data. In the first round of coding, I only coded for three major themes based on the three research questions (e.g., noting keywords, phrases, and perspectives), which included (1) participants' motivation, (2) impacts on their language socialization process, and (3) affordances and constraints.

After this step, I collected the coded relevant data into three Word documents, and read and compared the data in each document. I coded again so as to find emerging sub-themes, and categorized data under sub-themes. In this process, I paid attention to those themes which appeared frequently across cases. Meanwhile, I also sought to be alert to contradictory data within the same sub-themes, and compared this data in my analysis. After coding, I contacted those participants who were still available to check my interpretations of their experiences, perspectives and contexts. They gave very interesting feedback, which helped in revising my analysis. In the last stage, I restructured and finalized my claims based on the findings.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

I understand that the topic of engagement with popular culture and learning Mandarin is not free of ethical concerns. For example, some people might prefer to engage with popular culture that contains pornographic or violent contents. Exposing these preferences, if participants themselves revealed them, might negatively impact their reputation or how they might be perceived by me and others. It is also possible that some other people might feel uncomfortable about the communist ideology found in some Chinese popular culture. Imposing specific Chinese popular culture on them would not be ethically appropriate. As a result, all my participants were given a free hand to choose which Chinese popular culture they would like to engage with for this study, and their identities have been kept strictly confidential.

I informed the participants of the potential risks and procedures of the study, and asked for their written informed consent to participate in the study before my data collection, following the University's official ethical review procedures. Moreover, I respected participants' freedom to withdraw from participating at any stage of this study. I attempted to protect the identities and privacy of participants through the following procedures: (a) all identities were protected by pseudonyms, (b) interview data were encrypted and stored in a password-protected computer, and (c) the data are only accessible to my supervisor and me.

3.10 Researcher's Positionality

It is important for me to reflect on my own positioning and role in this study. This is because my position closely impacts how I framed the research questions and designed my research. Furthermore, my interview data were naturally co-constructed by my participants and me due to the discursive and interactive nature of the interviews. Interviews are not merely

research instruments but are socially co-constructed events involving interviewers and interviewees (Talmy, 2010).

Fundamentally, I believe that using popular culture to learn additional languages has many benefits. My motivation to do this study is based on my own successful experiences of practicing this method. For example, I watched numerous American TV dramas as a student both in China and Canada to improve my English, shows such as *Friends*, *Sex and the City*, *Homeland,* and *Scandal.* I also previously watched Japanese TV dramas to learn Japanese, and French movies to learn French. These engagements have contributed greatly to my acquisition of these languages.

On the other hand, as a Mandarin teacher, I have witnessed my adult students complain about difficulties in learning Mandarin. Such complaints triggered my curiosity to investigate if my method of learning additional languages could be applied in the CAL context. My eagerness to help CAL learners with this method is very likely to lead to my blindness to its disadvantages. In addition, since I always broke the ice with my participants by sharing my successful experiences of using this pedagogy or language learning strategy, they might take it as a hint from me to discuss the advantages of applying this method one-sidedly, and talk less about the negative aspects.

Furthermore, my identity as a Mandarin speaker from Mainland China might have given rise to participants' concerns, if any, about sharing their real perceptions of Chinese popular culture with me. For example, they might think that discussing their antipathy toward communist ideology and censorship of media in Chinese popular culture would make me feel uncomfortable. Accordingly, it was possible that in the interviews they either deliberately talked

less about this issue or used a softened tone towards it. Furthermore, due to the political controversies among Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, participants, especially heritage learners with family ties from the latter two regions, were likely to speak cautiously about their perceptions of Mandarin, and Chinese culture and its subcultures.

3.11 Summary

In this chapter, I first introduced the research methodology of this study, which is qualitative multiple case studies, primarily based on individual qualitative interviews. A snowball sampling approach was adopted to recruit participants. Participants needed to satisfy at least three criteria to be eligible: (1) they were Mandarin learners, (2) they used Chinese popular culture for learning purposes, and (3) they were adults (over 19 years of age). Ten participants were recruited by a recruitment letter circulated by Mandarin teachers. Data was collected through three steps: (1) individual interviews were conducted with each participant for one hour, (2) each participant engaged with Chinese popular culture at their own convenience and noted down their reflections; (3) a second round of individual interviews was employed with each participant for one hour.

Data was analyzed through thematic analysis, and I briefly explained my coding method. Each participant's profile was presented, and my reasons for selecting some of them as focal participants and others as secondary participants were also given. My presentation of participant profiles, however, was constrained by ethical considerations of this study. For example, people's engagement with popular culture is a private and individualized experience; therefore, their identities should be protected, and I felt that researchers should not impose a specific popular

culture on them to view for a study such as this. Finally, I reflected on my positionality in

designing and conducting this study.

Chapter 4: Chinese Popular Culture and CAL Learners' Motivation

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss CAL learners' engagement with Chinese popular culture and their motivations for learning Mandarin. First, I argue that the adult CAL learners in the study did not merely look for superficial fun in Chinese popular culture. On the contrary, they sought more interactive and contextualized experiences outside their Mandarin classes, such as releasing negative emotions and understanding abstract political problems. Second, I explain that their motivations for engaging with Chinese popular culture complemented their motivations for learning Mandarin. Finally, I illustrate how they utilized semiotic resources in Chinese popular culture to construct their identities. Their construction of identities is analyzed in terms of three different dimensions: appreciation, identification and participation.

4.2 Adult CAL Learners' Enjoyment of Chinese Popular Culture

Many parents and teachers believe that students' motivations for engaging with popular culture are merely shallow, escapist, and fun-seeking (e.g., Norton, 2003). However, my data suggests that popular culture provides adult learners with various and complicated experiences of enjoyment, which teachers cannot easily replicate in their classroom teaching. Therefore, it should be viewed as complementary to their language learning in class.

Among my participants, Kate enjoyed a tragic historical TV drama despite having sad and angry feelings regarding its story and characters. When I asked Kate if she actively sought Chinese popular culture in her spare time in the first interview, she mentioned that she finished watching the 76 episodes of the Chinese historical TV drama *The Legend of Zhen Huan* (*Zhen Huan Zhuan* in Mandarin Pinyin) with her Chinese friends in a year. This show portrays a story

in which an innocent juvenile girl at the age of 17 grows into the most powerful empress in the palace. During this process, she experiences circumvention, betrayal and revenge in China's Qing Dynasty. I asked Kate if she paused the show and asked her friend questions while they were watching the show. Kate said they had many discussions regarding the tragic destiny of women in the show. She stated:

> I was very aggravated with the emperor, I was like: why are all these women so trapped? And I was all like: go! Women power! And they are like have no power, and it's so hard for them in their lives. I remember this just being like, I can never do what they do, which is a very modern kind of way of looking at it, but then you feel how stuck they are, and how trapped they are, and how little power they actually have. How little happiness they are allowed. It was like, it was very tragic in that way like for me, that like just kill me to watch that. (From S1)

Obviously, Kate's enjoyment of this drama had little to do with fun-seeking. She was "aggravated" by the repression of Chinese women in the ancient patriarchal Chinese society from a feminist perspective. Nevertheless, she also took the historical context of the story into consideration by realizing that her perspective was "a very modern kind of way of looking at it."

Thus, negative emotions aroused from engagement with tragedies in Chinese popular culture did not necessarily impede adult learners' investment in such stories. In fact, sometimes these emotions motivated them to engage more. Although Kate felt that it was "killing" her to watch the show, she spent a year to finish all the episodes. She explained that watching such shows was "a safe way of [sic] release emotions" because people "can sort of suffer through somebody else." From the perspective of entertainment psychology, viewers often feel relieved after watching tragedies because they compare themselves with others in a more difficult social situation (e.g., Oliver & Raney, 2011). Kate's experience aligns with this viewpoint.

Furthermore, Kate used semiotic resources in Chinese popular culture to make sense of current political problems in Canada. In the first interview, when I asked Kate if she had any difficulty to understand Chinese popular culture, she said that popular culture actually represented complex issues in a visualized way. She talked about her reflections on a historical military movie called *Red Cliff* (*Chibi* in Mandarin Pinyin). This movie is based on the Battle of Red Cliff (208-209 AD) in Chinese history, when three kingdoms were fighting for the dominance of all of China. She thought that she learned new perspectives about separation and unity of different regions within a country through this movie. I asked if she was referring to the current political relationship between Canada and Quebec. She replied:

> Of course, and it always comes from in our history, so sometimes it's good to see it in a nice package. When you see something through pop culture, sometimes the packaging is a lot easier to understand than reading just a textbook, because it gives you something visual and then it gives you this real emotion and real-like issues. It brings it more, maybe more human versus fact, so I think pop culture is really good at doing that. (From S1)

Her experience suggests that this movie enabled her to think deeply about complex political issues.

Apart from Kate, Gordon and Alice also expressed their interests in the insightful representations of the complexities of life in Chinese popular culture when I asked about their preferences of Chinese popular culture in the first interviews. Gordon said that the movie of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (*Wo Hu Cang Long* in Mandarin Pinyin) was a sophisticated "human story" that he could watch many times. Alice claimed that she was "very selective about popular culture." Her favorite Chinese movie was *To Live* (*Huozhe* in Mandarin Pinyin) directed by Zhang Yimou because, according to Alice, this movie "depicted modern Chinese history and how it impacted one civilian's family." In contrast, John thought that Taiwanese popular culture

helped him imagine himself living in Asia. He said: "It's more like a dream of a 'what if' situation: what if I had lived in Asia, what if I had gone to school there, is it [Taiwanese popular culture] what it could have been like?" Victor, Julia and Phillis sought "entertaining" and "relaxing" experiences when engaging with Chinese popular culture. While learning Mandarin can be challenging and even boring for some CAL learners, engagement with Chinese popular culture brings them various kinds of pleasure, which is less likely to be found in Mandarin classroom courses (Duff et al., 2013). Based on this line of reasoning, I argue that the role that engagement with Chinese popular culture plays in learners' trajectories should be valued by teachers, scholars and learners themselves.

4.3 Motivation for Learning Mandarin from Their Engagement with Popular Culture

For many CAL learners, when they seek Chinese popular culture, they also tend to learn Mandarin through it. From my data, I found that their motivations for engaging with Chinese popular culture, as well as for learning Mandarin, often complemented each other.

For example, in the first interview, when I asked about her motivation to learn Mandarin, Kate said that her underlying motivation for Mandarin was a result of her belief that "the only way to really know a culture is, especially Chinese [culture], is to know the language." She added that she was impressed by the richness of Chinese history from Chinese popular culture, especially from historical TV dramas. Therefore, she took a course on Chinese history in university. In addition, she sought to better understand Chinese history and culture through learning Mandarin. She said that she also learned Chinese history and culture "even just from scraping the surface of Chinese and just seeing the basic Chinese characters and even just the idioms."

Gordon's engagement with Chinese popular culture played a huge role in his trajectories of Mandarin learning and career choice. During the first interview, when I asked Gordon if his interests in Chinese popular culture had changed over time, he told me that he had planned to go to Japan to work after graduating from his university and had even booked his flight. However, the Chinese martial arts movie *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* made him change his plans. After watching the movie, he immediately cancelled his flight to Japan and decided to go to China. He worked in Sichuan Province for two years and later worked in Taiwan for another five years. He summarized how this movie changed his life in the following words:

> What got me into pop Chinese culture in the first place was *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. That's what sent me to China. I watched that show, three months later I moved to China. So it just really grabbed [me], I had to go. I was actually considering going to Japan, so I was getting all ready and I was going to go, and it was supposed to be Japan, Japan, Japan. And then I watched *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and just immediately soon as it was done, I just went to the Internet, searching for jobs. Found out, sent some resumes out, three months later I was in China. So that was a big catalyst for me, for sure. (From S1)

Gordon described this movie as a "big catalyst" that prompted his move to China. His example implies how powerful popular culture can be in changing people's life trajectories and implicitly impacting their motivation for learning an additional language. Gordon had taken some Mandarin language courses during his undergraduate degree. However, he did not continue to learn Mandarin after finishing those courses. This movie triggered his curiosity about Chinese culture and society, and he exercised his agency to switch his prospective working place from Japan to China. His working environment in China then pushed him to start learning Mandarin again; since he wanted to establish various relationships with Chinese colleagues, friends and students through Mandarin. In brief, Chinese popular culture led to Gordon's move to China and his ongoing acquisition of Mandarin.

A third example came from Victor, who took notes of specific Mandarin words in order to better understand Chinese popular culture. In his self-notes, Victor reported that he watched some episodes of the talent show called *The Voice of China* (*Zhongguo Hao Shengyin* in Mandarin Pinyin) during the two-week research engagement. He found that many Chinese singers could sing better than their western counterparts. During the second interview, when I asked why he watched the show, he said that he valued the professionalism of Chinese judges, who critiqued singers' singing and performances with specific Mandarin words. He said that they "elaborated" and gave "details on the pitch, the control [of voice] and so on." He thought that such professional and constructive comments were rare in similar shows in the West. He wanted to learn more specific knowledge about singing from the judges. Thus, he became eager to understand their usage of Mandarin.

In order to understand the judges, he said that he asked his girlfriend to translate new words for him. In addition, he played the videos on YouTube back and forth in order to hear the words and understand their meaning more clearly. When I asked him to give detailed examples of how he made efforts to understand the judges' Mandarin usage, he answered:

> I would replay it and I would say "okay, this is how he placed it in the sentence", and "this is how you would describe a person's voice". While I do that I also see like "this is the word for voice", "this is the word for like your tone or your pitch". And at the same time you learn other words as well to combine in a sentence structure that makes sense in the context. I would try to see, like "this is the structure I can use with these words or something like that", and that's how I would try to learn by going back and try to see how they use it in a sentence. (From S3)

In addition to these strategies, Victor said that he also took notes of the Mandarin words and structures that he learned. Obviously, these strategies helped him learn a specific field of Mandarin (e.g., music and singing) outside his Mandarin class.

Actually, Victor's motivations for engaging with Chinese popular culture merged with his motivations for learning Mandarin. When I asked him to clarify if he had the explicit goal of learning Mandarin while he was watching these shows, he explained:

> I was learning Chinese, but I found out that this [method of learning Mandarin through Chinese popular culture] is a more entertaining way of learning. It's not as mundane and boring as of reading like a text book. ...you know what? This is fun and I'm also practicing Chinese. And why not? This is more like "hitting two birds with one stone." (From S3)

Victor's metaphor of "hitting two birds with one stone" uncovered the coexistence of two types of motivations during this engagement. His motivation for learning Mandarin distinguished him from other ordinary audience members who consumed Chinese popular culture merely for entertainment purposes. The complementarity of these two motivations validates the necessity of adopting an interdisciplinary theoretical framework in both the fields of SLA and media studies, a task which is undertaken this study.

4.4 Learners' Identity Construction during Their Engagement with Popular Culture

Based on my data, I analyze CAL learners' identities in terms of three dimensions of their investment in Chinese popular culture that arose from my study: *appreciation, identification* and *participation*. In the earlier three-dimensional model proposed by Vorderer et al. (2006) to account for audiences' motivation for entertainment, the three dimensions or themes were *autonomy, competence* and *relatedness*. The three constructs I propose are also inspired by Simon's (2012) notion of multiple dimensions of students' identity construction throughout their engagement with popular culture. My model is illustrated in the Table 4.1.

Table 4.1Three-Dimensional Model of Learners' Identity Construction and Usage of Popular Culture

Investment in popular culture	Cognition/emotion/ behavior	Construction of identities	Examples in my data
Appreciation (Autonomy)	Appreciate specific popular culture with affection and accumulate knowledge about it	Expert of specific genres of popular culture	Kate's identity as an expert of Chinese martial arts movies and historical TV dramas among her peers in Mandarin classes
Identification (Relatedness)	Identify with particular media characters in popular culture due to one's sociocultural context	Strengthening or reconstruction of one's social identities in terms of race, gender, class, age, profession, religion, nation, etc.	John's identity as an Asian male during his engagement with Taiwanese romance TV dramas
Participation (Competence)	Participate in using the target language to discuss and/or create popular culture	Proactive user of the target language (other than merely a language learner) and popular culture participant (other than a passive audience member)	Gordon's identity as a Mandarin user and a reviewer of popular culture in online language exchange websites

Each dimension and the examples cited will be discussed in the following sub-sections.

4.4.1 Kate's Appreciation of Chinese Popular Culture

CAL learners' investment in popular culture is analyzed from three dimensions because

their motivations for engaging with specific Chinese popular culture vary. For example, in

Vorderer et al.'s study (2006), autonomy refers to the exercise of one's agency to seek a

particular type of popular culture. CAL learners' long-term appreciation of a specific genre in

Chinese popular culture is a result of their autonomy because other people cannot normally force adult learners to engage with popular culture in their free time. On the other hand, to understand and then appreciate a specific genre of popular culture in an additional language, the learners need to exert considerable intellectual efforts. I think this is particularly the case for non-heritage CAL learners. For example, in the first interview, I asked Kate if she was able to understand ancient Chinese culture in *The Lengend of Zhen Huan*. She said that in addition to asking her Chinese friends a lot of questions, she also tried her best to watch and see what they were trying to portray. After she completed the three steps in my study, I emailed Kate for member-checking. I asked if she felt that she made a lot of intellectual efforts to understand Chinese popular culture. In her reply, she wrote: "Yes I do. I would often research myths and legends to better understand what I had watched. I am also on the lookout for any new films and interesting Chinese-related movies." The efforts and knowledge distinguished Kate from other learners who did not make such investments.

Furthermore, in the first interview, when we were discussing whether Chinese textbooks should incorporate popular culture, Kate said "yes," and told me that she felt "proud" and "excited" when she recognized the martial arts star Jackie Chan in one of her Chinese textbooks. She added that "most people [in her Mandarin class] didn't recognize him." She further explained, "You feel accomplished when you can make a connection and be like 'I recognize him' and you feel like you know something, so it was good." Moreover, she said that she told her friends in the Mandarin class about this Chinese star. In my member-checking email, I asked Kate if she felt that she had a different identity than other Mandarin learners who did not invest in Chinese popular culture. She replied: "Yes I do. I can talk a lot about them, I have seen many

films. I have acquired knowledge and experience in this medium. I feel like I have more cultural knowledge because of it."

In her Mandarin class, Kate was a newcomer in the community of practice as well as her peers in terms of proficiency. Yet, in terms of certain kinds of Chinese popular culture involving martial arts, for example, Kate was an expert in the community of practice in her Mandarin class. She was able to socialize her peers, who were relative newcomers, into martial arts (*kung fu*) movies and stars. Most certainly, this identity was beneficial for her to sustain motivation for learning about Chinese culture, as well as Mandarin in her language socialization process.

As was shown in Kate's case, the difference between the dimensions of appreciation and identification in CAL learners' identity construction is a distinction between an individual identity and a group identity. Due to linguistic difficulties, cultural differences, and personal preferences and priorities, not every CAL learner is willing to make such investments in Chinese popular culture. Through her investment in terms of appreciation, Kate acquired a unique and advantageous individual identity compared with other adult CAL learners.

In contrast, identification with a specific media character in popular culture, which I will illustrate in the following section, can also involve strengthening or reconstructing one's group identity. Learners feel that they are not alone in their sociocultural contexts (Vorderer et al., 2006). They develop a sense of belonging to a community or a group, and start developing shared identities with specific media characters. John's case, presented next, is better conceptualized from this particular dimension of identification.

4.4.2 John's Identification with Asian Males in Taiwanese Romance

The dimension of identification with media characters is based on the motivation for relatedness in Vorderer et al.'s (2006) model. Relatedness refers to the phenomenon when audience members "feel connected and related to characters" in popular culture (p. 8). This kind of relatedness, naturally, can be assumed to exist in traditional language socialization research with interlocutors who know each other through familial, collegial, or peer relationships and who may find suitable role models among them to emulate (or, in turn, influence). In this model, in contrast, identification with media characters refers to the phenomenon that viewers willfully relate to those non-present--and even fictional--characters and imagine themselves to be those characters (Cohen, 2009).

John was a heritage learner of Mandarin. He did not appreciate Taiwanese romance TV dramas (*Taiwan Ou'xiang Ju* in Mandarin Pinyin), but he identified with Asian males in them. In the first and only interview with John, I asked which genres of Chinese popular culture he liked the most. He preferred the Taiwanese romance genre. Since he previously said that he would not seek romance in North American popular culture, I asked why he watched Taiwanese romance. He said, "I find Taiwanese romance [TV dramas] are cheesy, which means they are overly exaggerated and unrealistic, and the plot is not great." Nevertheless, he had watched many such TV dramas from his adolescence. When I asked him to explain his seemingly contradictory motivations, he said, "for relaxing and at the same time learning Chinese. In a way it's interesting, as when you watch Hollywood, you don't see Chinese people, thus it's [Taiwanese romance is] a reflection of yourself at least aesthetically." I asked him if "yourself" in his comment was referring to Asian males in North American popular culture. He answered:

Definitely. You always see stereotypes like they are in martial arts or they are B-list background actor[s] in the movie or the one driving the car [in North American popular culture]. When you watch an Asian drama, everyone is Chinese or Korean and there is none of that kind of racial discord and it's refreshing to see someone who resembles you on TV. (From S1)

It seemed that John considered "Asian male" as a marginalized identity in the popular culture of his home country, Canada. The stereotypes and under-representations of that identity made him proactively seek Asian popular culture, in which he found characters that *resembled* him on TV. In these shows, "Asian male" was no longer an ostracized or invisible identity, but a mainstream one. His identification with such protagonists also involved imagining himself to be such characters in their sociocultural contexts, because he described it as "a dream of a what if situation." For John, watching those protagonists' performance in Taiwanese romance was equal to imagining himself vicariously in romantic relationships. In this way, he utilized semiotic resources in Taiwanese romance to empower his identity as a member of a particular social group in terms of race and gender, namely Asian males. My findings about John aligned with Cohen's (2009) notion that audience members' identification with media characters is fundamental to their construction of identities (Cohen, 2009).

In addition to his identification with media characters, John had an investment in the dimension of participation. When I asked if he had the explicit goal of learning Chinese during his engagement with popular culture, he confirmed that he did. In addition, he told me that he had plans for a prospective PhD in political science about the China-Taiwan relationship. It was possible that his Mandarin skills and cultural knowledge about this region would contribute to his prospective research. Therefore, John prepared himself to be an active Mandarin user (and performer of sorts), and not merely a Mandarin speaker. In John's case, although he did not

appreciate the Taiwanese romance genre, he embraced and enhanced his heritage identity

through engaging with popular culture. Such identification motivated him to watch more shows

and learn Mandarin, which steered his learning trajectory towards being a researcher of the

region, as well as becoming a proficient Mandarin user in the future.

4.4.3   Gordon's Participation in Chinese Popular Culture

In Vorderer et al.'s (2006) model, the dimension of *competence* is based on the argument

that sometimes people sought specific popular culture in order to improve specific skills or

overcome challenges. The typical image that the public has of audience members during their

engagement with popular culture such as TV dramas and movies tends to be one of "couch

potatoes," which refers to the passiveness of the audience consuming culture. Thus, it is

worthwhile to investigate the participation dimension of CAL learners' investment in popular

culture with regards to their identity constructions.

Using the three-dimensional model to analyze Gordon's engagement with Chinese

popular culture and identity construction, I found that his engagement involved not only the

dimensions of appreciation and identification, but also participation. He appreciated Chinese art

house movies and Taiwan talk shows (as he stated in S1). Furthermore, in the second interview,

when we were talking about his two-week viewing of the Taiwanese talk show *Kangsi Coming*

(*Kangxi Laile* in Mandarin Pinyin)*,* I found that he identified with its host Cai Kangyong.

Moreover, he also participated in critiquing popular culture. In the second interview, I asked

Gordon if he realized any improvements during the two-week engagement in terms of reading,

listening, speaking and writing. When he talked about writing in Mandarin, he told me that he

wrote essays about Chinese popular culture shown in Mandarin and posted his blog on a

language exchange website. He summarized the plots of shows and commented on them. He said that it "worked very well because Chinese people liked the shows as well so they all posted on [them] as well. [I am] engaging them with something that is of value to them." He said his posts received much feedback from Mandarin speakers. When I met him after my data collection, I asked him to clarify further about the feedback. He told me that he often received requests from more than 100 Mandarin speakers for online language exchange, around half of whom gave feedback on his writing. He no longer was simply being socialized into Chinese language, culture, and various kinds of knowledge himself, but was also playing an active role in socializing others into English (and into his own perspectives on Chinese popular culture). It suggests Gordon's cross-cultural competence at the macro/cultural level as a result of language socialization.

In fact, Gordon exercised his agency to develop stable friendship with some of the Mandarin speakers who could scaffold him to the right level of writing in the online community. He told me that his friends highlighted some of his problematic wording and explained the underlying reasons. He described, "Some people have done a really helpful job...they have done some very clear analysis." When we discussed his online interactions, he seemed to value his identity as a Mandarin user who was able to engage Mandarin speakers genuinely. He stated:

> If I engaged them with my textbook: "I ate a delicious dinner last night at a restaurant," …they don't genuinely be engaged [sic] because they don't like what I'm talking about. But if it's like a funny thing that happened in this TV show, and they are like "I watched that, too. It was really hilarious!" That [means] I was engaging them you know.

Through participating in the online community, Gordon enabled himself to use Mandarin with Chinese people despite the fact that he was not physically in the Greater China Region nor

was he a highly proficient writer in Mandarin (by his own assessment). Mandarin was no longer merely a linguistic skill to acquire. On the contrary, Mandarin was utilized to mediate his meaningful communication with Chinese people. Many CAL learners in my study admitted that they did not have many opportunities to use Mandarin after class. For example, both John and Victor said that they talked to their Chinese friends in English most of the time. Julia and Dennis mentioned that they did not have many Chinese friends. Therefore, Gordon acquired the identity of a proactive Mandarin user through his participation in discussing Chinese popular culture in Mandarin. This section illustrated how some participants utilized semiotic resources in popular culture to construct varieties of identities in three dimensions. The diverse choices of identities for learners to take on and identify with in popular culture are meaningful, compared to the limited choices typically provided by learners' language textbooks (Chiu, 2011; Hong & He, 2015). For example, Hong and He (2015) found that Mandarin textbooks developed by the Confucius Institute were sanitized with a monocultural ideology. With such a limited scope of ideology, it is likely to be hard for this type of Mandarin textbooks to appeal to the highly diverse identities and ideologies of CAL learners in North America. Thus, Chinese popular culture could offer more alternative resources to the adult CAL learners in this study, which enabled them to choose and construct identities other than those offered in their Mandarin textbooks.

4.5   Summary

This chapter discussed adult CAL learners' motivations and identities during their engagement with Chinese popular culture. First, I found that their motivations for engaging with Chinese popular culture were not necessarily shallow and fun-seeking. They sought sophisticated

experiences such as releasing negative emotions, learning professional knowledge (e.g., music and singing), or understanding complex political issues.

Second, I discussed how learners' motivations for Chinese popular culture and their motivations for learning Mandarin mutually impacted and complemented each other. Particularly, the two motivations merged in Victor's case. He said that he was "hitting two birds with one stone" because he learned Mandarin and enjoyed popular culture at the same time.

Third, I analyzed Kate's, John's and Gordon's identity construction in terms of the dimensions of *appreciation*, *identification* and *participation*. Kate appreciated Chinese popular culture, but did not explicitly identify with any media characters, according to my data. John did not appreciate Taiwanese romance TV dramas, but he identified with Asian males in them. Gordon's engagement involved all three dimensions, particularly the dimension of participation. All three participants' identity construction benefited them in sustaining their motivation for Chinese culture and language, and in contributing to their language socialization process.

Based on these findings, I argue that Chinese popular culture can bring varieties of pleasure to CAL learners, which is likely to be hard to reproduce in their Mandarin classes. In addition, Chinese popular culture provides a richer range of semiotic resources for learners to help construct or perform their identities, when compared to the Mandarin textbooks, and motivate them to explore both Chinese culture and language. Thus, adult CAL learners' engagement with Chinese popular culture should be validated as a pedagogy in addition to learning the language from teachers or textbooks.

Chapter 5: Chinese Popular Culture and CAL Learners' Language Socialization

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explore how CAL learners' usage of Chinese popular culture influences their language socialization process. I will first present some of the participants' understanding of the relationship between language and culture, as well as the process of learning an additional language. Since language socialization is primarily mediated by social interactions, along with other semiotic tools (including language itself), I will discuss three forms of social interactions found throughout CAL learners' engagement with Chinese popular culture. Furthermore, I will discuss how multiple modes such as facial expressions and body language in Chinese popular culture help learners comprehend Mandarin, and how CAL learners implicitly learn to recognize and use pragmatics in a culturally appropriate manner from the popular culture.

5.2 CAL Learners' Conceptualization of Language Socialization

The concept of language socialization is based on the fundamental belief that language and culture mutually impact each other and, indeed, at a certain level cannot really be separated (Duff & Talmy, 2011). It is noteworthy that participants in this study, most of whom had not majored in language and literacy studies, had similar understandings of the relationship between language and culture. Below, I will discuss Kate's (a non-heritage learner's) and Victor's (a heritage learner's) reflections on this topic.

As discussed in the previous chapter, after watching many martial arts movies and historical TV dramas, Kate was amazed by the historical aspects of Chinese culture and therefore, wanted to learn more about it. In the first interview, when I asked about her identity

when she spoke Mandarin, she asked me to clarify my question. Therefore, I decided to switch to a more concrete question. I asked her if she sensed any difference in herself when she spoke Mandarin as opposed to her first languages, English and French. She replied, "I think it goes back to understanding the culture because, like I said, the culture is embedded in the language…I feel like you do take on a piece of that culture when you are learning that language." When I asked her why she chose Mandarin, not other languages, she replied:

> I think it [Mandarin] attracted me because Canada is so young and it doesn't have a very old history, compared to China. And if you learn a little bit about Chinese history you just realize that it goes back quite of ways and then the roots of the language are just linked in with the history. (From S1)

The rich culture and long history behind Mandarin, which is very different from the culture and history of Canada, triggered Kate's curiosity about this language. Obviously, she had an explicit goal to learn about Chinese culture through learning Mandarin, which was one of the reasons she was selected to be a focal participant. It is very likely that this goal raised her awareness of the language socialization process, which operated at both micro (linguistic) and macro (sociocultural) levels.

Likewise, Victor also believed that Mandarin is enriched with history and culture. In the first interview, I asked him if he had any personal emotions towards Mandarin. He replied:

> I actually admire the language very much, like Chinese, especially when I study *Chengyu* [Chinese idiomatic expression, which usually consist of four characters/syllables] or I watch like *Guzhuang* [historical TV dramas or movies]. There is a very rich history embedded in the language itself and you can see how each letter [character] is formed, and there's a high rich like culture and world behind that language. (From S1)

After this reply, he kept on talking about his perceptions of Chinese language. It is interesting to note that even though his self-assessed Mandarin proficiency was not very advanced (ranging from A2 to B1 on the CEFR sub-components), he felt that Mandarin could help him express his

complicated ideas in a much better way than Thai or English, the two languages that he

considered as his native languages. He stated:

> Chinese, it's very deep, the language is very deep, and is very rich. I feel like I can connect, I could connect more with that language in a way because of how much depth it has, with just a simple word or with just a phrase. So I somehow I feel like this could be a language where it would allow me to deeply express my values, my principles, [and] my views, if utilized right, in the right way. (From S1)

> Victor's father is Taiwan-Chinese, and his mother is Thai. It was very likely that Victor

had experienced some Chinese cultural practices in his family since his childhood. However, it

was also probably hard for Victor to explicitly tap into the cultural values attached to those

practices. That was because, as he mentioned, his father spoke to him solely in English, probably

rendering Victor unable to name those concepts that were unique to Mandarin. Nowadays during

his process of learning Mandarin, the language is scaffolding Victor to explicitly conceptualize

and make meaning of some of the values, principles and views that he possibly had been

socialized into during his upbringing.

Most interestingly, Victor compared two types of language socialization: first language

socialization in the family context, and second language socialization mediated by textbooks.

When I asked about what his identity was when he spoke Mandarin, he said:

> Because I learn from those areas [such as textbooks and Mandarin classes], but like native speakers[of Mandarin] they learn from their upbringing, their family, so they learn through the environment, so their language is shaped by the environment, while my language is shaped by textbooks…While they are more free-flowing, more fluid, like they are more adaptive through time and through culture, while mine is based on textbooks. (From S1)

He realized that first language acquisition of Mandarin is directly shaped by learners' social

environment and family upbringing, which is more interactive, vernacular, and contemporary.

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By contrast, in second language socialization CAL learners typically learn from artificial, scripted interactions in Mandarin from textbooks that have a primarily pedagogical purpose. Undoubtedly, textbooks cannot always keep up with the times, which renders learners' Mandarin acquisition framed and fixed and sometimes not only bookish but also dated. Based on this line of reasoning, Victor justified his motivation for engaging in language socialization mediated by Chinese popular culture as follows: it helped him to be informed regarding the latest and popular language usage among Chinese people. In this way, he continually updated and revised his Mandarin repertoire.

I think that Kate's and Victor's aforementioned self-awareness about CAL is valuable because it is likely to have made their engagement with popular culture even more fruitful from a language socialization perspective.

5.3 Social Interactions during CAL Learners' Engagement with Popular Culture

As discussed in Chapter 2 and earlier in this chapter, language socialization is mediated by social interactions between novice and experienced members in their community of practice. Despite the fact that social interactions throughout adult CAL learners' engagement with popular culture are often invisible, they can be categorized into at least three types. The first type is the social interaction between learners and media characters, especially when learners identify with characters in the popular culture. The second type of social interaction is the communication among characters in the popular culture. CAL learners, as audience members, can observe such social interactions to learn about Chinese language and culture. The third type of social interaction happens when CAL learners discuss Chinese popular culture with other people. These three types will be discussed in relation to my data.

5.3.1   CAL Learners Interact with Media Characters

As discussed in Chapter 2, Parasocial Interaction (PSI) theories provide much empirical evidence about the existence of interactions between audience members and media characters (e.g., Horton & Wohl, 1956; Giles, 2002). It is noteworthy that Gordon's experience in this study resonates with PSI findings. Recall that he is the oldest Canadian-born non-heritage learner in this study who had previously worked in both Sichuan and Taiwan for seven years.

In the first interview, I asked Gordon if he proactively sought Chinese popular culture in his spare time. He said that when he watched Chinese movies, he watched them with the Chinese and/or English subtitles for the first time so that he could focus on the story. However, during the second time, he watched them without the subtitles so as to focus on the language. When I asked him to clarify how he focused on language, he explained:

> I go back and watch it [a Chinese movie] without subtitles and just try and follow the dialogues and listen to the dialogues, you know, almost like I'm taking part in [the movie]. You know [when] you watch good movies, it's like you're in the room with them talking to them right? (From S1)

Gordon confirmed that there were vicarious social interactions between him and the media characters in Chinese films. He felt that he was talking to them in the room. In other words, he did not feel that he was alone while watching a movie. His experiences aligned with PSI theories in the sense that companionship was the most common aspect of parasocial interaction (Giles, 2002). Some people might argue that such interaction is virtual, but "for the viewers, the [popular culture] mediated experience is a real experience" (p. 286). In the interactions, Gordon was the interlocutor and not just over-hearer, while characters in the movie were speakers. From the perspective of the imagined community (Norton, 2001), which in this case included the other members of the cast, Gordon was a novice and aspirational member compared with them. The

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characters were proficient speakers of Mandarin, who socialized him into their Chinese community.

In particular, Gordon's interaction with media characters involved identification with specific characters, which directly impacted his language socialization process according to him. In the second interview, I asked if he felt any improvement in terms of speaking Mandarin after the two-week engagement with some Taiwanese popular culture, such as the talk show *Kangsi Coming,* which he mentioned in his self-note. Gordon said, "I really like him [the male host Cai Kangyong of the show], the way he speaks, the way he engages…He seems like a very genuine and intelligent guy with good sense of humor." Thus, he further said he "tend[ed] to borrow a little from him." I asked him to clarify "borrow", he explained that "I come up with a way of talking a little more like the people in the show that I like, people who are entertaining. And you start to feel your way of speaking parallels [theirs]." I asked if he meant "mimic," he replied: "Yeah, mimic. And it might over time the people that you are watching are going to have an effect on you. They do."

In media studies, scholars believe that identification is a form of socialization because viewers take on social identities of the characters and adopt their goals, feelings or thoughts (e.g., Cohen, 2009). Such identification may lead to viewers' imitation of behavior and/or language. In Gordon's case, his identification not only encouraged him to learn Mandarin from Cai, but also led him to adopt Cai's perceptions and values and perhaps other behaviors because Gordon appreciated Cai's genuineness, intelligence and humor. This confirmed that social interactions between learners and media characters mediated their language socialization, especially when learners identified with specific media characters.

5.3.2 CAL Learners Observe Interactions among Media Characters

CAL learners' language socialization is also mediated by learners' observation of the social interactions among media characters in Chinese popular culture. For example, after her two-week engagement, in the second interview, I asked Kate how Chinese popular culture helped her learn Mandarin. She replied that [it teaches her] "the appropriate situation to use what [expressions]." After that, she gave me an example by saying that she would not talk to a friend at the top of her lungs to yell at them like the characters arguing in the movie *Lost in Thailand* (*Taijiong* in Mandarin Pinyin). She explained:

> Also I guess how you say it like even just using like the, you know, the fathers when they were talking to their kids [in *Where Are We Going, Dad?*], they would use the *ba* like "something, something *ba*," which is like more polite than just saying "do this and this," right? Then in the film [*Lost in Thailand*] the guy was like super angry and he would be like very harsh [in] almost [all his] language and it's, you wouldn't use that harsh language with a kid obviously. (From S3)

It was very interesting that Kate proactively mentioned the topic of a particular grammatical structure known as affective sentence-final particles (ASPs) in Mandarin to me in the interview.

ASPs are used at the end of sentences or utterances in natural discourse to signify speakers' affective stance, or their feeling about what they are expressing; therefore, they are also named *yuqici* or mood words (Wu, 2004). Corpus analysis has found that ASPs such as *a, ya, na, la, o, lo, ei, lei and me* appear frequently in daily conversations among Mandarin speakers (Starr, 2011). Yet, many studies with CAL learners discovered that mastering ASPs is a challenge for many CAL learners (e.g., Diao, 2013; Wen, 1995). One of the possible reasons is that ASPs do not have corresponding translations in English (Wen, 1995); furthermore, they are not modelled well in teaching materials and are best learned through ample exposure to

conversational language use (Diao, 2014). In addition to conveying subtle social and affective

meaning, ASPs make learners' speech sound more natural, when used correctly (Wu, 2004).

Although her self-assessed proficiency in Mandarin was relatively low (mostly A1 on

CEFR, the lowest level), having only studied it for 1.5 years, Kate recognized the usage of *ba* in

different social contexts. She paid attention to the ASP from parent-child interactions in the

reality show *Where Are We Going, Dad*? She also noticed that the two male adults in the movie

Lost in Thailand were arguing with each other angrily regarding their business profits, but they

did not use *ba*. I invited Kate to summarize the usage of *ba*. She replied:

> You can still see it in the way, it was almost like a question, but it's not a question. It was
> almost like a gentle suggestion, I guess. And you could just tell by the way that they were
> interacting with the kid, and this is a social situation which teaches you something about
> how to use the language. (From S3)

It seems that Kate was able to accurately comprehend the ASP *ba*'s usage in different social

contexts through observing interactions in popular culture. This signifies that interactions among

characters in popular culture can mediate CAL learners' language socialization and

metalinguistic awareness.

In fact, many language socialization scholars contend that observation of others'

interactions plays a key role in mediating people's language socialization process (e.g., Li, 2000;

Ochs & Shohet, 2006). For example, in their study on children's first language socialization

during meal time, Ochs and Shohet (2006) argue that "In societies where children are expected to

be silent or eat separately or are positioned as servers, minimal or no communication may be

directed to them, but they may nonetheless acquire critical sociocultural knowledge and skills

through observing and overhearing the communication of others" (p. 42). That is to say, although

children appear to be silent at the dinner table in some cultures, as observers and over-hearers

children can still be socialized into certain cultural practices. CAL learners who engage with Chinese TV dramas, movies and reality shows are very similar to children in the aforementioned occasions, as learners also observe and overhear others' interactions (on screen) so as to learn about Chinese cultural practices and language usage.

In addition, in second language socialization, Li (2000) also found that observation of interactions among American colleagues greatly mediated an adult Chinese immigrant's (Ming's) acquisition of English pragmatics in their workplace. Ming reported that her American colleagues did not talk to her very much, whereas they liked to talk to each other. Despite that Ming did not have many opportunities to participate in the communication in the initial stage, she told the researcher that she observed such conversations carefully. She said, "That's [speaking like they do is] what I'm gonna do" (p. 72). The researcher discovered that Ming later learned the "American way" to make requests, and thereby spoke to her colleagues more bluntly and less indirectly than before. Thus, observation can also make a great contribution to language learners' second language socialization process. My findings on CAL learners' observation of social interaction in Chinese popular culture resonate both with Li's and Ochs and Shohet's studies on language socialization.

5.3.3 CAL Learners Interact with Others about Chinese Popular Culture

A third form of social interaction happens when CAL learners discuss Chinese popular culture with other people, particularly their Chinese friends, during or after their shows. When I asked about participants' habit of engaging with Chinese popular culture in the first interviews, half of the participants in this study reported that they had Chinese peers' company while viewing the media pieces in general. Kate said she had her Chinese friend Shelly come to her

home to watch the historical TV drama *The Legend of Zhen Huan* and many other shows before

she participated in my study. Victor explained that he often enjoyed Chinese entertainment with

his girlfriend, who was a Hong Kong Chinese. John said that he often discussed popular culture

with other Chinese peers in his class. When he was asked to list some factors that played a role in

his learning trajectory, John said, "Friends, for sure, is one of them." As mentioned in Chapter 3,

John said that friends changed his mind about learning Cantonese, and suggested that he learn

Mandarin instead. Gordon said that, in Canada, he often invited Taiwanese friends home to

watch movies and shows together. He also posted comments on his favorite shows and movies in

Mandarin in online forums and received feedback from Mandarin speakers, as discussed in the

previous chapter. Chinese peers, as more linguistically proficient speakers in their respective

communities of practice, contributed greatly to CAL learners' language socialization through

discussing popular culture.

Chinese peers were particularly helpful to translate and explain the Mandarin usage in

Chinese popular culture. For example, in her self-note, Kate wrote that "the subtitles and quality

of the translation [in the documentary *A Bite of China*] was excellent and very clear." When I

invited her to her talk about translations problems that she had encountered with Chinese popular

culture in the second interview, Kate said that the English subtitles of Chinese popular culture

were often not intelligible due to poor translations. She gave the example of the Chinese name

Xiao Li. She said that the English subtitles showed that it meant *little plum* (the literal

translation), rather than telling English speakers that this phrase was only a Chinese person's

name. In addition, she said it was hard for her to search for new words in the Chinese subtitles

(in Chinese characters) when she did not know their *Pinyin* version (i.e., the phonetic system for

Chinese characters, as noted before, which is an input system for typing words into word processors to get their meaning). In contrast, if she wanted to search for the meaning of printed English words, she just needed to type the letters of the words into the online dictionary without necessarily knowing the pronunciation. Therefore, instant explanations and translations from Chinese friends were very helpful while watching shows. I asked her what she did when she encountered unknown vocabulary or grammar in Chinese popular culture in the two-week period. She replied, "As far as friends, I feel like the immediate feedback is really, really useful, as opposed to sort of try[ing] to remember what that [word or expression] was and ask maybe a day later to my friend."

She thought that simultaneous feedback from Chinese friends assisted her to catch the gist of the show and to comprehend the Chinese language in it. The feedback helped her to learn Mandarin within its different popular culture discourse contexts. Thus, this form of social interaction contributed greatly to learners' learning trajectories.

5.4　Multiple Modes Assist Learners' Meaning-Making of Mandarin and Culture

One of the most common advantages for using Chinese popular culture to learn Mandarin is that multimodality such as behaviors, voice, gestures and facial expressions contribute to learners' meaning-making of the language and the embedded culture. My findings align with Doherty's (2014) and Bednarek's (2010) argument about the affordances of multiple modes in popular culture.

For instance, Kate described herself as "a visual" language learner; thus, learning Mandarin from Chinese popular culture was more efficient for her than textbooks. In the first interview, I asked Kate the advantages of using popular culture to learn Mandarin. She said that

she would rather see and hear how language was used in context through popular culture, than read it in textbooks. She said, "You can learn the mechanics [from textbooks], but they are missing a really crucial part which is the rest of it... [It is] the actual real experience of it and actually using it in real life experience in context." Through paying attention to Mandarin in popular culture, she said she would "just remember more," and it would be "more meaningful." She elaborated on her past experiences of watching *The Legend of Zhen Huan* with her friend. She said she still remembered how to say "Don't kill me" (*buyao sha wo*) in Mandarin very well because concubines were always begging the Emperor in a pathetic tone, kneeling on the ground with extremely scared facial expressions in. In the same show, she also learned "Please rise" (*pingshen*) in Mandarin because she noticed that in ancient China, royal family members would say this sentence after ordinary people bowed to them. She said, "It was like 'please rise' or something, so when you like did that, little like bow, they would say that a lot, so I learned that, which was really interesting." Admittedly, the phrase "*pingshen*" is obsolete and quite archaic nowadays in Chinese society except in historical TV dramas and movies (or perhaps if used ironically as an imperial command). However, it does not mean this phrase is not relevant or useful to Kate, given that she was very interested in Chinese history, ancient literature and historical TV dramas. It is very possible that she will frequently encounter this phrase in other historical TV dramas and movies. On those occasions, she will not consider "*pingshen*" as something new and thereby there will be no need for her to ask help from others again. On the other hand, she would need to learn that its usage is restricted to those genres and times and is something she should not herself utter when asking people to stand up in contemporary contexts.

Furthermore, through the use of multiple modes, popular culture creates a relaxing environment to immerse learners in the stories, so that they focus more on understanding the content (Doherty, 2014). In the first interview when we discussed the advantages and disadvantages of incorporating popular culture into Mandarin classes, Kate noted, "that is just more fun and more relaxing to learn through pop culture. I get really stressed out when I'm in the classroom for this kind of thing, so for me [learning in the classroom] it's not always a very good learning environment." She described her performance anxiety in the following way:

> With a teacher I get pretty nervous, and I really want to do well, and I end up doing worse because of that, and I always feel like the teacher is marking me in their head because I'm not, I'm failing or I'm not doing something properly…There is always that situation of having like the authority or the, [teacher is] somebody who's older and more experienced, who's looking for your mistakes. (From S1)

In short, Chinese popular culture facilitated learners' language socialization because its multimodality assisted with CAL learners' comprehension, and provided a relaxing environment for them to learn Mandarin.

5.5   Chinese Popular Culture Contains Corpora of Mandarin Pragmatics

Many participants realized that Chinese popular culture provides a convenient corpus of reasonably authentic (i.e., scripted, but natural-sounding) Mandarin, particularly pragmatics. This finding resonates with Doherty's (2014) argument that popular culture such as TV dramas illustrated social contexts for using pragmatics that learners otherwise would have difficulty gaining direct exposure to. For example, in the first interview, I asked Victor to compare which method was better for learning Mandarin, watching TV shows or listening to music. Victor replied that he preferred TV shows and gave reasons as follows:

> Because there's a dialogue [in TV shows] and that's mainly how you communicate there's always a dialogue and you can look at…it's almost like a constant show of

examples, so it will show you how to structure things, how you would communicate, how you should respond to certain situations. It's sort of like a guideline for you in terms of how to say and act in that kind of context. (From S1)

For him, Chinese TV shows vividly represented social contexts of language usage in Mandarin, or what he called a "guideline". As a result, he learned about communicating with Chinese people in a culturally appropriate manner. In fact, the CAL learners' process of mastering pragmatics in Mandarin was fundamentally the process of language socialization. They are socialized into the Chinese culture so that they can recognize and perform pragmatics (e.g., speech acts) and other aspects of language accordingly.

Similarly, in the first interview, when I asked Kate why CAL learners should use Chinese popular culture to learn Mandarin, she said, "If you cannot speak properly in the proper situation, then I feel like, you're not using the language properly." She added that "with the repetition for the pragmatics [in popular culture], it's excellent because you see how it's supposed to be used, and how often it's used and then you also recognize it." Kate paid particular attention to the frequency of pragmatics in Chinese popular culture. She said, "Because you never repeat 1000 times in class, but I probably heard it 1000 times in the show, right? ...You definitely have more exposure [in Chinese popular culture], which is a lot better." Her argument aligns with Doherty's (2014) argument regarding frequent exposure to pragmatics in popular culture. In fact, frequent repetition actually helped Kate acquire and review pragmatics. She gave me an example:

> Like just watching the old sort of historical show, I learned like all of those weird like sayings, and I didn't even try to learn them. They just were repeated so many times, it just like even [if] somebody said [these sayings], I would be like I know what you mean. (From S1)

Kate's experience suggests that repeated appearance of pragmatic expressions in Chinese popular culture can mediate CAL learners' language acquisition even when they felt that they made little effort.

5.6   Summary

To sum up, this chapter explored Chinese popular culture and CAL learners' language socialization. It began by reporting that several participants in my study mentioned that culture was embedded in language, and they thereby learned about Chinese culture through learning Mandarin.

Although social interactions during learners' engagement with Chinese popular culture are often invisible, in my cases, I found that there were at least three forms of interactions. For example, when Gordon identified with the TV host, he purposefully borrowed language and behaviors or dispositions from him. Second, Kate learned about ASPs and other pragmatic features in Mandarin by observing social interactions among media characters in Chinese popular culture. Third, Kate, Victor, John and Gordon talked or blogged about Chinese popular culture with their Chinese friends, gaining additional information and interaction about the language, culture, and other aspects of contemporary social life.

As my examples show, any one of the three forms of social interactions can mediate CAL learners' language socialization process. They do not have to happen synchronically, or at all. Among the three, the most common form reported in this study was learners' observations of social interactions in Chinese popular culture. As suggested in my data, learners' identification with characters in popular culture was very selective. Gordon identified very specifically with one talk-show host. Cohen (2009) suggests that audience members' identification happens as a

result of a great many complicated factors such as race, social class, gender, education, family background, physical appearance, accents of language and speech styles. In other words, identification does not always happen. Similarly, CAL learners do not always have affordances to interact with Mandarin speakers about popular culture. Kate, Victor and John had close Chinese friends in their social networks. Gordon had information about online exchange websites as well as above-intermediate proficiency to participate in mostly written interactions with Mandarin speakers. In contrast, the most available social interaction for CAL learners probably is to observe how Chinese people communicate with each other in Chinese popular culture. As discussed in the previous findings, such observation can also contribute significantly to learners' language socialization process.

Chinese popular culture also mobilized multiple semiotic modes to assist learners to learn Mandarin in social contexts and provided a relatively relaxing environment in which learners often felt less stress, compared to their Mandarin classes.

Finally, Chinese popular culture provided corpora of pragmatic expressions and other linguistic forms for CAL learners which can socialize them into speaking (or understanding) Mandarin appropriately in Chinese society.

Chapter 6: Affordances and Constraints of the Pedagogy

6.1   Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss both affordances and constraints of the pedagogy of using Chinese popular culture to learn and teach Mandarin. With regards to affordances, I will discuss three ways: teaching with popular culture, self-learning with popular culture, and peer socialization with popular culture.

In terms of constraints, I will discuss at least three complex factors that emerged in practicing this pedagogy: perceived propaganda in Chinese popular culture, heritage learners' identity issues, and fragmented and informal language usage in popular culture.

6.2   Affordances of Utilizing Chinese Popular Culture

In my first interviews, I asked participants to discuss if and how popular culture should be incorporated in classroom teaching, textbooks and extracurricular activities. Based on their replies, three methods emerged for the utilization of Chinese popular culture. They suggested that (1) Mandarin teachers incorporate Chinese popular culture in class, (2) learners use it for self-learning, or (3) learners discuss it with their Chinese friends during their engagement with it. However, my participants did not show much support for the incorporation of Chinese popular culture in Mandarin textbooks.

6.2.1   Teaching with Chinese Popular Culture

Surprisingly, all ten participants suggested that teachers should limit the time spent in playing videos of TV dramas, movies or music in Mandarin classes. They thought that these activities were a waste of precious teaching time in class. Students could engage with popular culture on their own time. Even for a five-minute music video in Mandarin, CAL learners often

needed much more time to look up the vocabulary in order to understand the lyrics. Therefore, these participants recommended that on average, five to ten minutes of class time is enough to show videos. On the other hand, they suggested devoting more time to *discussing* Chinese popular culture. For example, they said that they would be interested in comparing values and customs between Chinese culture and their home country's culture. Furthermore, Victor and Phillis thought that it was not necessary to use it in every class because learning grammar was also important. Phillis proposed that teachers could assign engagement with particular Chinese popular culture as homework. She said that since this type of homework would be interesting, students would be highly motivated to complete it.

Many of them mentioned that instead of simply playing videos or music in class, they preferred if teachers would briefly introduce the titles, names, and cultural backgrounds of some of the latest Chinese popular culture. This would be helpful for them in case they wanted to explore it later. Moreover, Gordon said teachers should not try to explain every word in their recommended popular culture texts (as they often attempt to do in textbook materials), as it would be overwhelming for learners. Nevertheless, learners hoped teachers could facilitate some class discussion about particular popular culture contents. This tendency confirmed adult learners' preference for taking on the identity of active Mandarin users rather than merely Mandarin learners.

6.2.2   Self-Learning with Chinese Popular Culture

Gordon, Victor and Dennis all gave positive feedback on the self-learning website *FluentU*. Gordon and Victor had used this website before participating in my study. Dennis tried it at my suggestion during the two-week period. This website was developed by a company

registered in Hong Kong, and is available for learning Chinese, Spanish, English, French, German, Japanese and Italian. Users can use it for free for one month, and later pay for a subscription each month. For CAL learners, this website selects clips from varieties of Mandarin-speaking videos from *YouTube*, including movies, advertisements, music videos and reality TV shows. It adds English, Mandarin and Pinyin subtitles to the clips. When encountering any new word in Mandarin, with just a click, learners will be provided with an English translation, live voice of the pronunciation and illustrative sentences. This function greatly saves time for beginners. Additionally, they can have a quiz to test their memorization of the new words after viewing the whole clip, and their wrong answers will be recorded in their personal profile for reviews in future. This website also recommends videos to learners based on their levels of proficiency so that CAL beginners will not be overwhelmed. In short, *FluentU* utilizes resources from popular culture and makes them tailored for self-learning.

Gordon, Victor and Dennis reported positive learning experiences with *FluentU*. For example, I asked Victor what suggestions he had for other CAL learners if they wanted to use popular culture to learn Mandarin in the second interview. He said:

> I think *FluentU* has been very educational using pop culture because I think, I mentioned this before, when [you] pause and you click a word, it would show you the definition of the word, and how you can use it. It's almost like an online dictionary for those using pop culture as a way of learning. I think pop culture utilizes what I'm doing [such as looking up dictionary and taking notes], but making it to a website [is] more accessible in a way that it gives me what I am doing, so it's [convenient]. I don't have to do all that hard work of writing it down. It's like, it's right there for me. (From S3)

He thought that this website processed popular culture well and tailored it to language learners' needs. Gordon held similar views.

Dennis had the lowest proficiency level of Mandarin among the three participants who used this resource, having previously studied it for only four months in his home country, Ecuador. He was a beginner in Mandarin. Yet, he also found that the website's classification of popular culture for different proficiency levels of learners was very helpful for self-learning. He mentioned this in his self-note. When I asked him to give me more comments about it in the second interview, he stated:

> I thought it was very good, because "newbie" [level] was too basic for me and intermediate [level] included some things that I didn't know, and [in] the beginner one there were some words that I still didn't know, but it was easier to understand the thing as a whole. (From S3)

This reflection suggested that *FluentU* effectively presented new words and grammar in clips for CAL learners at different proficiency levels.

6.2.3 Peer Socialization with Chinese Popular Culture

The theme of peer socialization was prominent in the participants' narratives. All ten participants mentioned that they would love to have some Chinese peers with whom to view and discuss popular culture. They talked about at least four constructive factors of peer socialization.

First, Gordon recommended peer socialization as a starting point to socialize with Mandarin-speaking friends and build up a supportive community of practice. With a supportive community of practice, he had a chance to practice and use Mandarin. When I asked him to give suggestions to CAL learners in terms of using popular culture to learn Mandarin in the second interview, he said,

> [Watching] TV is fun with friends. You like friends come over to your house, you hang out. It's a nice way to do it. I know it gives you stuff, and it gives you those common cultural experiences with the locals, too, right? It's fun, hang out watch TV, [and] chat about it. It's giving you more and more to talk about even with your Chinese friends. Talk about these funny shows you watch together. (From S3)

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For him, socializing through popular culture deepened his friendship with relative experts in the community of practice. Moreover, popular culture socialized him into "common cultural experiences" which could facilitate more affordances of using Mandarin. Mastering such cultural references validated his membership in the community.

Second, Victor implied that a prompt explanation of Chinese language with peers was more efficient than searching for words on his own. When I asked about his strategies when he encountered unknown words and grammar in Chinese popular culture in the second interview, he replied,

> Especially if I read, if it's a long sentence, and I look up words, it can be difficult for me. It's like what is happening because sometimes there can be different elements that I don't know, and it can get pretty hard. I would rather watch it with someone who knows Chinese as well. …In the immediate sense because it's a show and it goes on and on, it's good to have someone else who knows, well that's for me and a friend who knows Chinese, and they can explain this is what it means and this is what they are saying. It's almost like I have a verbal translator on my side. (From S3)

Victor considered it time-consuming to look up words during his engagement with Chinese popular culture, as that would interrupt his flow of understanding the gist. Therefore, he relied on peers as brokers of Chinese language and culture. This language brokering was salient for Mandarin beginning learners.

Third, learners were more likely to favor their friends' recommendations of popular culture, which made peer socialization an important aspect of learning Chinese language through popular culture. In media psychology, Joyce and Harwood's (2014) empirical study on peer socialization suggests that students prefer their peers' recommendations for contents of entertainment. My data supports this finding. For example, in the first interview, Gordon mentioned that he and his friends recommended Chinese popular culture to each other when I

asked how he had access to Chinese popular culture. Gordon noted that he and his friends put high trust in friends' recommendations. In this way, they socialized each other into cultural practices of popular culture.

Fourth, peer socialization into Chinese language and popular culture was reported to lower learners' anxieties of learning Mandarin. As discussed in Chapter 5, Kate felt less stress when discussing media with her Chinese friends than with her teachers, and she was able to ask peers questions as often as she liked. In answer to my question regarding her preference for the way of utilizing popular culture, she said she preferred peer socialization. She explained:

> With a peer and actually being able to ask those really stupid questions like "what was that?"…[With peers] you won't get the same like judgment and I feel like the explanation from your friend would be very genuine, too. (From S3)

Kate trusted her Chinese friends to be the genuine socializers, and she was less intimidated by them. In particular, Kate recommended one-one-one peer socialization because she thought such arrangements were most likely to guarantee a safe space for social interactions among peers.

6.2.4   Controversies about Incorporating Popular Culture in Textbooks

My participants showed distinct opinions regarding the idea of textbooks incorporating popular culture when I asked about this topic in the first interviews. Among the ten participants, only three supported this approach. Alice said, "Because if not [incorporating popular culture], the textbook is going to become a grammar book. Nobody wants to read [that]." Kate also held similar views. "I think it's a really great way to learn and, I like, I said it make it modern and relevant." Kathy said that it would be interesting to have Chinese popular culture in textbooks.

In contrast, one of the most common opposing reasons was that since popular culture evolves quickly, it would be hard for textbooks to keep up. Victor worried that if textbooks had new versions every year just for the sake of updating popular culture content, they would become too expensive for students to buy. Julia and Dennis argued that students could seek Chinese popular culture themselves, so it was not necessary for textbooks to include it. John thought that popular culture could be appreciated better multi-modally than in print-heavy texts; therefore, brief textual introduction of movies, TV dramas or popular culture celebrities in the textbook was not so attractive. Furthermore, Gordon argued that appearance of popular culture celebrities in textbooks was not very relevant to ordinary learners, since these stars often had luxurious lifestyles that other people could not afford.

Despite these different voices, Alice proposed a practical method of incorporating popular culture in textbooks. She said that Mandarin textbooks could establish a corresponding website, on which textbook writers could release information about the latest Chinese popular culture. It would be much faster and less expensive to update the website than to publish new versions of textbooks.

6.3   Constraints of Utilizing Chinese Popular Culture

Based on replies to my question regarding constraints of this pedagogy, three themes emerged: propaganda in Chinese popular culture, heritage identity, and fragmented and informal language for learning. I will discuss each one in turn.

6.3.1   Propaganda in Chinese Popular Culture

Over half of the participants in my study mentioned their ambivalence towards the Communist Party of China (CPC) and propaganda in popular culture produced in Mainland

China. For example, when we were discussing the genre of historical drama in the first interview,

Gordon started to talk about the history of communist war in China. He continued to talk about

his resistance to the 2009 film *The Founding of a Republic (Jianguo Daye in* Mandarin Pinyin),

which was funded by the Chinese government to commemorate the CPC's contributions to the

establishment of People's Republic of China 60 years earlier. This movie included over 100 top-

tier actors and actresses in China. In order to increase audience members outside China,

producers equipped this movie with high-quality English subtitles. In spite of this enormous

investment, star characters, and good translations, Gordon still did not like the movie. He

explained:

> It [the movie] was the history of the communist war, *Jianguo Daye*. And it was a huge
> blockbuster in China, but that one I just found [it] naïve. It's just really an idealistic
> representation of the communist party. It's seemed more propaganda than it did real
> historical exploration. …I kind of had that dirty feeling, like there is propaganda in it.
> You know it's just a gut feeling, I guess: "People are more complex than this, they are
> not [like this]." I don't believe in heroes. …I'm like, this person [leader of CPC in the
> movie] needs to be more problematic, more troubled, you know, yeah. How do you
> represent their great national hero in anything but these glorious terms, so I'm just saying
> that troubled me. (From S1)

Gordon described his perceptions of this movie as "dirty." He suggested that propaganda of CPC

was a sensitive topic in North America, which would lead to barriers for Chinese popular culture

to be fully embraced by the western audience. He explained that due to CPC's censorship,

Chinese popular culture lacked complexity of human nature and represented an "extremely

artificial look at China."

Gordon's case demonstrates that learning an additional language through popular culture

is also impacted by the political ideology of a country, especially when learners' own culture and

the target culture are governed by distinctively different political systems, ideologies and value of freedom of speech.

6.3.2   Heritage Learners' Identity and Chinese Popular Culture

In Mandarin classes in Canada, there are many heritage learners whose home languages may include Chinese languages besides Mandarin (such as Cantonese), or English and other languages. Therefore, it is important to note how their heritage identities influence their choice of Chinese popular culture and language socialization process. Among all the ten participants, Phillis was the only heritage Mandarin learner who showed explicit resistance to Mandarin-language Chinese popular culture.

Phillis, introduced earlier in Section 3.8.5, was born and grew up in Canada with parents who emigrated from Hong Kong. Although she had only briefly visited Hong Kong several times, she said that she spoke fluent Cantonese and considered Cantonese as her native language. Phillis explained that she studied Mandarin in order to fulfil her curriculum requirements in the university. Her major of Marketing and International Business required her to learn a second language. She chose to learn Mandarin because "that would be easy and efficient."

However, the way she used popular culture to learn Mandarin was different from all the other participants. She told me that she used *Cantonese* popular culture rather than Mandarin language popular culture to learn Mandarin when I asked about her habits of seeking popular culture in the first interview. I asked her reasons for such choice, she replied that she knew that using the target language's popular culture is a good way to acquire the language, and had benefited from this method to learn Cantonese in Canada. However, in terms of learning Mandarin, she said explicitly that she had little interest in Mandarin-speaking Chinese popular

culture. She confirmed this perspective by saying, "It's because I have a strong connection with Hong Kong for some reason. I'm not into Taiwanese ones [media] or mainland China ones." From this comment, she implied that she had little connection with Mainland China or Taiwan. Her heritage identity was salient in her choice of popular culture, which further impacted why and how she engaged with popular culture in her private time. She said Cantonese popular culture could help her learn written characters because Mandarin and Cantonese share many characters (except that Cantonese characters used in Hong Kong are traditional, whereas Mandarin characters are simplified, although many are still the same in both scripts).

In the two-week period, she chose to watch a Mainland and Hong Kong collaborative movie which was available in both Mandarin and Cantonese. She chose Mandarin to watch this movie in order to generate data for my study. She said it was her first time to watch a movie in Mandarin. In the second interview, she said "it was very difficult" for her to understand a solely Mandarin language movie. In addition, she felt Mandarin in the movie sounded "very harsh." I asked if it was true that she would not proactively seek Mandarin language popular culture even though she was taking a Mandarin class at her university. She replied, "My whole lifestyle is engulfed with Cantonese pop culture that I haven't opened up to learning Mandarin."

Her experiences implied that taking actions to learn Mandarin did not mean that she would like to be socialized into Mandarin-speaking Chinese culture. Since there are many subcultures in Chinese culture, Phillis' case suggests that heritage learners can in some cases be interested in specific linguistic subcultures, which may be the case for non-heritage learners as well.

6.3.3   Informal and Fragmented Mandarin in Chinese Popular Culture

When I invited my participants to think about the disadvantages of this pedagogy, many

of them talked about the informal and fragmented language typically found in popular culture.

Since spoken vernacular language is usually adopted in popular culture, learners often observed

informal Mandarin in dialogues among media characters. John explained,

> Sometimes language is informal [in popular culture] and what happens if you use that language in the wrong situation. If you are talking to someone higher up than you, then that would be very disrespectful. Language is good, but you have to make sure someone is there to explain the context to you. You don't want to say something which is rude to someone and inadvertently disrespecting them. Which is why I understand why textbooks are overly formal because then you are erring on the side of caution and thus have no problems that come up with that. (From S1)

John compared language usage in textbooks and popular culture. He pointed out that by learning

Mandarin only from Chinese popular culture, learners were more likely to lack the component of

socialization which can be found in the formal teaching context of Mandarin.

In addition, after the two-week engagement with Chinese popular culture, I asked Victor

to talk about some of the problems that he encountered. He said:

> I think like sometimes people don't speak in complete sentences [in TV dramas]. They speak here and there, and they just break, a lot of break[s]. It's like they speak, and it doesn't finish. That's what I have realized because there are a lot of time[s] when I'm listening, and I'm expecting an end, and it goes somewhere. I just get lost and I have to ask what just happened, but [Chinese people] they are fine because they know. That's one of the things where I lose track of what they are saying very easily. …I have realized when you speak, it's very different from reading, because when you are writing, you are very aware of the sentence structure that you are writing. (From S3)

Due to the fragmented language usage in popular culture, it was hard for Victor to follow the

flow of ideas in Chinese popular culture. In contrast, since there were many commonly shared

cultural references, values and pragmatics in Chinese popular culture for Mandarin speakers, it was easy for them to make sense of the storylines.

Furthermore, since Victor wanted to do business with Chinese people in the future, he expressed strong interests in learning Business Mandarin in the first interview. Therefore, he told me that chose to learn this register of Mandarin by watching a Chinese TV drama featuring business competition, *Scarlet Heart 2* (*Bubu Jingqing* in Mandarin Pinyin). He finished watching 39 episodes before this study, and said he really enjoyed them. In the second interview, when we were discussing his interests in learning Business Chinese, I asked him if he would go to a formal class to learn it, or only seek Chinese popular culture relevant to business and trade. Victor argued that Mandarin in Chinese popular culture was still not of a sufficiently refined professional register for his purposes. Therefore, he still planned to take Business Mandarin classes in the future. He explained:

> There would be a lot more words in the real [business] world compared to what I see in the pop culture. I know that even though it talks about business, but they are not technical, because [*Scarlet Heart 2*] it's a TV drama. It's about… they don't talk about contracts, you know what I mean. They don't use all the languages that I need to know, so definitely [it is] very important if I enroll in a business course like a Chinese Business course. (From S3)

Victor said that he needed to learn about reading business contracts and carrying out business negotiations. He was aware that *Scarlet Heart 2* was only a story about business world, which did not cover every aspect of the real business field. Therefore, the Business Mandarin in this show was still very limited.

6.4 Summary

In sum, this chapter investigates both affordances and constraints of learning Mandarin through Chinese popular culture. CAL learners thought that peer socialization could help them to

establish deep personal relationships, broker between different languages and cultures, provide access to peer-recommended popular culture, and lower their learning anxiety. However, it does not mean that this pedagogy has no constraints. Several participants said that they were uncomfortable with the political propaganda in Chinese popular culture. In addition, heritage learners might prefer subcultures rather than the dominant Mandarin-speaking popular culture. Finally, informal and fragmented language usage in popular culture can confuse learners.

Chapter 7: Discussion, Conclusion and Implications

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will first summarize the findings of this research. After that, I will discuss three issues in my findings: (1) my participants' favorite genres of Chinese popular culture, (2) their proficiency and engagement with popular culture, and (3) long-term effects of this pedagogy. This discussion is followed by the implications of the present research, and directions for the future research.

7.2 Summary of Findings

My findings are organized around the three research questions that guided the study. Chapter 4 answered the first research question about the impact of Chinese popular culture on CAL learners' motivation. I found that adult CAL learners had a rich variety of cognitive and/or emotional experiences in relation to Chinese popular culture. I argue that such complicated experiences cannot easily be found in Mandarin classes; therefore, Chinese popular culture provides unique pleasures for CAL learners. In addition, many learners' motivations for Chinese popular culture complemented their motivations for learning Mandarin. Finally, CAL learners' identity construction was closely linked with their investments in Chinese popular culture. I analyzed their identities and investments from three dimensions: appreciation, identification and participation.

Chapter 5 focused on the second research question regarding CAL learners' language socialization and Chinese popular culture. I found that several CAL learners had some prior understanding of the principles of language socialization. Undoubtedly, their awareness of language socialization benefitted them in acquiring Mandarin from Chinese popular culture.

Moreover, I found that there were three forms of social interactions that mediated learners' language socialization throughout their engagement: (1) learners interacted with media characters, (2) learners observed interactions among characters, and (3) learners interacted with other people about popular culture. Furthermore, multiple modes such as body language, facial expression, voice and gesture in Chinese popular culture helped CAL learners to understand Mandarin in different social contexts. In addition, Chinese popular culture provided a rich corpus of pragmatic contexts, norms and expressions in Mandarin for the learners.

Chapter 6 explored affordances and constraints of this pedagogy, especially as they relate to textbook writers, extracurricular activity planners and Mandarin teachers. My participants reported that their teachers rarely played videos of Chinese TV dramas, movies or reality shows, or discussed Chinese popular culture in classes. Most of my participants were fine with such limited time for playing videos, but they recommended that their teachers spend more time in facilitating class discussions of popular cultural phenomena. They also found the self-learning website *FluentU* to be helpful. Yet, their favorite form of utilizing Chinese popular culture was one-on-one socialization with their Chinese peers. With regards to constraints, propaganda in Chinese popular culture, learner's heritage identity, along with informal and fragmented language usage, could add complicated factors to learners' language socialization.

7.3   Discussion of Findings

I will discuss three major findings—and problems—in this section. Firstly, martial arts movies and a reality show were found to be preferred genres of Chinese popular culture among my participants. Secondly, low-proficiency learners could also benefit from this pedagogy because popular culture helped to arouse their interests and sustain their motivations for learning

Mandarin. In addition, digital resources greatly assisted them to learn from popular culture.

Finally, long-term engagement with Chinese popular culture probably would be beneficial for

learners' longer-term acquisition of and socialization in Mandarin.

7.3.1   Participants' Favorite Genre of Chinese Popular Culture

In the first interviews, I invited participants to talk about their favorite genre in Chinese

popular culture. Phillis and Julia said that they were interested in Chinese popular music. Julia

played musical instruments, so she spent a lot of time listening to and playing music. Phillis

loved Hong Kong music. In contrast, eight other participants recommended TV shows and

movies to CAL learners, rather than music. Gordon and Victor both explicitly expressed their

objections to using music to learn Mandarin. In the first interview, I asked Victor why he did not

listen to much Chinese popular music. He explained:

> Some lyrics [in music] I don't understand, like I don't know what is being said. It's
> unclear sometimes, it's unclear, or there are sometimes when words are pronounced in
> the wrong way, because for the sake of the song, for the sake of the melody. That
> becomes a little confusing for me…. For sure watching TV shows is much better. (From
> S1)

Among TV shows and movies, my data suggests that Chinese martial arts movies played

a salient role in attracting some adult CAL learners. Kate practiced martial arts (*kung fu*) first,

fell in love with martial arts movies, and then started to learn Mandarin. Gordon planned to visit

Japan, but as soon as he finished watching the martial arts movie *Crouching Tiger, Hidden*

Dragon, he started to look for jobs in China. Thus, this martial arts movie changed his life's

trajectory.

Martial arts movies attracted CAL learners for a couple of reasons. Both Kate and

Gordon mentioned that martial arts movies often involved mythical elements, which were

interesting. Moreover, martial arts is also a physical activity so that people can practice it and meet other martial arts enthusiasts and practitioners during training. Since many martial arts lovers around the world are Chinese descendants, learners can get in touch with their local Chinese communities through these associations. Kate made friends with other Chinese people in martial arts training, who later socialized her into the Chinese culture.

Another genre preferred by my participants was reality TV shows. Kate, Julia and Lindsay told me in the second interviews that they were interesting, as well as beneficial for learning Mandarin. This genre was different from martial arts movies because I recommended the reality show *Where Are We Going, Dad?* to them, whereas martial arts movies were favored by Kate and Gordon *before* participating in this study. As noted in Chapter 3 and Appendix D, I suggested the show to all participants by the end of the first interviews.

Lindsay was a heritage learner from Taiwan. In the first interview, she said that she was not very interested in popular culture, whether it was in Mandarin or in English. However, for this study, she watched the show *Where Are We Going, Dad?*, and found it interesting. She explained in the second interview that "it was funny." For example, she described that she saw "the dads trying to think of what to do to accomplish the task or to climb down the valley given that they brought too much stuff", and "little kids aren't used to the wild [environment]." She said that she would finish the whole season after this study, and this show was also good for improving her Mandarin, because it exposed her to other Chinese accents (i.e., varieties of Mandarin from different regions). She told me that she only listened to Taiwanese Mandarin before this study (when she talked with family members). However, since the fathers in the show

took their children to rural areas of China and talked to residents from local communities, Lindsay said she was able to listen to other accents of Mandarin.

Kate also found the same reality show beneficial for her Mandarin learning. She found that the Chinese children spoke Mandarin more slowly and clearly than adults. She also thought that children were more genuine than adults, which made the reality show more "real" for her. Additionally, topics in the reality show were simple with frequent repetition. For example, one child was looking for a rooster and kept saying *gongji* (rooster) throughout one episode. After watching that episode, Kate said she would not forget the Mandarin word *gongji* for the rest of her life.

7.3.2   Learners' Proficiency, Digital Resources and this Pedagogy

The existing literature on popular culture and additional language learning has mainly focused on the intermediate to advanced learners (e.g., Bueno, 2009; Choi & Yi, 2012). Few studies have investigated beginners' engagement with popular culture in the target language. Admittedly, the Mandarin proficiency of learners in this study impacted their comprehension of Chinese popular culture. Yet, it did not mean that CAL beginners are not willing to proactively make efforts. In spite of her low proficiency, Kate finished 76 episodes of *The Legend of Zhen Huan* with her Chinese friend within one year. This example suggests that CAL beginners can be very persistent with Chinese popular culture as long as they find interesting content, and obtain continual peer socialization.

More importantly, Kate's case implied that Chinese popular culture could also benefit beginners in terms of their acquisition of Mandarin. Firstly, contact with Chinese popular culture consolidated their interests in learning Mandarin, and empowered their identity formation. Kate

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felt that being able to recognize Jackie Chan in her textbook and introducing him to other CAL classmates allowed her to display a different identity that distinguished her from other beginners: an expert and practitioner of Chinese popular culture. This identity in turn motivated her to invest more time in Chinese language and culture.

Secondly, it is particularly noteworthy that recent developments in digital resources have greatly facilitated learning an additional language through popular culture for all levels of learners, including beginners. For example, the self-learning website *FluentU* recommends videos to learners based on their levels of proficiency. When learners encounter a new word, they just click on it and its English translations and usage immediately appear. Generally, it is hard for beginners to enjoy popular culture in the target language because they encounter many more unknown words and grammar than intermediate and advanced learners. Yet, *FluentU* saves a lot of time for beginners. Another website *ChinesePod,* which also has an app, provides individualized, mobile, and interactive ways of learning Mandarin through popular culture (Duff et al., 2013). It records each learner's errors in exercises so that individual profiles are established. They could also have access to peer socialization through the online community of thousands of other users. Thus, with these resources, learners' proficiency becomes a less important factor for practicing this pedagogy, except that both *FluentU* and *ChinesePod* require paid subscriptions.

7.3.3   Long-Term Effects on Learners' Language Socialization

One of the limitations of this study is that it lacks direct, observational evidence to illustrate the effects of CAL learners' long-term engagement with Chinese popular culture. My participants reflected on their previous experiences as well as their experiences during the two-

week popular culture engagement that was part of Step 2 of this research design. It is hard for me

to predict the long-term effects on their Mandarin learning trajectories based on this data.

However, I noticed that Victor's experiences of five to six years of engagement with Korean

popular culture could shed light on how such engagement could impact learners' additional

language acquisition during a long period.

Victor had neither formally learned Korean nor had an explicit goal of learning the

language during his engagement with Korean shows. Therefore, he did not even consider himself

a beginning learner of Korean. However, in the first interview, when I asked about his preference

of popular culture in general, he reported that he loved Korean popular culture, and now he was

able to understand some daily conversations in Korean after five to six years of engagement with

Korean entertainment. In the second interview, I asked him: "If you don't have an explicit goal

of learning the language, what would the results be?" He explained:

> I watch Korean shows without the intention of learning the language. The big difference
> is I would never stop [the Korean shows]. I would never pause and I will never try to
> understand how things have been structured. …There will be I keep hearing this word
> and I keep hearing this subtitle its translation in English: "this must mean this." And so if
> I go to like a Korean family, surprisingly I understand what they're saying. It was a shock
> to me actually I understood what they were saying like almost 80%. (From S3)

After that, he continued to tell me the whole story about his visit to a Korean friend's home.

There he overheard the conversation between his friend and her mother, and he was able to

understand 80% of it. Victor's reported development in Korean language implied that there was

the possibility to improve one's additional language implicitly, even if that person did not pay

attention to the language during their engagement with popular culture. This observation is

supported by Ellis (2002), according to the current language acquisition theory. Victor also

implied that his acquisition of Mandarin was more effective than Korean because he paused videos and made efforts to understand sentence structures during his engagement with Chinese popular culture. Without an explicit goal to learn Korean, his Korean acquisition was not developed in all aspects. He only developed the ability to understand the Korean language, not necessarily speak it.

Victor's experiences with Korean language and popular culture illustrate the positive prospects of this pedagogy in the long run. Without having the explicit goal to learn Korean, he was nevertheless socialized into the Korean language after several years. In addition, his experience also supports my argument that language learners' observation of other people's interactions in popular culture can significantly contribute to their language socialization process. In Victor's case, his Korean language acquisition primarily depended on observation, and he did not have much opportunities (according to him) to practice Korean language during these five to six years. Yet, his language socialization into and through Korean demonstrated obvious progress. Therefore, I believe that CAL learners can improve their Mandarin more efficiently if they pay attention to, and make efforts to understand the meaning-making process of the language during their long-term engagement with these media.

With regards to CAL learners' socialization into Chinese language and culture after years of engagement, cultivation theory in media studies can help foresee some possibilities. As discussed previously, this theory found that people's perceptions could be cultivated or primed by the TV programs that they watched, especially after they engaged with them intensively over a long period (e.g., Gerbner et al., 2002). According to this theory, it is possible that CAL learners become able to understand some Chinese values, worldviews and conventions

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cumulatively if they engage with Chinese popular culture longitudinally. Furthermore, it is also unfortunately likely that they would develop stereotyping perceptions about Chinese people and society due to the stereotypes in Chinese popular culture.

However, in my study, most participants showed how they exercised their agency and critical media literacies while comparing social realities in Greater China Region, and their representations in Chinese popular culture. For example, Kate said that Chinese parents disciplined their children more in real life than those fathers in the reality show did. She reached this conclusion after observing many parent-children interactions in Beijing. Gordon said that there were many wealthy people depicted in Taiwan's popular culture, but he knew that ordinary people's lives were different since he had lived there for around five years. Phillis added that Hong Kong's streets were not as clean as they seemed to be in the movies. She said that it was probably because movie directors wanted to present a better image of Hong Kong. John found that young couples behaved dramatically in Taiwanese romance dramas, and he did not see such behaviors in public in Taiwan.

In short, long-term engagement with Chinese popular culture is very likely to be beneficial for Mandarin acquisition, especially if CAL learners have explicit motivations for learning Mandarin. Long-term engagement is also likely to have cultivation effects on CAL learners, but their agency moderates how and to what extent they will be socialized into Chinese culture.

7.4   Implications

In this section, I will discuss both theoretical and pedagogical implications of my study.

7.4.1   Theoretical Implications

This study demonstrates the benefits of combining lenses and findings from other disciplines with the framework of language socialization. Combining research from media studies situates my study of CAL learners' language socialization in specific contexts where language learners engage with media and become audience members as well. For example, identification theory in entertainment psychology enabled me to discover that language socialization happened when Gordon identified with the TV host Cai Kangyong. This means that other disciplines can equip researchers with new lenses, theories, and tools by means of which to study language socialization, which in the past has mainly involved ethnographic observation and discourse analysis (e.g., Duranti, Ochs, & Schieffelin, 2011) or as in this study and some others, through interviews primarily (Duff & Talmy, 2011).

In my analysis, I also specified learners' identities in terms of these three dimensions: appreciation, identification and participation. The multiple dimensions of CAL learners' identity construction suggest that enjoying popular culture to learn Mandarin is an individualized and contextualized experience. In this sense, language socialization facilitators, including Mandarin teachers, extracurricular activity planners, and textbook writers, should respect learners' will instead of imposing popular culture content on them.

7.4.2   Pedagogical Implications

One of the vital conditions for the success of this pedagogy is that learners should have a genuine interest in the Chinese popular culture that they engage with, and they should have an explicit goal to learn Mandarin through their engagement. Only then can one or more of the following learning conditions exist (and ideally as many of these as possible): CAL learners

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appreciate Chinese popular culture, they make personal connections with certain media characters, and/or they participate in discussions of it, possibly involving deeper analysis and critiques of the works as well. In this way, their motivation for learning Mandarin might be sustained. With the explicit goal of learning Mandarin, furthermore, CAL learners are likely to pay attention to vocabulary, grammar and pragmatics during their engagement, seek help from Chinese peers, and take notes of their findings. When their motivations for Chinese popular culture and motivations for learning Mandarin complement each other, CAL learners are more likely to benefit from this pedagogy.

As the saying goes, one man's meat can be another man's poison. My study shows that preference for and engagement with popular culture was an agentive choice. My participants showed strong interests in martial arts movies and reality shows. However, it would be better if teachers, activity planners and textbook writers could get to know their students, participants or potential readers personally, and recommend suitable Chinese popular culture based on their interests. For example, these facilitators can conduct a survey to learn about their target CAL learners' preferences for popular culture, as Duff (2002) suggested. In addition, teachers or activity planners could discuss with learners their favorite popular culture genres and topics. However, teachers and facilitators should be cautious about potential propaganda contents in Chinese popular culture, which might lead to learners' discomfort or alienation.

Moreover, Mandarin teachers could also assign more class time to facilitate discussions about Chinese popular culture. Moreover, they could ask students to engage closely and critically with Chinese popular culture as assignments after class. Extracurricular activity planners could help team up one-on-one tandem language learning partners between a CAL learner and a

Chinese peer, and provide popular culture resources to them. Textbook writers could consider building up a corresponding website for textbooks, in which learners could have access to resources of Chinese popular culture and participate in discussing interesting topics in Mandarin.

7.5   Limitations of the Study

As a qualitative interview-based study with just ten participants, findings of this research can hardly be generalized to a broader category of learners of Chinese, or other languages in other contexts. Participants' preferences for specific genres and topics in Chinese popular culture could be investigated further by other qualitative, exploratory studies such as this one, with confirmatory qualitative studies, or with quantitative studies with a much larger sample. This study, furthermore, does not explicitly distinguish and compare heritage and non-heritage learners' experiences and popular culture preferences even though this study included five participants representing each background. However, these two different identities play a key role in learners' popular culture engagement and language socialization process. For example, all heritage learners in my study reported that they had access to Chinese community and popular culture resources. In contrast, Kate, a non-heritage learner, started to get in touch with a local Chinese community when she had martial arts training as a teenager. There, she began to seek Chinese popular culture because her Chinese friends recommended it to her. Dennis reported that he did not know where to find Chinese popular culture since he had not been to China and had few Chinese friends in his social networks.

Another limitation is that this study is purely based on learners' self-reflection over a rather short period of time. It cannot provide accurate data about how learners' Mandarin improved as a result or about how they might sustain their interest in and engagement with the

pop culture genres chosen. However, this pedagogy represents an extensive rather than intensive method (e.g., learning in Mandarin classes). Therefore, its effects are more likely to appear after learners' long-term engagement. Thus, longitudinal studies are necessary to overcome this limitation, since language socialization in general aims to understand developmental processes and outcomes.

A third limitation is that my data was solely collected from CAL learners, and lacks insights from other practitioners such as Mandarin teachers, extracurricular activity planners and textbook writers. All these three types of people aim to provide quality Mandarin education to CAL learners; thus, how learners expect them to teach, facilitate or write is meaningful. For future research, it would also be insightful to invite these people to discuss the affordances and constraints that they are likely to face while carrying out this pedagogy in practice.

7.6   Directions for Future Research

One direction for future research would be to recruit a larger sample of participants and a much larger pool of media resources, and compare the differences between heritage and non-heritage learners in terms of Chinese popular culture engagement and Mandarin acquisition.

Second, longitudinal, in-depth studies with a small number of focal cases would be another direction of this study. It would be particularly interesting if researchers also conducted proficiency tests (or even more focused tests related, for example, to ASPs) with participants before, during, and after their long-term engagement with popular culture. These tests could provide empirical evidence about the benefits of this pedagogy for learners' Mandarin acquisition. In addition, recorded observations of learners' peer socialization experiences in

connection with popular culture with more proficient friends would better illuminate how language socialization is mediated and taken up during this process.

Finally, it would be interesting if future research could incorporate insights from Mandarin teachers, extracurricular activity planners, textbook writers and CAL learners. These are all stakeholders of this pedagogy. Their actual experiences would refine both the theory and application of this pedagogy.

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Sage

Appendices

Appendix A CEFR Table

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Self-Assessment Grid

		A1	**A2**	**B1**	**B2**	**C1**	**C2**
U N D E R S T A N D I N G	**Listening**	I can understand familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g., very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.
	Reading	I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.	I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables and I can understand short simple personal letters.	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.	I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.	I can understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. I can understand specialised articles and longer technical instructions, even when they do not relate to my field.	I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as manuals, specialised articles and literary works.
S P E A K I N G	**Spoken Interaction**	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g., family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.	I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.	I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.
	Spoken Production	I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.	I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.	I can present a clear, smoothly-flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.

		A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
W R I T I N G	**Writing**	I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.	I can write short, simple notes and messages. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something.	I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.	I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.	I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues. I can select a style appropriate to the reader in mind.	I can write clear, smoothly-flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works.

Source: Council of Europe, retrieved from http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf

Appendix B Recruitment Letter

UBC a place of mind
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Faculty of Education

Department of Language & Literacy Education

2125 Main Mall

Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4

Recruitment Letter

Engagements with Chinese Popular Culture in Adult Chinese Language Learning and Socialization

Hello,

My name is Sumin Fang, an MA student in the Department of Language and Literacy Education. My MA thesis aims to study the role Chinese popular culture plays for learners who study Mandarin as an additional language. This study will be supervised by the Principal Investigator, Dr. Patricia Duff, Department of Language and Literacy Education.

Participants in this study should not be native speakers of Mandarin. Participants should be over 19 years old who have had experience using or engaging with Chinese popular culture to learn Mandarin. In this study, Chinese popular culture include popular movies, TV dramas, music, video games, animation, graphic novels and so on in the Mandarin,

Cantonese or other Chinese dialects, produced in the mainland of China, or in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and other areas of the Chinese diaspora.

If you choose to participant in this study, you will be asked to devote approximately three hours to be interviewed and fill in a form and another two hours to engage with Chinese popular culture in your own free time. More specifically, you will have the first individual interview for around one hour. Then you will spend at least two hours in total during a two-week period engaging with Chinese popular culture at your convenience and you will note your popular culture activities in a simple form (less than one hour in total for this purpose). The content of Chinese popular culture that you use can be either chosen by you or suggested by the researcher, who is a Mandarin teacher as well. After returning your form to the researcher, you will have the second individual interview for one hour, based on the information provided in your form. Both interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. Interviews can be conducted either in English or Mandarin, decided by the individual participant.

To thank you for your time, you will receive a $20 gift card to the UBC Bookstore at the end of the first interview. After filling out the form and having the second interview, you will receive another $20 gift card. In addition to the gift cards, the researcher can provide one-hour individual tutoring of Mandarin for free after you complete two interviews and the form. During the tutorial, you will be offered resources and suggestions for using Chinese popular culture for language learning purposes, or the researcher can help with

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your own questions. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

If you are interested in participating in this study and feel that you meet the criteria, please contact Sumin Fang (xxxx; contact information deleted for the published thesis).

Sincerely,

Sumin Fang

Appendix C Consent Form

Department of Language & Literacy Education

2125 Main Mall

Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4

Consent Form

Engagements with Chinese Popular Culture in Adult Chinese Language Learning and Socialization

Investigators

Principal Investigator: Dr. Patricia Duff,

Department of Language and Literacy Education, UBC

(Contact information is intentionally deleted here for the published thesis)

Co-investigator: Sumin Fang

Department of Language and Literacy Education, UBC

This study is undertaken in fulfillment of Sumin Fang's MA thesis research in Modern Language Education.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate adult Chinese as an Additional Language learners' experiences with Chinese popular culture and Mandarin learning.

Study Procedures

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to devote approximately three hours to be interviewed and fill in a form and another two hours to engage with Chinese popular culture in your own free time. More specifically, you will have the first individual interview for around one hour. Then you will spend at least two hours in total during a two-week period engaging with Chinese popular culture at your convenience and you will note your popular culture activities on a simple form (less than one hour in total for this purpose). The content of Chinese popular culture that you use can be either chosen by you or suggested by the researcher, who is a Mandarin teacher as well. After returning your form to the researcher, you will have the second individual interview for one hour, based on the information provided in your form. Both interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. Interviews can be conducted either in English or Mandarin, decided by the individual participant.

Potential Risks

There are no significant risks to participating in this study although participants may initially feel awkward discussing their Chinese learning practices with a researcher.

Potential Benefits

Participation in this study will give you the opportunity to reflect on your experiences of learning Mandarin. In addition, the researcher will provide one-hour of (optional) individual tutoring in Mandarin for free after you complete two interviews and the form. During the tutorial, you will be offered resources and suggestions for using Chinese popular culture for language learning purposes, or the researcher can help with your own questions.

Confidentiality

If you choose to participate in this study, you identity and privacy will be protected by these measures: (a) all identities will be protected by using pseudonyms, (b) interview data will be kept in a pass-word protected computer, and (c) the data will only be accessible to the supervisor Dr. Duff and Sumin and will be locked in their respective offices.

Remuneration

To thank you for your time, you will receive a $20 gift card to the UBC Bookstore by the end of the first interview. When finishing filling in the form and having the second interview, you will receive another $20 gift card. In addition, when the two interviews and the form are completed, you can have one hour of (optional) individual-tutoring at your convenience.

Contact for information about the study

Should you have any questions regarding this study, feel free to contact Sumin Fang.

(Contact information is deleted in this published version.)

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects

If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services.

(Contact information has been deleted here.)

Consent

Your participation in this study is fully voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

Your signature on the next page indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature and indication of willingness to participate indicate that you consent to participate in this study.

FOR PARTICIPANTS TO COMPLETE

 I consent / I do not consent (circle one) to take part in two interviews about my views

and experiences of engagement with Chinese popular culture for learning Mandarin and

to fill in a form to note my engagement for a two-week period.

_____

Your Signature (and email address for follow up)   Date

_____

Your Printed Name

(PARTICIPANTS: PLEASE KEEP THIS COPY FOR YOUR RECORDS)

FOR PARTICIPANTS TO COMPLETE

I consent / I do not consent (circle one) to take part in two interviews about my views and

experiences of engagement with Chinese popular culture for learning Mandarin and to fill

in a form to note my engagement for a two-week period.

_____

Your Signature (and email address for follow up)   Date

_____

Your Printed Name

(RESEARCHER'S COPY)

Appendix D Interview Protocols

Protocols for Two Interviews

Interview 1

1. How long have you been learning Mandarin?
2. Where, when and why did you start to learn it?
3. Are you still learning Mandarin actively (or even passively)? If yes, how and why do you engage in Mandarin learning/use? If not, when and why did you stop engaging actively with Mandarin learning/use?
4. How would you assess your Mandarin proficiency (e.g., using the CEFR scales of what you "CAN DO" in Mandarin)? (CEFR self-assessment grid is available at http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf)
5. What are your expected goals of learning Mandarin? For what purposes are you learning it? What kind of identity do you have as a speaker or learner (or user) of Mandarin?
6. What are the factors that have contributed to your learning of Mandarin? What are the factors that have hindered your learning of Mandarin? What kind of ups and downs have you had in the process?
7. What is your definition of popular culture? Generally, what role does it play in your daily life in English or other languages?
8. What genres and themes of popular culture do you enjoy in your native-language culture? Can you give me some examples? How do you usually enjoy them (watch/ listen/read/share with friends/ participate in creative reproduction/…)?
9. Do you seek out forms of Chinese popular culture in your spare time, and if so, which ones and why?
10. What genres and themes of the Chinese popular culture do you like most? Can you give me some examples? How often do you enjoy them? How do you access them? How do you usually enjoy them (watch/listen/read/share with friends/ participate in creative reproduction/…)? Have your interests in Chinese popular culture changed over time and if so how and why?
11. Is there any Chinese popular culture included in your formal Mandarin classes or textbooks? Do you think it is necessary or desirable to incorporate aspects of Chinese popular culture in Mandarin classes, textbooks or extracurricular activities? What are the pros and cons of such incorporation?
12. If you were invited to give advice to Mandarin teachers, textbook writers and extracurricular activity planners in terms of incorporating the Chinese popular culture into Mandarin teaching and learning, what genres do you recommend? Why? There are some examples below, but your suggestions can go beyond these options. On the other

hand, they belong to up-to-date popular culture in China. If you are interested, you are welcome for exploring some of them and give me your feedback in two weeks.

(a) Chinese popular movie: Lost in Thailand *(Tai Jiong)*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTTMQrGG1JU

(b) Chinese popular music: The Hottest Ethnic Trend (*Zui Xuan Min Zu Feng*), by

Phoenix Legend

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHEOfXOqp1Y

(c) Chinese popular reality TV show: Where Are We Going, Dad? (*Baba Qu Na'er*)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGVGcNmTsvA

(d) Chinese popular Internet novel: The Legend of *Zhen Huan* (*Zhen Huan Zhuan*)

http://book.kanunu.org/book/3819/

(e) Website for learning Mandarin through popular culture:

http://www.fluentu.com/

Interview 2

1. When you encounter unknown vocabulary, grammar or expressions in the Chinese popular culture texts, how do you deal with them (let them go/read or listen repeatedly/discuss with Chinese friends/ look up in the dictionary/ ask questions in online forums/...)? Can you give me one specific example?
2. When you encounter different cultural references, values, perceptions and customs in Chinese popular culture, how do you deal with them or react (ignore them / discuss with Chinese friends/ discuss with Canadian peers/ look up in related literature/ ask questions in online forums/ …)? Can you give me one specific example? An example could be like this: when I watched the Chinese emperor choosing his prospective wives in Episode 2 of the TV Drama *Zhenhuan Zhuan*, I did not understand why a servant suddenly dumped tea water onto a young lady. I asked my Chinese friend and she told me that the servant was to test if the lady could behave appropriately in front of the emperor on an unexpected occasion. I found it very interesting and then wrote something about it in my blog.
3. What are some specific and interesting things in terms of language and contemporary culture that you paid attention to during your engagement with Chinese popular culture in these two weeks? What did you learn from them?

4. What are some difficulties that prevent you from enjoying or learning from Chinese popular culture? What corresponding strategies do you suggest for other CAL learners?
5. When you enjoy the Chinese popular culture, do you have an explicit goal of improving your Mandarin and/or getting to know about the Chinese culture? After engaging with the Chinese popular culture, do you sense any progress in your Mandarin proficiency and understanding of the Chinese culture? Can you give an example when you really felt you learned something useful in terms of language, behavior, culture, etc.?
6. Have you been to China? If yes, are the social realities that you encountered in China the same as or similar to what you learn from the Chinese popular culture? If not, do you believe the representations of China and Chinese culture in Chinese popular culture are accurate? What are some other sources for you to know about China and the Chinese culture?
7. Compared to your native (or perhaps English-medium) popular culture, what are some different characteristics of Chinese popular culture you have noticed? How do they impact your Chinese-learning motivation and practices?
8. What insights or experiences can Chinese pop culture provide a language learner that other course-related tools and materials such as dictionaries, textbooks, in-class discussions, etc. cannot?

Self-Report Form for Noting the Usage of Chinese Popular Culture

Date	What Chinese popular culture?	How long did you engage with this (in minutes /hours)?	With whom (if not alone)?	What are some interesting or difficult language usage that you notice in the popular culture?	How do you use Chinese popular culture? What kinds of tools do you use(if any) to help you understand it ?(see notes at the end of the form)	What are some interesting things that you notice about Chinese culture in the popular culture contents?
Example: Nov 19, 2014	The film *Lost in Thailand*	Around 2 hours	I watched it with my Chinese friend at my home.	First, I find the title of the film is very interesting. What does "*jiong*" mean? I have never heard of this word in my Mandarin classes or learnt this word in my textbooks. Second, in the first five minutes, one of the protagonist said "*heike hei dao dizhi le ba*" (Has the hacker got the address). Here the word "*hei*", which usually means black, are used as a verb here to refer to hacking into computer systems. This is impressive.	When I came across difficult words or phrases, I stopped playing the film and asked my Chinese friend immediately. For example, my friend told me that "*jiong*" means embarrassed experiences. After watching this film, I searched the film title in *Weibo* (the Chinese version of Twitter), and read Chinese people's comments about this film. In addition, I released a short comment about this film in *Weibo*. I feel that this film talks about how people from different social class in China interact with each other.	I find that Chinese Lunar New Year is a big culture event in China. It seems everyone in the movie wants to arrive home before the first day of the new year and to gather together with their family.

Date	What Chinese popular culture?	How long did you engage with this (in minutes /hours)?	With whom (if not alone)?	What are some interesting or difficult language usage that you notice in the popular culture?	How do you use Chinese popular culture? What kinds of tools do you use(if any) to help you understand it ?(see notes at the end of the form)	What are some interesting things that you notice about Chinese culture in the popular culture contents?

*How do you use Chinese popular culture? Do you read/listen/watch/ discuss with Chinese friends/ discuss with Canadian friends/ ask your Chinese teacher/look up in the dictionary or literature/ ask questions in online forums/write blogs or twitter about it/recommend to other friends.

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