

**Assembling the Puzzle: An Investigation of
Asian Adolescent Students' Recreational Reading Habits**

by

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Abstract

My belief in the value of recreational reading for pleasure prompted this study which was designed to understand the educational and cultural background of Asian adolescent students and make recommendations so that we can ensure that all students in our English classrooms are equipped with the skills and motivation to read for pleasure and thus are able to participate fully in class regardless of their previous educational experience.

In the study I investigated the recreational reading habits of Asian adolescents in two similar urban schools in Vancouver to discover why Asian adolescents were not reading recreationally in English. I examined the participants recollections of their experiences with books and story from birth to preschool, in kindergarten and elementary school in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Communist China.

I used interviews to gather data from 22 Asian adolescents, 5 English as a second language (ESL) adults, 8 teachers of ESL and 100 recently arrived ESL parents in the Vancouver area.

Results indicated that many of the students perceived reading only as a means of improving their English skills and increasing their knowledge base. Adolescents coming to Canada face many pressures

to learn English quickly and graduate "on time." Their experiences with literature in their home country were very different from the expectations of Vancouver schools and the expectations of the home culture and parents expect adolescents to study hard.

I conclude with recommendations to all groups involved in education to encourage Asian adolescent students of ESL background to read recreationally in English.

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Preface

On the desk in front of me is the puzzle box which my family took on vacation this summer. Our purpose for going on a family vacation is to enjoy each other's company while enjoying the outdoors. However, the weather does not always cooperate with our plans, so we have developed some indoor vacation traditions. A new jigsaw puzzle for each trip is one of those traditions. On the first poor weather day the puzzle is opened, the pieces turned right side up and the assembling begins. We have developed our own procedure which may or may not be different or unique to that of other "puzzlers" but works well for our purposes. First, we assemble the border, then sort the colours, and finally plan our method of attack. The only constraint on the assembling is the length of the vacation. Therefore, we may work together for an hour, individually for ten or fifteen minutes, a visitor with a fresh eye may place a few pieces or no-one may touch the puzzle for several days if the weather is fine, allowing time for reflection. We may work on the puzzle standing, sitting or circling, for often a new perspective is beneficial. Always at hand is the puzzle lid, to remind us of our goal.

The puzzle box is a symbol of the problem I investigated in this research project. Defining the problem for the research established the border of the puzzle, I was aware there was more picture beyond the borders of the physical reproduction of the puzzle lid. In the same way, I was aware that there were other influences and factors affecting the situation I was investigating, which were beyond the scope of the project. Part of the challenge of the project was discovering the areas of investigation which become part of the overall picture and grouping information and impressions to become a cohesive whole, then identifying themes which were the substance of the picture. As with a puzzle there were pieces of information that did not seem to fit the picture at all. With time for reflection or a new perspective, those pieces became key pieces in an unexpected part of the picture.

The picture on the box of the puzzle is a frozen moment in time. The problem I investigated in this research project was also a unique moment in educational time. Part of the picture was the story of the individuals I interviewed and part of it was my own story. This report on my investigation of the problem is the assembling of the puzzle.

Chapter I

Introduction: Pieces of the Puzzle

For we dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate, and love by narrative. In order really to live, we make up stories about ourselves and others, about the personal as well as the social past and future. (Hardy, 1977, p.13)

This quotation sums up an important part of my life and beliefs. "Story" has always been a dominant force in my life. My earliest memories are of sitting on my father's lap listening to his stories of homesteading in Alberta, living through the dust storms of the Depression, and traveling around North America. Through his stories, his parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, though deceased, became real people to me and part of who I am.

In school when I was taught to decode words on a page, I discovered that those words held meaning and that they opened

innumerable opportunities for story. I was introduced to the lives and experiences of other people through the stories I read. My parents often complained that when I was reading, I was so involved in the story that I would not respond to their calls or questions. I was a reader! Reading also focused the direction of my career. I became a school librarian and spent a good portion of the last twenty years encouraging adolescents to read recreationally, to enjoy "story".

In my personal life, as a mother of two adolescent sons, I have from their birth exposed them to stories and books and observed with delight their different reactions and different preferences to "story" and reading. I have watched closely the use of "story" in their education, from pre-school through high school, as narrative developed to novel study and has evolved to meaning making.

In my family all reading is for pleasure. It may be an escapist novel read before bed, a novel for English class or a non-fiction book which is on a subject of interest. In our home we consider reading done for a course, usually from a textbook, to be studying. Reading a chapter in a Chemistry textbook to learn the content for the purpose of a test, is studying. Academic achievement is valued in my home, but recreational reading is also valued. It is not unusual to see the entire

family in the living room reading, or to come upon books "in progress" throughout the house. We talk with each other about what we are reading, we pass reading material around, and we give each other books as gifts.

I am certainly aware, considering my personal interest in reading, my career, and the emphasis we place on reading in our home, that perhaps our situation is not typical. However, as both an insider and outsider to education, I am aware of the focus throughout the curriculum, kindergarten to grade twelve, on literature. In the community, it is obvious that there is support for the public library and its programs, and for the variety of bookstores in the marketplace. From my experiences and observations, I feel it is safe to say that our North American society values reading for pleasure.

I believe that narrative or story is inherent in each individual , as Wrightson (1990) says,

....for story is rooted in the need of every one of us: children and adults, readers and writers, Indonesians, and Americans and Chinese and New Zealanders, the whole of the family. (p. 170)

With encouragement and nurturing, story develops into oral communication often identified as myths in a culture which has a

strong oral tradition and further develops into written form.

Wrightson (1990) continues in her article,

Stories, like trade routes, arise out of human need. They're rooted in the need to tell what is moving in the mind, to explain and pass on thought. They live and spread only if they succeed in doing it, if they articulate something we can recognize, This is true of those that tumble in their thousands from the generous presses of the world, consuming forests; stories that can be kept on the shelf and easily passed from hand to hand. It is even more true of stories that must be spoken from mind to mind and remembered and retold as if they were newly written every time. (p. 165)

Exposure to storytelling nurtures narrative in a child and helps develop the skills necessary for the appreciation of written literature.

In her introduction, Steele (1995) asserts,

As teachers and librarians, we strive to offer students a rich experience in literature and, in this case, the novel. Our goal is to inspire students to become lifelong readers and to recognize reading as part of the fabric of life. (p. 1)

The objectives of reading literacy put forward by the 1992 National Assessment of Education Progress, which educators wish to encourage in our students, describe what good readers do as reported in Rubin, (1993).

1. They exhibit positive reading habits and value reading.
2. They can read with enough fluency that they can attend to the meaning of what they are reading rather than focusing all their attention on figuring out words.
3. They form an understanding by using what they already know and interact actively with the text; they extend, elaborate and critically judge the meaning of what they read.
4. They plan, manage, and check the progress of their reading and use effective strategies to aid understanding. (p. 8)

I also believe this development of ability to appreciate literature exists on a continuum which can vary in length of time.

It was with growing concern that I noticed in my home school a decline in the amount of recreational reading occurring in my school library. Also, more and more frequently students in the senior English classes were asking for books that would give the meaning of a poem or story. Parents began to express more often their belief that fiction

in the classroom was a waste of their students' time and fiction books in the school library a waste of taxpayers money. It was this concern that triggered this research which started as an informal study about two years ago.

Background of the Study

I examined many possible factors that could account for the perceived shift away from recreational reading in my home school. The curriculum, the staff, the stated philosophy of the school had remained the same, but over the last seven years, the student demographics had changed dramatically. English as a Second Language (ESL) classes had grown from no classes to ten classes, and Asian students had increased to 80 percent of the student population (Eric Hamber, 1994). Asian parents had formed an Asian Parents Consultative Committee separate from the existing Parent Consultative Committee, with meetings held in the Mandarin and/or Cantonese language. Enrollment in the senior Sciences, Computer Studies and Maths had increased to the degree that all three subject areas offered early morning classes at 7:00 to accommodate the demand. The subject areas of Art, Music, Drama, Home Economics, and Technology had

declined to the point where some areas had ceased to exist and others offered only one multi-level course.

To check my perception of the problem I undertook two brief investigations, one with teachers and one with students. Six "regular" English teachers permitted me to visit their classrooms to observe a lesson, then graciously spent time with me discussing my observations. All six concurred that their Asian students were less willing than other students to participate in class discussions around literature and were less able to respond personally to literature.

A teacher of two "regular" English nine classes (with 80 percent of the students Asian, of ESL background) allowed me to conduct a research project with her students to explore the students' attitude to reading. Of the 49 students responding, six students said reading could be fun. A theme identified throughout the responses was reading "improves my learning, I learn information from reading."

In discussion with staff from all subject areas including ESL, there seemed to exist the perception that ESL students who had been through the ESL program and were in regular classes, would do well in Sciences, Maths, and Computer Studies, would rarely take History,

Geography, and English Literature, and would attain only moderate success in the regular English classes.

A check of the circulation records of my library over a period of ten years indicated that there had been an increase in overall circulation from year to year which corresponded to the increase in library programs offered. However, there had been a definite decrease in fiction circulation over the last seven years, even though the library staff had aggressively promoted recreational reading through curriculum programs, booktalking, author visits, cooperative teaching, contests, and displays.

After a careful examination of many factors there seemed to be on the one hand, a connection between the increase in Asian students with ESL background and an increased demand for specific courses, and, on the other hand, a decrease in participation in discussions in English classrooms, decreased expectations for student success in English courses and a decrease in recreational reading. This research project focused on the decrease in recreational reading, acknowledging that the other concerns mentioned may be part of the larger picture and worthy of further study.

Based on my experience and observation as a teacher-librarian and as a mother, I believe literature is important in the development of a well rounded individual. This belief is reflected in Thomson's (1987) suggestions that the purpose of bringing quality literature to students is an attempt

to develop a love of reading, extending students' understanding of life and enhancing their personal development, fostering enjoyment and the encouragement of reading interests, insight into human nature and the relationship of language and literature to it. (p. 12-13)

Literature helps provide a grounding in tolerance, fosters an understanding of the human condition and assists individuals to make meaning for their own lives in terms of what they discover through literature. Adolescents are at a period in their lives when they are formulating their outlook on life. They should be testing through literature how they see and understand themselves against the values to which they are exposed. This is supported by Probst (1988), who states that

Literature....should help students make connections between the books and their experience, continually revising their conception of the world and their place in it. (p. 66)

Adolescents from other cultures could use literature to identify accepted behaviors of our society. Machet (1992) in her study found that as each culture has developed its own values, "readers understand, remember, and enjoy their reading more when they possess relevant cultural knowledge" (p. 357), and that "readers are more likely to respond positively to books in which there are characters from their ethnic group or culture" (p. 362). More and more frequently ESL readers are finding characters of their cultural background in literature, young people with situations similar to the ones in which they may see themselves, thus gaining insight and confidence to deal with their own life experiences.

Moreover, reading of literature recreationally is a means to continue language development without formal instruction. According to Krashen (1992),

When second language acquirers read for pleasure, they develop the competence they need to move from the beginning "ordinary

conversational" level to a level where they can use the second language for more demanding purposes, such as the serious study of literature, business, and so on. When they read for pleasure, they can continue to improve in their second language without classes, without teachers, without study, and even without people to converse with. (p. 84)

I have observed over the years that students who speak well, have a good vocabulary, read and write well and have a well developed imagination are the students who read literature recreationally.

The Problem

As an educator seeking to promote recreational reading of literature throughout the curriculum and to encourage students to become life-long readers, I have sadly come to the realization that not all students will become recreational readers. Within the population of our adolescent students there is both great potential for reading and immense variety in interest, ability, maturity and willingness. Also there has developed from the number of students with whom I have interacted over the last twenty years as a teacher-librarian, a profile of students who have been exposed for many years to the use of literature

in the curriculum, to the expectation of response to and engagement with story and who can think critically about literature. However, I have also observed that there seems to be within the student population a subset of Asian students who have progressed through the secondary level ESL program at the site schools and are now in regular English classes who do not fit the profile. As More (1995) maintains, evidence from various cultures suggests that.... the cultural component of learning styles is significant. Or as Gunderson (Ms.) states, the views that reading and writing are integral activities of human beings which produce independent critical learners, a belief "well engrained in North America views [that are] not necessarily shared by individuals from other cultures" (pp. 7 - 8).

The Asian students from an ESL background currently in the senior English courses at the site schools appeared not to have been reading literature recreationally. I believed this was negatively affecting their continuing language acquisition, their ability to take part in classroom discussions, and their potential to perform well in English and other courses in the Humanities in which writing is the main vehicle of communication. I also believed they were missing the pleasure of story, the opportunity to be "inside" the literary experience,

and the acknowledgment of their own personal story as part of a larger human story.

This research study investigated the recreational reading habits of Asian adolescent students of ESL background and the cultural factors which played a part in influencing these students' recreational reading habits.

I feel particularly sensitive to the students with whom I interact who are not born in this country. My husband arrived in Canada as a student and I am very aware of the difficulties he overcame to become successful in the Canadian system. All my grandparents immigrated to Canada from various areas of the world. Even though my family thrives in Canada, the Canadian culture we are grafted to does not influence our initial response to events and situations. It is the cultures we came from that seem to dictate how we react initially to circumstances and how we celebrate at special times in our lives. The longer we live in Canada the more the culture of Canada modifies or influences all aspects of our lives. My children react in a more Canadian way to various situations than I, and so it should be. The ESL background students I interviewed had only been in Canada a few years. I see each of them as very recent "graft" which

.....is forever a foreign body

That bears within it the stigmata of origin

Spliced onto a new land.....

A stranger nourished on foreign sap

Penetrated, impregnated by this new world

Surviving in the alien clay

(Fanning, 1993, p. 79)

A better understanding of their backgrounds would enable teachers to introduce to ESL students the skills necessary for a more successful "graft" to the Canadian school system and eventually to Canadian society.

Research Questions

This research was undertaken to try to gain some insight into the recreational reading habits in English of this group of Asian adolescent students and the cultural factors that have an influence on these students' reading habits. More specifically I was looking for answers to the following questions:

1. What are ESL students' perceptions of recreational reading?
2. What influence does the age at which the students come to

Canada and begin second language acquisition have on whether they read literature for recreation?

3. What impact did the educational model of their home country have on whether ESL students saw reading recreationally as an activity in which to engage?
4. What are the expectations of the home culture and parents to reading recreationally?

Potential Significance of the Study

This investigation of cultural influences on the recreational reading of literature will add to educators' knowledge of how a particular group of students approach story and reading. Abi-Nader

(1990) states,

Through culturally sensitive instruction that reflects the teachers' knowledge of his students' culture, concerns and needs the students gain confidence in the ability to learn, to solve problems, to set goals and to reverse stereotypes which hinder their achievements. (p. 15)

The Chinese ethnic population is one of the dominant ethnic groups at this time in the Vancouver School District. According to a recent publication of the Vancouver School Board (1995), the leading countries of origin of local ESL students are: (1) Hong Kong, (2) Taiwan, (3) Vietnam, (4) China, in a student population where more than half the students speak English as a second language. In a school district serving a multicultural student population of 55,363 students (Vancouver School Board, 1995-b, p. 31), every effort should be made to understand and assist students to meet expectations inherent in our curriculum which have developed from historical and

cultural traditions of English language instruction. If Asian the cultural emphasis on literature and recreational reading of literature has not paralleled Western emphasis, the students will not be equipped to respond to the curriculum in English classes or read literature recreationally.

The Research Site

The two site schools were chosen because they represent a unique real life situation. They provided the opportunity for an in-depth study of a small group of students. I was not concerned with proving or disproving generalizations. Instead I aimed for comparability and transferability of generated findings (Goetz and Le Compte, 1984). I hoped the reader would construct his/her own knowledge from the findings and apply it to another situation or undertake further study. Demographically the schools were very similar in size, economic level, social class, ethnic makeup, educational program and geographical location.

The main criteria for the choice of the two site schools were accessibility and permissibleness (Spradley, 1980). During the course of the research I had the position of teacher-librarian in one school and

vice-principal in the other. As teacher-librarian I had contact with all the students in the school and was not focused only on one subject area; therefore I was constantly alert to trends which appeared in the school and had the opportunity to influence the program of the library. As vice-principal I also had contact with all the students in the school and, as part of the administrative team, I identified needs in the school and developed curricula and programs to address those needs. From my experience as a staff member and from my interaction with the students in both schools, it was apparent that the same problem existed in both schools - the ESL background Asian adolescents were not reading recreationally.

Also, I had the support and permission of the two principals. Both principals encouraged research which would benefit the students, enhance the educational program of the school, and increase the understanding of the teaching staff to meet changing instructional demands.

Definition of Terms

The meanings of the words we use exist within ourselves and are a product of our understanding and experience. It is important that I define the three terms germane to the context of this report. Reading for the purpose of this study, goes beyond the mere decoding of words on a page. It includes a personal response from the individual reader to the message of the writer held within the meanings of the words. The reader steps inside the story and actively constructs a new, unique meaning. Two readers reading the same novel will be able to describe the characters, setting, theme and plot in similar ways, but each will have personal meanings and responses to the story which are, in part, reflective of their individual life experiences. Rubin (1930) adds,

reading for pleasure and enjoyment ... fits some mood,
feeling, or interest. Reading for enjoyment allows readers to
experience many adventures vicariously and to engage in
“something interesting and exciting.” (p. 69)

The recreational reading investigated in this study is reading done in the English language.

Literature includes poetry, prose, plays and comic books, but for this study I have focused on the novel - which is defined as a fictional piece of narrative writing of a considerable length which incorporates the elements of characters, setting, theme and plot. This definition is based on my experience as a librarian working with the Dewey Decimal System and Sears Classification System in which popular, pleasure reading is classified by the author's last name and poetry, prose and plays are catalogued in the 800's.

Culture is the common experiences, attitudes and beliefs of a group of people. In this report that group of people is of an ethnic origin, Chinese, referred to as Asian, from a specific geographical area, historically Mainland China, but now includes, due to political expansion, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Culture continues to evolve. Due to the separation of the three geographical areas and their separate evolution as political entities, this definition will encompass ethnic origin, attitudes and beliefs.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this literature review is my attempt to better understand the students I studied by understanding the history of literature and reading in Chinese culture, the differences in educational focus in their home countries, and their varied reasons for learning English. Also, the review provides the reader with a background in the above, as well as in the history of literature and reading instruction in Western culture and a summary of the reading habits of Western adolescents.

Introduction

The jigsaw puzzle border is assembled on a table and the initial sorting of colours begins. The blues for the sky go to the top of the table, the greens for the trees to one side, the greys for the wall to the other side and the whites for the buildings are placed at the bottom of the table. On closer inspection of the colours it is obvious that within each colour are many different hues that need to be separated. These

shades within the colour represent areas of shadow, texture, and distance which give the picture perspective. Often a piece which should fit with a colour needed to be moved to another area, for example, what appeared to be a blue grey piece that should fit with the puzzle pieces for the sky is really an important part of the wall. So it is with the literature reviewed for this research. The identification of the articles located related to the research and initially were easy to group into the main areas to be discussed; the History of Reading Instruction and Literature in Western Culture, the History of Literature and Reading in Chinese Culture and Chinese Learners of English. On reviewing each area, the first impression was one of generalizations which supported widely held perceptions. Closer examination of an area in the literature brought to light statements which were incongruent with the widely held beliefs and suggestions which generated questions resulting in further research and new perceptions.

This sorting also resulted in clarification of terms. The initial understanding of "Chinese" referred to the residents of mainland China. Further research refines this understanding to include different periods of time within a historical framework and to

geographical locations which include mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. "Western" culture referred to in this report began in Great Britain, but now focuses on North America.

In this report, culture is defined in the broadest sense of the word. In Webster's it refers to "customary beliefs, social forms and material traits of a racial, religious or social group".... "the act of developing the intellectual and moral faculties especially by education"... and "the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations."

The definition also recognizes that there exists more than one culture within a society. In Walder & Soltis (1992), it is proposed that Western civilization supported two cultures - a high culture of the educated upper class, and a folk culture based on oral traditions. This idea of multiple cultures coexisting is supported by popular cultures we are aware of today. We talk of "youth culture," "academic culture," "sports culture," etc. In this report the literature describing the development of literature and education in both Western and Asian

society will be referring to a high culture within the society.

Bissoondath (1994) defines culture as life.

It is a living, breathing, multi-faceted entity in constant evolution. It alters every day, is never the same thing from one day to the next. Stasis is not possible. A culture that fails to grow from within inevitably becomes untrue to itself, inevitably descends into folklore.

Culture is a complex entity shaped in ways small and large. A preference for coffee over tea or beer over wine. Movies over books or sitcoms over documentaries. Free trade over managed trade or insularity over adventurism. Change through negotiation or change through arms. Nothing is inconsequential. Culture must be measured in its minutiae. The very breath of a people must be appreciated, or else that people and their history are trivialized, reduced to the most common of denominators: stereotype. (p. 81)

When discussing Western and Chinese culture I am aware culture is constantly changing, subject to time, place and perception, and that more than one culture may be existing simultaneously. I am

also aware that the situation I am investigating is subject to change, to evolve and one of the factors which is an agent of change is the current culture existing in the environment of the site schools.

History of Literature and Reading Instruction in Western Culture

A survey of the literature on the inclusion of literature in the classroom, why reading is taught, and the development of children's literature, establishes the historical framework of this study. Before I begin it is important to remember that I am using generalizations. The social history of Western society reminds us that more than one culture existed. The majority of the population, members of a folk or popular culture, did not have access to classrooms or any form of universal literacy. Their culture was transmitted by oral communication, crafts, and dance. Only a very small elite had access to the literary culture. Compulsory, free elementary schools for the working class were introduced in the late nineteenth century, introducing the rudiments of the literacy culture of the upper class (Walker and Soltis, 1991, p. 31).

Inclusion of literature in the English classroom

In North America, about the time of the First World War, the teaching of English literature was progressively moving away from the study of the "classics" toward functional reading or reading for "real-life" purposes. It was recognized that not all students were college bound and they should read books "more appropriate to their calling in life and be encouraged to develop interest in reading for pleasure" (Anderson, 1986, p. 20).

In the 1930's the purpose of the literature curriculum changed from an "emphasis on books to an emphasis on the adolescent" (Anderson, 1986, p. 21). Finding the appropriate book for the social and developmental needs of the adolescent reader became part of the role of the English teacher.

With the development of the Psycholinguistic/Language Experience Model for teaching English literature in the sixties, (Anderson, 1986; Willinsky, 1991), the emphasis shifted to holistic understanding of texts, rather than a reading skills approach. Rosenblatt (1968) with her theory of Reader Response, focuses on the aesthetic reading of a text and the individual reader's creation of meaning from the text.

Evaluation under the language experience model would be based on improvement of the student's linguistic and literary understanding over time as evidenced by increased skill in reading, wider variety in the selection of voluntary reading, and more sophistication in literary response. (Anderson, 1986, p. 21)

Reading Instruction

Our reasons for reading instruction have followed a similar historical course to that of the formal teaching of literature. Early social history indicates only some members of the upper class had the skills of reading and writing and access to books.

In the 1890's the immigrant child in North America educated at the public school could "read" passages he had memorized. This was called recitation literacy. The elite, educated privately, had access to the colleges and read the classics to preserve civilization.

By 1914, the reader was taught to identify the who, what, when and where answers in the text. This was necessary for the working class in the factories, so written instructions could be followed.

By 1987, the Higher literacy period, readers could infer, question and recognize ideas (Wolf, 1988, p. 3). Of course this concept

of literacy was radical, hopeful, breaking across economic and class lines and very demanding on the English teacher. In today's classrooms we have the mere literate, who are the decoders, the illiterate literates, students who know how to read but choose not to, and the fully literate, students who read a variety of literature on all subjects and whose understanding of the human condition expands and grows (Hickman, 1983, p. 251).

Today in North American English education we recognize two types of reading: efferent, which is reading for information, such as skimming a textbook, and aesthetic, which is identifying with the story on a personal level.

In aesthetic reading...pay attention to what the words call to consciousness. They can savor the images, the sounds, the smells, the actions, the associations and the feelings the words point to. (Rosenblatt, 1991, p. 447)

The recreational reading this study is investigating is aesthetic or pleasure reading, as Nell (1988) says, a form of play.

It is free activity standing outside ordinary life; it absorbs the player completely, is unproductive, and takes place within circumscribed limits of place and time. (p. 7)

It is important to understand the difference in approaches to reading and how each fits into the curriculum and this study. In most subject areas in secondary school, it is necessary for students to read a textbook for information. This type of reading, the efferent type of reading, presents information in blocks of print. Using the table of contents and the index, a student can pick out the sections of text necessary for understanding a concept in Physics, a problem in Math or conjugation of a verb in French. A student will take this type of reading into his/her personal life in reading manuals, such as How to Install a VCR, technical magazines, such as Road and Track or Byte, and filling out forms such as Income Tax returns. The aesthetic reading is used in the English classroom. It requires sustained involvement in the story, personal response and can result in continued language development, heightened awareness of personal and social attributes and a feeling of connection to other human beings. The students may take this type of reading into their personal lives purely for pleasure. It does not produce anything concrete, it feeds the soul, develops the imagination and improves the ability to communicate. The material read is called literature and in this project I refer to the aesthetic reading of literature as recreational reading.

Development of Children's Literature

The development of children's literature, including literature for adolescents, in Western Culture is an important aspect of this project. Sheila Egoff, Professor Emeritus, U.B.C. School of Library, Archival and Information Studies is a noted scholar of Children's Literature. Most of her publications are a historical survey showing the development of children's literature and identifying patterns and trends within the scope of children's literature. Her book, Thursday's Child, is a survey of literature from its beginnings until 1981. Egoff (1981) defines children's literature as,

written for children, intended to be read as literature, not for information and guidance, less intricate a web of plot, character and style than adult literature. Children's Literature is a reflection of the social condition of man. (p. 2)

Thursday's Child is not a unique book. There are other authors who have also written a historical survey, such as Wintle and Fisher (1949), The Pied Pipers, and Donelson and Nilson(1989), Literature for Today's Young Adult. They all come to a similar ordering of the literature. The historical timeline that evolves from these works emphasizes that childhood as we know it did not exist until the

Puritans identified children as unique. During the Puritan era children appeared as characters in literature with the purpose of illustrating divine virtue for the reader, that is for the purpose of moral instruction. The first children's book, Holiday House (Sinclair, 1839) written for pleasure, was a milestone in the development of the literature. The Victorians recognized a separate state of childhood and experienced the "First Golden Age" of children's literature with writers including Verne, Alcott, Twain, Carroll, and Stevenson. The development of the literature in Western culture continued with the focus on the ideal state of childhood until the 1960's with the introduction of the adolescent problem novel. We are still in this time when the children in the literature appear more adult-like, dealing with more adult-like problems. This literature reflects the change in our society and is responsible for an explosion in publishing. With the variety of material on the market, its accessibility and affordability, adolescents are reading a wide variety of material which suits their own interests. Therefore students in our secondary classrooms of today can no longer be expected to have had the same shared reading experiences of the "children's classics" such as Treasure Island, Little

Women, The Black Stallion, and many of them will have read novels originally intended for adults such as The Client (Grisham, 1993).

Looking at this brief historical summary, we in the West are in a unique and relatively recent time where recreational reading is encouraged and valued. This is not due wholly to the English teacher, the school curriculum, the development of public libraries or an affordable publishing industry, but perhaps also a result of the industrial revolution on Western society and the creation of increased leisure time.

Recreational Reading Habits of Adolescents

The literature available on the recreational reading habits of adolescents is too broad and encompassing to be reported in its entirety in this report. To provide a background for the report, key research studies in the areas of recreational reading habits, attitudes toward recreational reading, influences of school to recreational reading and influences of home toward recreational reading that were important to the development of the questionnaire and to the understanding of the adolescent recreational reader encountered by

me in the last twenty years will be reported. One study on the reading interest of Chinese adolescents will also be summarized.

In 1984 , I conducted a survey on student reactions to booktalking (Braeder, 1984). Though the focus was to determine if booktalking was an effective method of promoting recreational reading, information that was gathered on what students read and how often they read was valuable to add to our understanding of adolescent reading habits. The survey was given to 440 students in one fall term, in grades eight through twelve, after they had participated in a booktalk. The students represented a lower middle class, multicultural, multi-ethnic population. The survey indicated that,

Girls prefer reading books in all grades, while boys prefer magazines more often than books. There is a decided decrease in the amount read as grade level increases. (Braeder, 1984, p. 212)

The survey also indicated that the respondents read a wide variety of topics with adventure, mystery and sports, and romance were the top three choices.

In the Maxwell (1977) study, which investigated the progress of reading among 5000 students between the ages of eight and fifteen, it was reported that girls read more than boys when it came to books, and at the secondary school level the population of infrequent readers begins to grow.

Greaney (1988), Long and Henderson (1972), and Rasinski (1987) have reported that participants with a higher reading ability level seem to spend more time reading recreationally. Nell (1988) in one of the five studies he reports on in the article on "The psychology of reading for pleasure: Needs and gratifications," concludes that ,

The processes of reading gratification begin with the subjectively effortless extraction of meaning from the printed page. (p. 46)

Also Nell (1988) observes,

Compelling observational evidence comes from the experience of learning a second language and settling down at some point to read what looks to be an exciting book in this newly acquired tongue: One then becomes forcefully aware of the difference between the technical literacy that allows one to decipher a

menu or a newspaper headline and the effortless fluency that opens the way to pleasure reading. (p. 9)

In Study 5, "The Sovereignty of the Reading Experience," Nell (1988) reports on his findings of why individuals read. These include consciousness-controlling busyness, to block or enhance self-awareness, and the control they have as readers. For most of the 33 subjects in this study, reading in bed was identified as one of the "delights of reading" (p. 44). Respondents identified the "power of bedtime reading to shut out the day's activities and problems and to induce the relaxation essential for sleep" (p. 44).

Fielding et al. (1984), Greaney and Hegarty, (1987) and Landy, (1977) also report reading in bed or the bedroom seemed to be the most popular place for recreational reading for adolescents.

Moffitt and Wartella (1992) surveyed by questionnaire 414 high school students from five high schools in Illinois to measure the importance of reading as a leisure activity which adolescents themselves decide is fun and therefore pursue. The study differentiated between reading for fun and reading for school work.

The survey reported that a very high percent of the sample (78%) read books for leisure. This included both the consistent and occasional reader. Surprisingly the survey reported an upward trend in reading from freshman to the senior year in high school. More females than males read, and academically better students were more likely to read than students with lower grades. In response to the question: How does reading as leisure practice compare in popularity to other leisure practices, both male and females ranked it third after sports, and being with friends.

Students were asked what kind of books they preferred and females responded in declining order; romance, adventure, then fantasy, detective and suspense. Male readers preferred equally, fantasy, science fiction, sports, adventure, suspense and detective stories. Both males and females responded that what they read was their own choice, that society and parents had little influence on their choices, and both indicated a clear preference for reading at home, during the evening.

School Library Journal (1994) reported in a recent survey that the percentage of children who read books dropped by more than half

between the ages of nine and seventeen. This is a direct contradiction to the Moffitt and Wartella (1992) survey. The difference may in part be explained by the inclusion in the School Library Journal report that though reading of books dropped, the reading of newspapers quadrupled and magazine increased. The survey also suggested that a decline in book reading occurred as children become more interested in social activities and as a result of the attitude reported by many children and parents that reading would not be of practical value later in their lives.

While 65 percent of the students and 63 percent of the parents surveyed cited mathematics as one of the two most important skills "to be successful in life," reading was so cited by only 34 percent of the children and 58 percent of the parents. (p. 17)

Another factor cited in the literature which determined if a child read was the reading activity in the home.

Among students classified as "active" or "moderate" readers, more than two-thirds said their parents read to them every day when they were younger and encourage them to read now. (p. 17)

Hansen (1973) reported four factors in the home that influenced recreational reading: reading guidance, reading encouragement, availability of reading materials, and parents as reading models.

Neuman (1986) found parents of readers "were inclined to help children relate their reading of newspapers, magazines, and books to everyday events" (p. 339), read themselves and read to their children often.

Though I did not include attitude to recreational reading as part of my study, I did briefly examine some of the literature on this topic and found some interesting correlations. Greaney and Hegarty (1987) found ,

A favorable attitude would appear to be a necessary precondition to a willingness to devote some leisure time to reading; a child who does not have a favorable attitude is likely to select other forms of leisure activity from the wide range of available alternatives. (p. 5)

Whitehead et al. (1977) found in responses to a questionnaire which examined voluntary reading that a positive attitude towards school was positively associated with voluntary reading.

The literature reviewed identified a number of activities of the school that influenced students to read recreationally. When a school had a specific program in place such as a literature based reading program, the results of that program indicated a demonstrated increase in the reading of books and magazines outside of school. Morrow (1992) and Fielding et al. (1984) reported that when teachers recommended books to students, discussed with students what they read and read aloud to the class, students spent more time reading.

Landy (1977) was one study that reported on recreational differences based upon ethnicity. It reported that leisure readers tended to be less likely to have mothers who spoke another language although 22% of the avid readers commonly spoke another language at home.

The one study found on Chinese adolescent readers, by Lau and Cheung (1988), focused on the personality traits of the readers and their interest in reading. The study did not specify what type of reading was being investigated. The study reported the findings of students from ten secondary schools in Hong Kong who responded to a class questionnaire written in Chinese, on the time spent on reading,

the type of reading, family reading, and questions from Eysenck Personality Inventory and Scott's Personal Value Scales. According to the study, parents read newspapers and magazines but not fictional books, and adolescents' reading behavior was influenced by how introverted their personality was. Adolescents high on the value scale of intellectualism tended to read more.

Results show that they read more of the literary materials, but interestingly no less on the technical material than adolescents low on intellectualism. They seem to enjoy reading and knowing things, and at the same time they do not miss the recreational aspect of reading. (Lau & Cheung, 1988, p. 703)

They also reported, that the adolescents who placed high on the value scale for academic achievement,

they read more of the literary and to some extent curriculum-related materials. With respect to their outside reading, their focus is again on the literary kind. Their reading interests are not broad and do not differ widely from others lower on the value of academic achievement. (Lau & Cheung, 1988, p. 703)

As indicated above, this study on Chinese adolescent reading focused on the personality traits of adolescents who read and the relationship of intellectualism and academic achievement to reading. This indicates a different approach to reading than the other studies examined. The next part of the review will help to understand reading in China.

History of Literature and Reading Instruction in Chinese Culture

This is by far the most complex colour of the puzzle. During the initial search of the literature it appeared that there was a commonly held perception that learning is highly regarded in China, education as it exists in China today is a product of a long and glorious history spanning nearly two thousand years and China today has the largest school system in the world. A more critical and in-depth look at the history of literature and reading instruction in Chinese culture reveals information that questions this perception and reveals the complexity of the Chinese system which has evolved into the three educational systems which exist today, Communist China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. As I outline very briefly my findings in the literature on

literature and reading instruction in traditional and modern China, it is to be remembered that this is to provide a background and understanding for the investigation which is to come. The intent was not to become an expert in Chinese literature nor Chinese education, nor to be critical of the achievements of the Chinese people. My regard and fascination for Chinese culture has increased as my understanding has grown.

Inter-twining of literature and education in China

While searching the literature it quickly became obvious to me that a history of literature and reading instruction in China is really a history of education in China, and education is the transmission of "Chinese culture". Many writers (Ross, 1992, Price, 1992, Kane, 1980, Paine, 1992, Woodside, 1992, Hayhoe, 1992, Cleverley, 1991, Huang, 1991, Chyu, 1991, Moa, 1991, Smith, 1991, Gregory, 1993, Vaughan, 1992, Luk, 1991), confirm that education has existed in traditional China (mainland) for 6000 years. Schools as we understand them were "teaching the rituals of social life to the people in the Shang Dynasty (c. 1700 - 1100 BC)" (Cleverly, 1991, p. 1). The ancient sovereign Shun in the third millennium BC, appointed a

minister of education, and funded colleges. The curriculum developed to include the six virtues, the six praiseworthy actions, and the six arts of music, archery, charioteering, writing, mathematics, and ritual. The early school system developed rules for the education of upper class boys. Girls were educated at home in the skills necessary for a wife. The society, which aimed at unity and harmony through education prescription, expected each member of the society to be aware of his/her role and responsibilities and to fulfill his/her obligation of service to the society or the balance of the universe would be upset resulting in floods and famines. The education system that developed was to create "a public civil servant system that would bring about honest government, quality education, and a fair competitive examination process that would constantly nourish and replenish the leadership of the country"(Smith, 1991, p. 7).

The individual who had the greatest impact on the Chinese education system was Confucius. Confucianism became the ruling ideology of Chinese society during the Han period (200 B.C. - 200 A.D.). Confucianism presented an intellectual model for proper and ethical behaviour and an active process of teaching and learning. It was Confucius' view that moral behaviour was governed by relations

and respect (Smith, 1991, p. 7). This appears to be an enduring theme in the history of Chinese education.

The Confucian message was enshrined in the Four Books, and the Five Classics, "mastery of which has been the mark of the educated man down countless generations" (Cleverley, 1991, p. 7). It is estimated that a pupil (used synonymously with student) would have memorized textual material from the Classics amounting to over 40,000 characters by the time he reached fifteen years of age. Three primers which must be mastered usually within the first years of school were the Three Character Classic, the Thousand Character Essay and the Hundred Names Primer. These textbooks were used to master the characters necessary to read, and taught the Confucian moral code.

Men such as Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, Chiang Kai-shek, Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedon, who have been leaders in China this century, were steeped in these Classics in their early education. The Three Character Classic written by Wang Yinglin in the Song Dynasty, is the world's longest surviving and best selling textbook and is still in print in China. This text stresses three beliefs which are important for the consideration of this project: "education is important, for unpolished gems cannot form

ornaments”(Cleverley, 1991, p. 17). Children were urged to study books written by the great philosophers, and to read history: “Read whenever time permits you to do so, and read intelligently”(Cleverley, 1991, p. 17), and to study diligently (Cleverley, 1991, p. 17). In terms of book learning, four branches were represented in the literary collection of China: the Confucian canon, the histories, the noncanonical thinkers, and belles lettre. Traditional “literati” memorized the most important texts of each branch and spent years drilling to perfect the “Eight-legged” essay style required for the imperial examinations (Luk, 1991, pp. 650-651).

A high level of literacy gave access to such masterpieces of classical Chinese literature as The Book of Songs, pre-Qin in its origins, Records of the Historian, by Sima Qian from the Western Han, the poetry and essays of the Tang and Song Dynasties, the poetic drama of the Yuan Dynasty, and the famed Ming and Qing Dynasty novels, The Romance of the Three Kingdoms, The Outlaws of the Marshes, Journey to the West, The Scholars and The Dream of the Red Chamber. (Cleverley, 1991, p. 25-26)

Universal education never developed in traditional China although the ideal was recognized. Literacy had a high priority in China to facilitate a society with a highly developed system of private ownership, agricultural trade, commercialism and banking. Literacy was necessary for record keeping, contracts, registering of lineage and membership in guilds and secret societies. Mass printing in the sixteenth century expanded reading opportunities. A variety of primers and glossaries taught words and phrases needed for functional literacy. By the mid-nineteenth century, estimates put functional literacy across China at 30 to 45 percent of the males and two to ten percent of the females (Cleverley, 1991).

The poor in traditional China seldom attended school: "the rich never [taught] school, and the poor never [attended] one" (Cleverley, 1991, p. 23). As mentioned earlier, the first impression given by a look at the literature is of the glorious tradition of education and literacy in China, illustrated by statements by Ross (1991) such as "So ingrained in the psychology of the Chinese is the value of education that it is often characterized as the true religion of the people" (p. 8). But in reality education was for a small elite group who could afford to write the Imperial Examinations in hopes of becoming part of the

ruling civil service. In Western culture mass education began in the nineteenth century; in China mass education is a recent phenomenon of the mid-twentieth century (Cleverley, 1991) and Price (1992) states that in Communist China the

great majority of young Chinese still do not complete more than lower secondary school and an unknown but probably still large number have a poor attendance record and may leave even before that. (p. 235)

In Communist China, Woodside (1992) states that 31.8% of the population over age 12 are illiterate. The communist peasants of today would rather expend their energy on agriculture which produces immediate results than on education which exists at the whim of the current political regime.

This prompts me to look again more closely at the colour of this part of the puzzle. From the early 1900s three distinct shades of colour have emerged: Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Communist China have developed unique education systems with roots in the history of education in traditional China.

Three Education Systems

(i) Hong Kong

Hong Kong was ceded to the British in 1842, at the end of the Opium War. The British Administrators and Chinese educators had developed a curriculum which honored Chinese culture and identity and supplied the manpower needs of the China trade and interests of China-British economic and diplomatic relations.

The schools sought to produce a bilingual, bicultural elite to function as middlemen between the British traders in Hong Kong and the merchants and mandarins of China. Therefore, great emphasis was placed on students' learning Chinese as well as English in order to maintain linguistic and cultural continuity with their Chinese milieu. (Luk, 1991, p. 654)

Students would be admitted to British colonial schools only after they had acquired a strong grounding in traditional Chinese studies. In the colonial schools they pursued English and the study of Western subjects. They sought their careers in areas outside of the Chinese "literati" officialdom and formed a new class in commerce, technology, journalism and diplomacy.

Hong Kong University was founded in 1911 to enable Chinese students to acquire a British higher education. This was also the time of the outbreak of the Republican Revolution in China. Throughout the unrest in China, and World War One and Two, Hong Kong strengthened its connections to mainland China, but remained also firmly rooted as a British colony. In 1927, the governor of Hong Kong, Sir Cecil Clementi, invited the senior "literati" then in Hong Kong to assist him in establishing a new government secondary school, the teaching of which would be in Chinese, and which would coexist alongside the existing government and missionary schools in which lessons were taught in English. This was a political move to set up a stronghold of cultural conservatism in Hong Kong. This was to "protect the traditional Chinese idea of Chineseness" (Luk, 1991, p. 660).

After World War Two and the proclamation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Hong Kong experienced a flood of immigration and a political concern of how to handle relations with Communist China. As social, economic, and political connections with Communist China became stabilized, Hong Kong developed an education system by the early 1970's which combined the features of

the British and traditional Chinese systems. The system has matured into its own identity, self sufficient in syllabus, textbooks, teachers, and examinations.

In 1952, the government appointed a Committee on Chinese Studies to review the question of Chinese language, literature, and history in its schools. Their recommendations are interesting and provide a unique insight to this project. The Committee advocated that the teaching of language, literature and history be student-centered and active. It also strongly urged a cultural emphasis to Chinese studies with two particular aims: "a) to develop the pupils power of expression in their mother tongue and (b) to lead the pupils to understand and to cultivate their appreciation of Chinese thought, literature, and traditions" (Luk, 1991, p. 665). The Committee also identified moral education as one of the major needs of education in Hong Kong to revive the respect for Chinese virtues. They suggested students do outside reading in Chinese Literature, but cautioned this must be done under proper supervision so students would not be led astray by books from a bookstore which might have "subversive propaganda and undesirable doctrines" (Luk, 1991, p. 666). They advocated modern teaching methods, but wished to revive traditional

Chinese virtues and thought. They advocated students read, but under strict supervision.

Also, as Luk (1991) explains, as the teachers and writers of the new textbooks may have been refugees or displaced persons with no roots in Hong Kong,

generations of Hong Kong Chinese pupils grew up, learning from the Chinese culture subjects to identify themselves as Chinese but relating that Chineseness to neither contemporary China not [sic] the local Hong Kong landscape. It was a Chinese identity in the abstract, a patriotism of the emigre, probably held in all the more absolutely because it was not connected to tangible reality. (p. 668)

This does in part explain the generalization of references to love of education and respect for learning. These would have been part of the Chinese identity which the scholars would want to transmit to the students in Chinese studies. Hong Kong is a city that has created itself, and this may be part of the image it wished to create and sustain.

(ii) Republic of China, (Taiwan)

Politically, the Republic of China, (Taiwan) was securely in place in the mid 1950's. There had been attempts during the Republic Period, initiated by Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, to reform the education system but only after political stability had been assured could the government turn its attention to education. Today the Chinese education system in Taiwan has many characteristics that are found in other developed nations, particularly the United States. Unique to Taiwan is the aspect of moral education with an emphasis on Confucian values which greatly influence Chinese culture. Nearly every school subject has an ethical component. Lee (1990) explains,

Morality is also taught in specific classes, namely, Life and Ethics in primary school, Civics and Morality at the middle school and Civics at the senior high school. In addition the subject of Chinese Language and Literature has generally been considered the most important source of moral cultivation in Taiwan. (p. 4)

Also, Lee (1990) states that the textbooks or readers adopted by the schools have moral messages embedded in the passages.

Chinese literature tends to carry abundant moral messages or cultural ideas. In the Chinese literary tradition, writing (wen) and principles (dao) are inseparable. A good writing is a work that can enlighten readers spiritually or elevate their moral state educationally.....Consequently, Chinese Readers have become a rich source for moral emulation....Chinese literary works appear to be especially suited to convey moral attitudes and sentiments. (p. 4)

In Taiwan society today, the Confucian ideals of family and structural relationship and authority interact directly with the education process. Smith (1991) points out that the education opportunities of children are given great consideration.

Families make major sacrifices to afford their offspring a good education. Housework, chores, and part-time jobs are virtually un-known to the boy or girl who attends an academic high school. Conversely, such a youngster is expected to do three to five hours of homework each day to assure progress of his or her academic endeavors. (p. 53)

Chinese high schools in Taiwan emphasize conformity of student behavior, learning and extra-curricular activities. Chyu (1991) states that it does this for two reasons:

(1) All children who go to the academic high school may sit for the national college entrance examination and must have the same knowledge as their peers in order to be competitive. (2) The education authorities with whom this writer (Chyu) spoke suggested that conformity in the childhood learning process and creativity in later life are related. As one scholar suggested, 'How can one hope to be a great musician, or artist, or physician if he has not studied hard and learned from rote the basics of these art forms'. (p.99-100)

I discovered from the literature some basic differences in pedagogical philosophy between China and the West. One is that Chinese educators' believe that studying one subject will enable the student to better learn other unrelated subjects. For example,

Learning the Chinese language, with its thousands of characters, is seen as a way of strengthening the brain of the high school student and making him or her more scholarly

in other areas of learning, particularly in computation and advanced science. (Chyu, 1991, p. 127)

Secondly, the Chinese believe that learning is best accomplished as a group function and through the process of repetition (Chyu, 1991. Teaching at the secondary level usually consists of formal lecturing by the teachers and note taking by students.

The students believe that the information given should be learned because (1) the teacher is a "bank" of knowledge who is sharing his or her wisdom and (2) the subject matter may appear on the school or national examination. Memorization, drill and constant testing are the most common methods found in the Taiwan academic school classroom for teaching most academic subjects. (Chyu, 1991, p. 127)

Chyu goes on to state that in recent years efforts have been made to introduce discussion, self-exploration, and field-based learning but, with the focus on passing the Joint College Entrance Examination, the emphasis remains on the teacher transmission of knowledge and standardized textbooks. Subjects that do not have a national examination, such as Music, Art and Cooking, use a seminar or workshop method of learning.

Homework is a vital part of the learning process of the high school student in Taiwan. Parents see a strong correlation between homework and success in school. Feelings of success or failure are shared greatly by the family.

Within the Chinese heritage, education and attainments are directly equated with honor and success, not only for the child who achieves, but also for the whole family and, in a transcendental way, for all ancestors who have lived and all persons of the family name who are yet to be born. This view of human continuum, based on educational success, is quite difficult for the Western mind to understand or accept; in Taiwan, it exists and is a topic of regular discussion. For this reason and for historical motives, parents have strong incentives to support and encourage their children to excel within the academic/formal educational setting. (Chyu, 1991, p. 133)

(iii) Communist China

If historically, education in traditional China was a search for harmony, education in Communist China today can best be described as confusing. The education systems of Hong Kong and Taiwan have evolved with a discipline or constancy inherent in the new systems

which include cultural elements of the traditions of China. There is a recognition of continuation. Looking at the literature available on education in Communist China, I have the distinct impression of an official destruction of all that was before and an unclear direction or plan for the future.

I found this part of the literature search very confusing and frustrating. The education program of modern Communist China is closely linked with the political system, which in turn was Mao. The literature provides some interesting insights on the man. He was classically educated and a voracious reader. He was schooled in the Classics, discovered the romantic novels of old China, read translations such as Great Heroes of the World, and contemporary newspapers. He was often found in libraries and frequently browsed in second hand book shops. One-third of the money his family contributed to his upkeep was spent on reading material. Yet he had little respect for the content of much of Chinese literature; he claimed that the

teachers of Chinese are such obstinate pedants. They are constantly mouthing expressions such as 'We read in the Book

of Poetry' or 'Confucius says', but when you are down to it, in fact, they don't understand a word. They were not aware that this is already the twentieth century; they still compel us to observe 'old rites' and follow 'old regulations'. They forcibly impregnate our minds with a lot of stinking corpse-like dead writings full of classical allusions. (Cleverley, 1991, p. 76-77)

It is difficult for me to understand, aware that Mao read a wide variety of material, why access to literature in Communist China, was curtailed. World literature was omitted from courses as non-essential, while foreign books previously used in language lessons "were locked away in libraries with only the occasional dusting when used as negative example" (Cleverly, 1991, p. 189). Selected excerpts from Western writers were treated in a political context and libraries were used very little, with many books withdrawn from open access. "Students who visited the book stacks too frequently were cautioned" (Cleverly, 1991, p. 195).

The curriculum became political content from kindergarten on. Fairy stories and legends were replaced by the praiseworthy deeds of communist men and women. Kindergarten children sang songs of the

brilliance of Chairman Mao and the socialist child's love of labour. In primary school, children were taught according to The Schooling of China; a core of Chinese Language, Arithmetic, Music, Drawing, Singing and Drama, Politics, Science, Physical Education and Productive Labour. Each primary pupil learnt the five loves: "love our great socialist motherland; love our great Chinese people; love our great Chinese Communist Party; love our great People's Liberation Army and love our great leader Chairman Mao" (Cleverley, 1991, p. 187). In junior middle schools Politics, Chinese Language, Mathematics, Foreign Language, Geography, History, Physical Education, Music and Drawing were taught. The students also learnt by heart the three articles of Mao Zedong, "Serve the People, In Memory of Norman Bethune and The Foolish Old Man who Removed the Mountains" (Cleverley, p. 187). The senior middle schools added to the curriculum of the junior middle schools the subjects of Physics, Chemistry and Physiology. Seniors studied also the five essays of Mao, as well as The Selected Works of Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong on the Educational Revolution, the writings of Communist leaders and current Communist party information. Some schools abolished the

study of History and foreign languages as the subjects were considered politically contentious.

Physical labour in factories and on farms became mandatory for students and staff at all levels of education. Schools became self supporting units. The level of manufacturing increased with the age of the students. Kindergarten children may fold cardboard boxes, while middle schools may produce electric cables. The domination of schooling by books ended.

Children's Education and Literature in Communist China

Two articles provided information on the topic of Children's Literature in Communist China. In the first article Vaughan (1993), describes the early childhood programs for age 2 to 6 year olds in Communist China. Nationally prescribed curriculum includes academic subjects varying with the age of the children. The comment that "parents often want their children to begin academic work early believing it will give them a head start in the competitive struggle for scholastic success" (Vaughan, 1991, p.197), indicates that education in Communist China is seen by the population as the route to success.

I was discouraged to read that better equipped child care centres "possess one shelf of toys and books available for children's use during their free time," (Vaughan, 1991, p. 198) and the emphasis for activity is "teacher-directed, whole group instruction,"..... "respect for the teacher and prompt, unquestioning obedience are expected" (Vaughan, 1993, p. 199).

In the second article, Zhang and Breedlove (1989) explain that in the limited field of children's literature there is the tendency to not actively cultivate the imagination. There are two types of books for children, one being for smaller children, "mostly about the imaginary world, such as animal stories and fairy tales" (Zhang, 1989, p. 407). The second type of book is for the older child, "preparing to step into the adult world. These books are about social reality and the children's own lives, being educational and somewhat instructional" (Zhang, 1989, p. 407). The article states that at the beginning of this century, "many progressive Chinese intellectuals, stimulated by the progress of other cultures, realized the importance of literature in kindling children's imagination and arousing noble thought and feelings" (Zhang, 1989, p. 411). The writers BinXing, Ye Shentao and Zhang Tiny wrote about children's lives, either in letter form or

“problem novels.” However, it appears these were not written for the purpose of recreational reading, but to enlighten and liberate the reader. The article goes on to say that the writers of the ‘New China’ have taken these writings and are applying the same premise of writing for children to scientific topics to popularize science. In a totally new direction Zhang (1989) states, the writers are trying to

observe children’s life from within, that is, they are writing from the children’s point of view, observing the world through children’s eyes, listening to the sound of nature with children’s keen ears, and most importantly, comprehending everything with children’s innocent heart[s]. (p. 411)

Zhang (1989) admits that “comparatively speaking, China’s children’s literature is a late born baby”(p. 412), but I found it encouraging to find something on the development of a specific literature for children, although the writing of science books for children does not meet my definition of literature.

Differences in Educational Focus

Memorization and Imitation

Within the educated portion of all Chinese society some broad general observations from the literature can be made. Jones (1979) states that there is a traditional love of learning in the Chinese culture and academic excellence in the child is encouraged. Ho (1990) corroborates that "education and scholastic achievements are the real motivating forces in life; everyone must strive" (p. 253). Also, the Chinese culture and academic excellence in the child is encouraged. "Traditional Chinese education stresses the importance of training the memory" (p. 56).

Tinberg (1986) spent one year teaching English composition and literature at Shanxi University in Shanxi province and observed that, memorization and imitation dominate Chinese rhetoric. To the Chinese, whose written language consists of thousands of characters, literacy depends on great feats of memory. Style, invention, arrangement - the components of rhetoric on which we place the greatest stress - are dominated and transformed by memory. (p. 49)

In Chinese history, the governing elite were selected after a rigorous four day examination. The candidates were rewarded if they were able to memorize standard forms of poetry and prose.

Western notions that the reader and the writer should render something new - the reader critical insight and the writer with originality of vision - have no place in this rhetoric. (Tinberg, 1986, p. 49)

Tinberg found that his students imitated successful models. Copying had a special status in Chinese education and history. Part of learning was copying the masters. His students would include an old saying or proverb in all their essays, which was following an ancient tradition of writing style.

Meaning in the Text

H. W. Matalene taught American fiction at Shanxi University. Matalene observed that in the Chinese culture, "for thousands of years, passing theories about classic texts have not only been produced and learned, but enforced and obeyed" (Trimmer, 1992, p. 134). In other words, the text holds the meaning and the teacher, as a better credentialed reader, passes the meaning to the students. There is only

one correct meaning. This is based on the Confucian model of learning. In the Confucian model there is also respect for the teacher, the aged and a system of authority. A student would never challenge the instruction of a teacher. There is a definite difference between the Chinese culture and the Western culture in what is taught and how it is taught. Recalling my opening remarks, I would like to restate this is a general observation. I know there are teachers in both cultures who use different methods and styles, and it would be possible to walk into a school in the Lower Mainland and find a teacher using the transmission model in an English class and to walk into a classroom in Taiwan and see a teacher involved in the student-centered discussion model.

Universality of Narrative

There is a widely held theory that "story" or "narrative" is a universally held constant. Barbara Hardy, professor of English Literature at the University of London, believes we all use narrative to organize our human experiences, to make sense of the world. Others, such as Pradl (1984) share her belief.

Stories provide the initial and continuing means for shaping our experience...it is through story an individual creates meaning out of daily happenings and this story in turn serves as the basis for anticipation of future events. (n.p.)

Roland Barthes (Trimmer, 1992) once remarked of narrative that it is "simply there like life itself...international, transhistorical, transcultural" (Trimmer, 1992, p. 124). From his experiences in China, Matalene feels to the contrary. He believes that narrative is very much culture bound and lists researchers who disagree with the western theorists about narrative and agree with Matalene that narrative is not universal. In my study I was interested in finding out, if and how the subjects of this study demonstrate ability for "story."

Chinese Learners of English

The literature found on Chinese learners of English focuses on two important issues, the differences in the mechanics of the two languages, and the attitude towards and reason for learning English.

The Chinese Language

Chinese students who make the transfer to English must make a shift in the reading act itself while adjusting to a different system of

decoding meaning (Osborne-Wilson, 1989, p. 330). Chinese writing is based on symbols, requiring the Chinese student learning to read to memorize thousands of unique shapes, each with its own sound and meaning. Each symbol is basically the same size as all the others and traditionally has been written in vertical columns from top to bottom and from right to left on the page. This is still true for textbooks of Chinese literature, but recently other texts have been produced horizontally (Wang, 1972, p. 664). Chinese students therefore are particularly strong in visual memory. (Wang & Earle, 1972, p. 666)

The Chinese language itself cannot be broken into parts of speech, is devoid of abstract terms, does not use affixes, (Osborne-Wilson, 1989, p. 331), does not use different tenses for verbs, (p. 332), uses reduplication, considers balance within a sentence very important, and does not have the equivalent of the definite article. Besides, the verb never gives an indication of person and number (Jones, 1979, p. 57).

English sentence structures, as a reflection of our thought patterns, tend to be lineal. Our paragraphs and essays are organized in a sequential manner. Wang (1979) describes much of Chinese writing as "approach by indirection."

In this kind of writing, the development of the paragraph may be said to be turning around a gyre. The circles or gyres turn around the main subject and present it from a variety of tangential views, but the subject is never "straightforwardly" stated. (p. 668)

Chinese language learners struggle to follow the more direct Western style of writing, and may have difficulty adjusting to different types of materials. It has been suggested that one of the reasons for this may be the lack of a variety of reading materials available in Chinese schools or the tendency for Chinese students to read passively and too acceptingly. "Questioning ability and critical insight will have to be developed through intense practice" (Wang, 1972, p. 668).

Wang (1972) goes on to suggest that narrative writing (in English), which is a good example of simple chronological organization, easy to understand, used in most cultures, and interesting to most students, is not be used extensively.

Story reading should only be continued as exercises in vocabulary building, idioms, faster reading, and perhaps cultural understanding. If our goal is to prepare students

to study history, philosophy, science, and other courses in the English language --then the use of narratives seems limited, and should be cut short. Analytical reading exercises should be shifted to expository prose as soon as possible. (p. 669)

This would suggest a directed purpose incorporated into the learning of English as a second language and introduces the second area discussed in the literature, the attitude towards and reasons for learning English.

Reasons for Learning English

There is a natural intimacy between language and culture. In the Chinese culture, as I have already discussed, there are certain cultural expectations for a student. At this point I would like to differentiate between the Chinese student studying English as a foreign language in a school in China and a Chinese student studying English as a second language in an English speaking country.

The literature suggests that the reason Chinese students study English as a foreign language is to access academic material from the West, specifically science and technology. Wang (1972) suggests English may be seen as a skill necessary to study in a Western university, or only as a subject needed to complete a college degree.

Many Chinese students have neither the opportunity nor the inclination to develop oral English skills. A college education, for example, demands the ability to read English, not speak it. Hence, it is by no means certain that perfect pronunciation and fluent oral interpretation is a goal worthy of much time and effort. (p. 666).

In the Hong Kong education system and the Taiwan education system, the study of English begins early and at different ages. In Taiwan, language instruction begins in the seventh grade. In Communist China it may begin in the Middle School. The younger the student, the less likely he/she is embarrassed by the exaggerated facial contortions necessary to form some English sounds. Besides, the traditional Chinese virtues of being quiet and passive in class may be less well formed.

Kohn (1992) and Tinberg (1986) suggest that much of the English language instruction in Communist China and Hong Kong is a subject which is based on the early British model which emphasized grammar rules, close reading of texts and the use of translation exercises. I realize one cannot generalize about English language teaching methods, for the generalization would encompass three

different countries, their different school systems and the thousands of individual instructors within their classrooms. But I also know how slowly institutions of education change and that many teachers, teach as they themselves were taught. It is possible to say, then, with the long held tradition in Chinese classrooms of the transmission model of instruction and the use of memorization, that English language may still be taught with the focus on vocabulary, grammar rules, and exercises.

The English as a foreign language learner quickly discovers the difference between the technical literacy that allows one to decipher a menu or a newspaper headline and the effortless fluency that opens the way to pleasure reading (Nell, 1988, p. 9). It could be suggested that this lack of fluency limits the ease of reading recreationally in English and discourages Asian adolescents from reading for pleasure.

The ESL learner, on the other hand, has different reasons for learning English. He/she is in a new country and in a different school system learning a language that is needed for school, business, and everyday activities such as shopping, reading street signs and visiting the dentist. For the Chinese ESL learner, learning English may be a culture shock. Sitting in the classroom with the student are the

expectations and attitudes which have developed as a result of his or her cultural background; for example, the attitude to reading.

Chinese culture has a history of printing that is twice as long as that of Western culture and therefore certain attitudes may have

developed. This attitude is illustrated by Smith (1991).

In the reading process one must be patient while getting to the answer or the solution. While waiting for the conclusion of the issue or problem, one is obliged to evaluate the validity of the piece that is being read.

Reading separates the young from the old. It requires a complex and logical approach to gaining information from symbols, be they alphabetical or ideographical. Books require certain rules of behavior to be read, understood, and appreciated. The book not only separates the child from the adult but also fosters in the child a need to defer gratification; to approach a problem with logic; to acquire a vast memory of word, punctuations, and symbols; and to remember them so as to garner meaning from what has been read. (pp. 51-52).

This is an attitude much different from the expectation of the North American classroom, specifically classrooms that embrace the Whole

Language approach which suggests “children should be encouraged to explore writing....teachers and students should be involved in questioning knowledge, what’s worth knowing, and the question of worth of knowledge” (Gunderson, Ms. p. 3).

The belief that reading takes place after enough words have been learned is illustrated by the case of Tony, a Chinese boy in Britain (Gregory, 1993).

The Case of Tony

Tony is five years old and is in a multilingual reception class. He is the only Asian child in the class. After three months, he shows little progress in learning English and his teacher is very worried about his changed attitude to school. She makes a home visit and her discoveries are typical of those of students who experience a “mismatch between home and school cultural practices” (Gregory, 1993, p. 54). The expectations of the teacher and the home do not agree. In Tony’s case, there are two differing interpretations of reading. There are four areas specific to this case which may provide background understanding for this project, which I will summarize.

1. Purpose or Function

Tony's teacher emphasizes the role of pleasure as an important part of her reading pedagogy. Trying to link reading at school to stories the child knows from home, she reads simple stories for the children frequently. In contrast, studies of the Hong Kong community in Britain suggest that English literacy is viewed as primarily functional in nature, while Mandarin script is given more status and held in greater respect. Tony's family share this view. They are aware of the need for English for business and as a means to financial security.

2. Method

Tony's teacher tries to stress that we learn to read by reading, and she encourages the children to experiment. Students are seen as writers as soon as they enter school and are encouraged to experiment. Tony chooses not to pick attractive story-books to read with the teacher, nor does he like to predict the next part of the story. He focuses on individual words. Tony is also attending Mandarin school on Saturdays and his Chinese teacher explains that Tony has been given a note book to practice writing Chinese symbols. In Chinese school, learning follows the traditional approach, with emphasis on

repetition, memorization, and careful copying. In other words, each symbol is repeated until it is learned perfectly. Tony has a notebook full of symbols which are a very concrete testimony to what he has accomplished. Tasks at Chinese school are carefully and clearly defined and confined in scope.

3. Materials

Tony's teacher sees the use of books as important in encouraging young pre-readers to want to learn to read. Tony's family also values books but believe children must prove themselves worthy of a book by first learning how to read. To have immediate access to books devalues the book and devalues the principle of hard work necessary to achieve the book. A love of books, comes after learning how to read.

4. Participation structures

Tony's teacher views the child as a partner in reading interaction and prefers to take her cue from the child. The family's expectations of the role of teacher are based on their experiences in school in Hong Kong and China, that is, the teacher is the authority and enforces obedience; school is work, not fun; there is no choice of activity, and no talking unless called upon by the teacher (Gregory, 1993, p. 56-67).

This case was germane to my understanding of how cultural background can influence how a student reacts in a new situation. It also reminded me that my definition of reading and its importance is very much a product of my experiences and culture.

The Jobe and Sutton Study

Jobe and Sutton (1990) of the University of British Columbia undertook an ethnographic study on multiculturalism for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in 1990. This study examined four ethnic groups, Chinese, Punjabi, Spanish and Italian. Parents and children from the four language groups were interviewed and one of the areas probed was their attitude toward reading. Some interesting results were reported.

Members of three of the language groups spoke of the importance of reading in terms of its contribution to the intellectual development of their children. They equate reading with learning which, in turn, they equate with success in the world . (p. 53)

The Cantonese speaking parents acknowledged that their children loved story books, but the parents' interest in books was linked to what

books can teach children. In the Jobe and Sutton (1990) study the Chinese parents qualified their support of reading:

Reading is good but there is a saying in Chinese that there is not enough physical activity in reading. Thus, it is not healthy in that manner. On the whole, the Chinese parents showed much more interest in books that would teach their children something than in storybooks and children's literature. (p. 55)

Reading aloud appeared to be less frequent in Cantonese and Punjabi homes and in the Cantonese homes older siblings and relatives were mentioned as the reader more frequently than the mother. The Cantonese speaking parents appeared to value realism in books and one parent disclaimed fairy tales as being fakes.

Summary

A search of the literature has enabled me to identify the colours of this project and to do a careful sort of shades within the colours. The search has provided a historical framework in a very broad sense to give a background to the educational system of Western culture and of Chinese culture. The search has enabled me to identify

generalizations and at times to look beyond the obvious and also to realize the weight and length of the impact of culture.

In both Western and Chinese culture there is a long history of education and a general recognition of the value of education. In both cultures, education was available for the upper classes only, until universal education was introduced in the last 100 years. Books have been important in both cultures as symbols of literacy and transmitters of culture.

Western culture has developed an education system that values literature and the interaction and meaning making with literature by the individual. Children's literature has been developing for the past 160 years as a distinct literature written for the pleasure of children. Reading of fiction or literature for pleasure (aesthetic) is recognized and encouraged by schools, bookstores, and libraries. It is recognized that the reading of literature continues the development of language without formal schooling, provides the opportunity for individuals to develop their human attributes, and contributes to the basic need for story.

The literature on reading habits of western adolescents indicates that adolescent girls read more books than boys, but boys

read more magazines recreationally. There is more evidence to support a decline in recreational reading as the adolescent progresses through secondary school than to support an increase in reading. There appears to be a correlation between reading ability and a positive attitude to the amount of reading done recreationally.

Adolescents like to read a wide variety of types of fiction recreationally and they like to read it in their bedrooms or beds. One study suggests adolescents who like to read like the control it gives them in their fantasy life. Studies indicate that activities in the home and at school can positively influence the amount of recreational reading an adolescent does.

Chinese culture is explicitly linked to education in a relationship that spans 2000 years. The dominant force was Confucius. The Confucian virtues of respect, moral behaviour and structural relationships are central to the traditional Chinese education system. The three political regions of China - Communist China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan - have evolved different education systems but each has been influenced by Confucian values and the traditional Chinese teaching methods of repetition, memorization, and teacher as authority. Chinese culture has developed education

systems which value conformity, mark progress by examinations, and use the teacher transmission model.

Children's literature written for pleasure is a fairly recent development in Chinese culture where previously books were written for moral or educational instruction.

Chinese adolescents in a Western English classroom may experience a cultural mismatch. Their expectations of what education is and the reasons for reading may not match our Western cultural expectations.

In searching the professional literature it is apparent that a real gap exists in the literature in the area of recreational reading by Asian adolescents in both Asian countries and North America. This study addressed the cultural factors influencing pleasure reading by Asian adolescents in one area of North America.

Chapter III

The Study

Methodology

When preparing to assemble a puzzle, quite often the puzzle picture suggests a method. For example, if the picture is of a landscape, the colours are often arranged in layers, suggesting the puzzlers do a layer at a time, a layer each, and work from the top to the bottom or vice versa. If the picture features architecture, then each puzzler can choose a building to focus on. Usually, the method suggested by the picture also conforms to the colours which have been sorted.

When examining the pieces of the problem before me, I considered a number of research methods in order to understand the cultural factors influencing the recreational reading habits of Asian adolescent students of ESL background. The method I chose for this study can be categorized as ethnographic techniques which can be described as, "a descriptive analysis, a process of inquiry designed to uncover meaningful theories and raise important questions"

(Weintraub, 1975, p. 16). To examine a problem within the context of the educational situation, I used the responses of the individuals involved in the situation in an attempt to "understand cultures or parts of cultures from the point of view of those who participate in them" (Walters, 1984, p. 4).

More specifically I employed qualitative interviewing as the ethnographic technique of investigation for this study. As a means of gathering data, "an interview is a window on a time and a social world that is experienced one person at a time, one incident at a time" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 11). Rubin and Rubin (1995) also state, "qualitative interviewing allows the researcher to find out what others feel and think about their worlds" (p. 1).

In interviewing, a relationship develops between the researcher and the interviewee, a partnership develops in which "both parties maintain the flow of dialogue" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 10) and have responsibilities. The interviewee as a partner can decide what is going to be discussed and in what depth, "what issues to explore, suggest what remains to be said, and work [with the researcher] to provide the thick description that builds toward an overall picture" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 11). I chose the semistructured interview when

working with student participants to enable them to respond within a structure which ensured that specific topics were covered. I used the unstructured interview with all the adult participants which allowed them to decide which aspects to discuss and to tell their own story.

Qualitative interviewing is a practical research tool when working with adolescents because it is a gentle, versatile way of finding out what they think, know and feel. It is built on the conversation skills everyone has so, as a method of investigation, is not an alien format to which the ESL students had to adapt. It is also a rigorous academic tool which gathers information from which the researcher can form, "explanations and theories that are grounded in the details, evidence, and examples of the interviews" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 4).

I also employed the ethnographic technique of interviewing for this study because it included data in the form of negative responses that the scientific model often excludes. When a question prompted an unusual response, rather than excluding the response I was able to probe the response for some very interesting insights.

Researcher's Role

The data for this case study were gathered by myself in the role of interviewer. As an investigator, I bring a background of 20 years as a secondary teacher-librarian in schools in the district of the site schools and in schools with large ESL populations. I was the first librarian in the district to begin a program which included recreational reading, literature appreciation, and read aloud for secondary ESL students. As the year and a half of interviewing progressed, my role changed from Librarian at Site A school, to Vice-Principal at Site B school. This did have an impact on the study. While working as a librarian, I experienced difficulty getting students to respond to my requests to participate in the study. When questioning one of the students who did respond, she volunteered that Chinese families did not like participating in a *"survey, because they might give the wrong answer."* Another student said, *"Chinese people are very private, they don't like to talk about themselves."* However, when working as a Vice-Principal at Site B school, the participants were more accessible. In reply to my request to participate in the study, participants responded, *"You are the Vice-Principal. Of course I will do what you*

ask." I found this very interesting as it appears to support the insight in the literature regarding Chinese cultural respect for authority.

Description of the Research Site

This research project took place in two urban public secondary schools (grade 8 to 12). I chose these two schools mainly because of accessibility. However, while each situation is unique, there are many characteristics the two sites have in common. Both sites are large schools having populations around 1900 students; both are about 80% Asian; both have large English as a second language (ESL) departments (ten classes, nine classes) which have grown rapidly in the last five years; both schools have an academic focus in which the sciences and maths are dominant; and both have found the humanities and nonacademic areas of the school to be declining. For example, at Site B school, the graduating class for 1996 had 351 students. Students sit for Provincial final examinations in the academic subjects. In the June 1996 Provincials final examinations, 241 students wrote the final examination for Chemistry 12, only 27 students wrote the final examination for English Literature 12.

The Vancouver School Board has a rather unique induction process for ESL students. As the ESL students arrive in the district, they are initially tested and screened at the Oakridge Reception and Orientation Centre (OROC) and then placed in the appropriate program in schools in the city as space is available. The district has identified as a priority in a recent internal study, (The ESL Management Review, 1995) the need to place ESL students in their home school. Currently, when space in appropriate programs in the home school becomes available or when the students are able to enter the regular program, they are encouraged to transfer to their home school. Some do; others for various reasons, do not. Students at the two site schools, tend to stay in part because of a perception that these two schools are the best in the city. (This perception is built partly by lists available from real estate agents in Hong Kong and Taiwan listing the "best" schools in Vancouver. Amazingly, the "best" schools correspond to the highest real estate values and therefore the largest commissions.)

In Vancouver, once OROC has assigned an ESL student to a school, it becomes the school's responsibility to develop and administer an educational program for the student. The district supports a model

of reception and transitional classes at the secondary level, rather than immediate integration and pullout assistance. How the educational program is designed is the responsibility of the school. This is one of the ways in which the two site schools differ.

Site A school grouped ESL students in multi-level, multi-age classes, an organization unique in the district. The ESL students were randomly assigned to ESL courses, except ESL Reading and Literature, by the school computer. The classes, therefore, had a wide range of abilities and ages. The program was based on a two year time frame with immediate integration into Physical Education, Math and often Science.

This past year, Site A school introduced an ESL Core course on citizenship for all ESL students. It was a literature based course that seemed very similar in intended outcomes to Chinese Literature classes in Hong Kong and Moral classes in Taiwan. The format of the class and purpose of the class should be very comfortable for ESL students. It would be interesting to see a formal review of this course. The ESL staff at Site A school believed that multi-level, multi-age grouping is a more natural reflection of life, provided a good learning

environment, and a convenient way for students to move into mainstream classes.

Site B school used a more traditional approach based on age and language ability. In the first level, ESL 1, students whose reading ability in English was between 0 to grade 3 level, took five ESL classes and 3 regular classes, usually Math, Physical Education and one elective such as Art, Music, Keyboarding. Students reading in English between grade 3 and 6 level were placed in ESL - 2 which was divided into Junior (age 13 - 15) and Senior (age 16 - 19). This level offered 4 ESL classes and 4 regular classes. The last level was not an ESL level financially supported by the provincial government, but by the school which provided extra support blocks for the students in regular classes. The school identified this as the Transitional Level. Students at this level were taking regular English classes with an English Language Support class and a content driven Transitional Social Studies course with an emphasis on concepts. The ESL staff at Site B school saw their mandate to support ESL students so that they would be able to successfully integrate into the regular classroom with their peers.

Though the structure of the programs was different, it was interesting to note, during classroom visits, that the practice in individual classrooms in the two schools was very similar. Both schools continuously examined students' progress and considered many factors such as oral and written work, attitude and effort, participation and previous schooling, before advancing students. In both schools the length of time spent in the ESL department was dependent on the student's progress.

Both schools focused on reading and used literature within the ESL program. Site A school had a course called ESL Reading and Literature. Site B school made a positive statement about the value of reading literature recreationally to the entire school by having a reading break in the morning.

The ESL reality in the Vancouver School district is similar to that in many school districts in the surrounding area and in major urban areas across North America. The uniquely high percentage of Asian ESL students appears similar to the surrounding districts in the Lower Mainland and also the cities of Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego (Scarcella, 1990). This study will be

beneficial to many school districts that are experiencing an increase in students of different cultures.

Selection of Participants

Participants were interviewed from four groups of individuals: adolescent students ages seventeen, eighteen and nineteen; adults who spoke English as a second language, teachers of ESL students; and parents of ESL students. Those chosen met specific criteria and each group served a function in the study.

Students

For this research project, I chose students who had a common experience in their ESL classes and regular English classes. Therefore, the students identified were grade twelve students presently in regular classes, who have been through the ESL program as adolescents and who have remained at the same school, for their entire education experience in Canada. I identified students with the assistance of the grade twelve counselors and the ESL Department Heads at the site schools, who, using personal knowledge and computerized student records, identified the students to be interviewed based on the following criteria. The sample included both male and female Asian students from Hong Kong and Taiwan who had

completed the ESL program at one of the site schools and were now coping successfully in the regular program at the same site school. Initially 100 students at each site school were identified. Consent letters were sent to parents/guardians and twenty-four students in total were selected from the returned consent forms. School clerical staff contacted each student, assigned an identification code, and made an appointment for the interview, that would be at the convenience of the student, in the library conference room. Twenty-two of the twenty-four students were interviewed. Seven students were from Site A.

Adult ESL

The initial contact was made through a Multi-Cultural Home School Worker for the Chinese community at the Vancouver School Board and then the snow-ball method prevailed, as each interviewee mentioned individuals that they felt would be interested in responding to the project. This group was chosen to corroborate the information from the students and to provide a thicker description. It appears that adults who had their education in one of the Chinese systems and were then involved in the Vancouver education system were able to reflect on the similarities and differences of the two systems. They were very able to share what they considered the

strengths of each system. If they were parents, they were able to recall more of their childhood experiences as they raised their own children and reflected on similar times in their lives. Five adults were interviewed. They were all of Chinese background, all had at least one advanced degree, all were involved in some aspect of education, and all were female. Because of the voluntary nature of sampling, I was not able to interview an adult male.

ESL Teachers

The third group of interviewees were ESL teachers. These participants in the study were chosen with their consent, from the teachers at both sites who taught the classes of Reading and Literature in the ESL department and included the Department Head from each site school. These participants were included for triangulation and providing richer data. A total of eight teachers were interviewed.

Parents of ESL students

The last group interviewed were parents of ESL students. The best possible situation would have been to interview the parents of the adolescents interviewed. However, with a large number of those parents off-shore, or with employment commitments, it was soon

obvious that another group of parents who had a reason to come to the school should be considered. As the Vice-Principal for grade eight and grade ten, one of my responsibilities was to interview parents of new students to the school, this included the parents of ESL students. The nature of the interview required clear communication with the parents who were often not fluent in English, so a Vancouver School Board Translator was often present. During the interview with ESL parents, as part of the orientation to the school, we discussed the curriculum, style of instruction, method of evaluation and involvement in school activities. When the parents began to ask questions, I had the opportunity to request their consent for their participation in this study and to probe their expectations for their children. Not only did this provide interesting information for the study, but also a clearer understanding for the parents of the expectations of the educational system their children were entering. I interviewed 100 parents.

Time Frame

Identification of students began in October of 1994.

Interviewing of students began in January of 1995 at Site A school and concluded in June. Students from Site B school were identified in

September of 1995 and interviewing began in October through to December. ESL adults and ESL teachers were identified and interviewed from January 1996 to June 1996. Parents of ESL students were interviewed from August 1995 through July 1996.

Data Collection Strategies

The ethnographic technique of interviewing was used to collect data. The interview questions were developed during a course on research methods and tested on two different groups of adolescents. The pilot questions were then refined.

Student participants were identified as previously stated. A letter and consent form were mailed home to the parent/guardian. This was followed by a telephone call, a group information meeting and a personal contact at school. After the parent/guardian and student gave consent (Appendix A), the student booked an interview time which suited his or her schedule.

During the interviews an open-ended question format was used which proved to encourage the interviewee to answer as completely as possible. The interviews of the students took between thirty and sixty minutes depending on the depth of response. The questions asked

during the interview (Appendix B) were designed to elicit responses in three areas: Personal Data, Reading History and Current Reading Data. Students who demonstrated an ability to respond were probed more deeply. A tape recorder was used to generate a transcript of the interview. During the interview I made my own notes which included observations related to body language, facial expressions, and some of the nuances and lustre of the interview. Later, interviewees were asked to read over the transcript of their interview for further elaboration and/or clarification. I kept interview records, transcripts, a field journal and made summary observations. Some students were also contacted to clarify a point raised in the interview.

Interviewing is exciting but creates a concern about the trustworthiness of the data. The three techniques I used to gage the validity of response were:

1. The negative evidence, which are responses outside the pattern that can be investigated more thoroughly to yield insight.
2. Triangulation which cross-validates data.
3. Data displays which are data charts accompanied by description that assist in

the analysis. (MacMillan and Schumacher, 1993, p. 419)

In designing this ethnographic research project, I was aware of the six areas that enhance reliability. I was concerned that the role of interviewer might not be perceived as neutral. I am not an "outsider" to the students in my two site schools. However being a staff member did help establish rapport more quickly than if I were a stranger. I also was concerned about using a tape recorder. During the piloting of the interview questions, some of the students voiced concern about being recorded and during the actual interviews I felt some students were constrained in their responses by the presence of the recorder. However the value of an audio tape to generate accurate transcripts of the interviews outweighed this concern.

I was also concerned about the comparability of the study. To overcome this concern I described the findings fully in the hope that future researchers would extend the findings to other comparable groups of Asian adolescents, and perhaps be motivated to examine other adolescent groups of other ethnic origins.

Analysis of Data

Analysis of data consisted of examining and colour coding the transcripts of the participants' responses, as well as my field journal and summary observations. The points that stood out were developed into themes. These themes are reports of the participants' voices (or stories). They represent my interpretation of their stories which are reported verbatim. I hope that by reading these stories, the reader will construct his/her own knowledge or form his/her own interpretation of the recreational reading habits of Asian adolescent students.

Chapter IV

The Findings

Introduction

All the preparation work for the puzzle is complete. It has been time consuming, often tedious, but necessary. Without the border in place, the colours sorted and a plan of attack, there is chaos, and a strong possibility that puzzle pieces could be overlooked or even lost. With the parts in order, the individual puzzle pieces can now be placed. This does not mean that the filling in of the picture will be mechanical, or lack challenge, but rather that there is a focus to the endeavor and the completed picture can be examined to discover meanings or themes.

In this chapter I describe the participant groups, summarize the personal data and reading histories of the student participants, and report on the findings yielded by the study by focusing on the themes identified in the interview responses.

Participants

The Students

The students who participated in this study were registered in the site schools under their legal names, which were Chinese names. In this report, I will be referring to them by their "called" names or the English names they had chosen themselves. This maintains their anonymity but is less clinical than referring to Student A or Student 76. Twenty-two students arrived for the scheduled interviews, seven from Site A school and fifteen from Site B school. As discussed earlier, the willingness of parents to give consent for their children to participate in the survey may, among other reasons, reflect my change in position from Librarian to Vice-Principal and the cultural respect of the Chinese for authority.

Each interview began with the section on Personal Data. This served many purposes. It allowed the students to relax and become accustomed to the situation as they answered rather routine questions.

Adult ESL

I am not comfortable with the title I have given to this group of participants. There is a perception in the minds of some individuals

that ESL indicates something lacking or a flaw. I wish to state that in no way are any of the individuals I interviewed been lacking in anything or flawed in any way. I have felt privileged that they shared their stories with me and that in many cases, long after the purpose of the interview was complete, we continued to share our personal stories. I was persuaded by one of the participants to leave the heading of this section as Adult ESL. As she explained, *"People need to be reminded that regardless of how long we spend in this country and how good our English becomes, we will always be ESL. There are some things about us that we would not or could not change."*

The five ladies I interviewed were all involved in some aspect of education in the Vancouver area. They all had or were working on a Masters Degree and impressed me as life long learners. They had a love of learning. Three of the ladies were mothers, which provided an additional dimension to their stories. Having children of their own seemed to help recall experiences of when they were children, which was helpful for this project. Each lady contributed a unique perspective to the picture I am trying to assemble. As with the student participants, I have identified each ESL adult by an alternative name.

I began each interview with the same questions that were used with the students. This established the adults' personal backgrounds and educational backgrounds and helped open doors to memories long stored. The interviews then proceeded as unstructured interviews to allow interviewees to recall memories of their early education, their experiences with literature, their parents' attitudes to studying and reading and finally any reflections they had on the differences in the Chinese and Western education systems.

Teachers of ESL Students

To this point in the project student and adult ESL interviewees had shared their stories with me. Their perspective was very much an "inside" look at their education and reading. To keep in mind the context of the picture I am assembling, it was also important to see the students in an ESL classroom situation. The six English speaking ESL teachers whom I interviewed from the two site schools were without exception, very dedicated individuals. They came from different teaching backgrounds: one elementary, one special education, one secondary science, one a new teacher who specialized in ESL, one returning to teaching after raising a family, and one with a doctorate

in linguistics. As in the two previous sections, I will refer to each of the teachers by a fictitious name. As noted earlier, the two site schools had set up their ESL departments in different ways and each had a slightly different focus to its program. Also, when interviewing the six ESL teachers, I noticed that each had an individual style and unique focus within the classroom. Often the teachers expressed the same concerns of too much to do in too little time to prepare students to enter the mainstream classes and a feeling of resistance from the regular classroom teachers to accommodating or modifying course work when an ESL student entered the regular classroom. They also felt pressure from the ESL parents to advance the student quickly through the ESL program as if the English language was a subject with a set content that could be memorized, and the pressure of the constant arrival of new students into their classes throughout the year. There was a concern in both schools that, because the Asian students formed the majority of students in the ESL classes and in the school, they speak in their first language while in class and during "free" time in the halls. If there were a more diverse group of students, the language of communication among the students would likely become English.

Parents of Asian ESL Students

I truly believe that all parents have the best interests of their children at heart. When speaking with Asian parents of ESL students, I constantly reminded myself that their comments, opinions, and expectations; many of which might not be realistic in the Western school system, were grounded in a different value system and were an expression of their concern for a successful future for their children. When the students themselves are not consulted about the courses they are to take, it may not be disregard for the wishes of the child, but a display of the involvement of the parents in educational decisions.

Working through an interpreter during the interviews raised some issues of concern. First of all, the time lag between the time I asked a question, through the interpreter to the parent, back to the interpreter and then to me resulted in a problem. The conversation lost the spontaneity I was used to in a one to one interview. Secondly, I was never exactly confident that what I said or what the parent said, was accurately translated without embellishment. For example, a very short question of mine might require a very lengthy translation. I

could not tell from the response of the parent if the question was understood and I was not able to pick up on any reference made by the parent in response to a question that would have been valuable to probe further. I constantly had the feeling that the questions and responses were being filtered for correctness. I therefore spent a great deal of time and effort restructuring and re-asking questions.

Over the past year I had interviewed over one hundred families who wished to have their children attend Site B school. Most of them had been to the OROC facility for testing and placement and my responsibility was to verify their documents and explain the format of the ESL program and the expectations of the school. Some parents made an interview an attempt to shop for a school, unaware of the system of home schools in place in this school district. I will report general impressions from the parents within the context of the themes reported.

Personal Data of Student Participants

All of the participants interviewed were either seventeen or eighteen years of age and had been in Canada anywhere from two to five years. Nine of the participants were female, thirteen participants were male and eight had arrived in Vancouver from Hong Kong, fourteen from Taiwan. Two participants indicated that they had spent time in other countries. Tim spent his kindergarten and grade one years in Texas when his father was working on a doctorate and Lulu spent six years in Costa Rica, when her father was in business there, before returning to Taiwan.

The family situations of the participants were remarkably similar. This is partly a result of the demographics of the area in which the two site schools were situated. In the twenty-two families represented, twenty fathers were professionals or business men, one was retired. Fourteen fathers were carrying out their profession in their home country. Sixteen mothers were at home as the primary care givers, two of these mothers had been teachers in their home country. Of the mothers who worked outside the home, two were in real estate, two were business women, one was a teacher and one was

a nurse. Only one participant indicated that the grandparents were part of the extended family living in the same home.

For their plans after high school and long term goals, twenty participants indicated that they planned to attend a university and pursue a profession in business, medicine, engineering, or science. One was considering teaching. The two participants who did not plan to attend a university were considering the British Columbia Institute of Technology. Both these boys had been in Canada longer than the other participants. Danny had been in Canada for five years and wanted to be either a mechanic or a policeman. Tony had also been in Canada for five years and would like to be a broadcaster in Chinese media in the Vancouver area. Five other participants indicated their long term goals included remaining in Canada. Emerson was determined to return to Taiwan to study medicine (See Figure 1).

Future Plans of the ESL Participants

FIGURE 1 -

NAME	SUBJECT DOING WELL IN	POST SECONDARY PLANS	CAREER PLANS
Howard	Math, Chemistry	University-Forestry	Business
Yonie	Biology, Math, Psychology, Chemistry	University-Medicine	Doctor
Danny	Accounting, Biology	University or BCIT	Policeman or Mechanic
Vikki	Math, Physics, Chemistry, Graphics	University-Engineering	Architect
Jackson	Chemistry	University-Science	Businessman
Ada	Accounting, French	University	Business
Emerson	Biology, Chemistry	University-Medicine	Doctor
Amanda	Biology, Chemistry	University-Science	Dentist
Tony	Marketing, Geography	College or BCIT	Broadcasting
Esther	Math, Art, Drafting	University	Architect
Ulysses	Math, Chemistry, Technology, Biology	University	Science Professor
Lawrence	Physics, Math, Technology, Biology	University	Business
William	Math, Physics, Computer Science	College or University	Computers
Sandy	Math, History	University	Work
Carol	Math, Drafting	University	Accountant
Lulu	Math, Computer Science	University or College	Business
Edwin	Computer Science, Physics, Math	University-Engineering	Engineer
Samuel	Biology, PE, Marketing	College	Teacher?
Connie	Math, Chemistry	University-Commerce	Accountant
Pinkie	Chemistry, Mandarin	College	Early Childhood Education
Vincent	Math, Chemistry, Computer Science	University-Engineering	Computer Engineer
Tim	Physics, Chemistry, Calculus	University-Engineering	Doctorate

The participants were asked to do a self evaluation on the kind of student they considered themselves to be. All considered themselves to be hardworking, average to good students. They admitted to between two and six hours of studying (apart from homework) a day. There was no correlation between length of time in Canada and amount of time spent studying, nor between designation of an average or good student and the amount of time spent studying.

It was very interesting when I asked the participants what school subjects were their favourites. Carol was the only participant to mention English, and that was to tell me she hated English, but loved Math. She was excelling in Math and Drafting. All of the other participants mentioned Math and one of the sciences as their favourite courses and, not surprising because they were also the courses in which they were achieving well. There were some surprises that did not match the pattern of the other participants. Yonie was doing well in Psychology, and she wanted to be a medical doctor. Incidentally, her father was a Psychiatrist. Tony, who wanted to be a broadcaster, was doing well in Geography and Marketing.

Overall, the student participants were a very homogeneous group. They all were hard working, from upper middle-class families, and had a goal of post secondary education, and appeared to be doing well in their studies. They did match the stereotype of Asian adolescents who do well in maths and sciences, but are not involved in the humanities.

I found the participants to be very cooperative and pleasant as I have found all the ESL students with whom I have worked. As I re-listened to the tapes of the interviews several times, reviewed the transcripts several times, and reflected on what I was hearing and reading, I observed that the participants in general were still very poor in their spoken English. They displayed marked difficulty with tense, grammar, sentence structure, misuse of he/she, lengthy pauses, misuse of words, and excessive use of "um." This was something that did not strike me on a day to day basis when I was involved with the students in the schools. I had worked with ESL students for twenty years. During that time I seemed to have modified my own speech so I was using less complex vocabulary and sentence structures, but also I must have been mentally filling in the gaps, correcting the tense, and anticipating the meaning of the oral English of my students. Of

course, not all of the participants involved in the project had the same fluency of spoken English. From listening to the tapes, the students who spoke most fluently were Tim, Lulu, Amanda and Lawrence.

Reading History of Student Participants

Before reporting on the reading history of the participants, I will backtrack to report on the results of previewing the interview questions. When previewing the questions for the interview, I worked with two groups of grade twelve students. The first group included my son and a group of his friends, all of whom had been born in Canada, had English as a first language, and had their entire education program in schools in the Vancouver area. The second group of students were Asian adolescents, from the two site schools, who were also born in the Vancouver area and had their entire education program in schools in the Vancouver area. In total, twenty-six students previewed the questions. Interestingly, both groups responded to the interview questions as I had anticipated. For example, they all remembered being read to as children, could name favorite stories, and recalled being read to in school and going to the library from pre-school on. All the students had given and received

books as gifts and had personal collections of considerable numbers of fiction books. All of the preview students had public library cards and felt comfortable using libraries.

The interviews with my twenty-two participants presented a different picture. The first group of questions in this section was to encourage participants to remember if they had been read stories at an early age and who had done the reading. The intent of these questions was to indicate if literature was considered important in the home and in early education experiences during the participants' early years. There is some information in the literature on the early education in Communist China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, but nothing in the literature of what happened in the homes prior to pre-school. Sixteen of the participants recalled their mother or their father, sister, uncle or grandparents, reading to them; only one participant could remember anyone telling her a story, and that was her father who only knew one story and kept retelling the same story over and over again. Four participants recalled visiting the public library as small children, Tim

**ESL students who were read or told stories
and visited the public library**

FIGURE 2

NAME	READ TO		BY	TOLD STORIES		BY	VISITED PUBLIC LIBRARY	
	YES	NO		YES	NO		YES	NO
Howard	✓		Mother		✓			✓
Yonie	✓		Mother		✓			✓
Danny	✓		Mother		✓			✓
Vikki					✓			✓
Jackson	✓		Mother Grandparents		✓			✓
Ada	✓		Sister		✓			✓
Emerson					✓			✓
Amanda					✓			✓
Tony	✓		Father		✓			✓
Esther	✓		Mother		✓			✓
Ulysses	✓		Mother		✓			✓
Lawrence	✓		Mother, Uncle, Grandparents		✓		✓	
William	✓		Father		✓			✓
Sandy	✓		Father		✓		✓	
Carol				✓		Father		✓
Lulu	✓		Mother		✓			✓
Edwin					✓			✓
Samuel	✓		Mother, Father		✓			✓
Connie	✓		Mother, Father		✓			✓
Pinkie					✓		✓	
Vincent	✓		Mother		✓			✓
Tim	✓		Mother Father		✓		✓	

and Lawrence whose mothers were elementary teachers, Sandy who had an English nanny and Pinkie. They recalled that they found picture books, looked at books, or their mothers picked books to take home. Some of the participants did not think public libraries existed in their home countries (See Figure 2).

Thirteen of the participants went to a pre-school or play-school. Six of the thirteen recalled being read to at this time. Two of those participants attended pre-school in Hong Kong, and four attended pre-school in Taiwan. Of the six participants, four recalled a favourite story from that time, two called them Chinese stories or legends, and one was able to recall the Chinese version of The Three Little Pigs

All twenty-two participants attended kindergarten, Tim in Texas and Lulu in Costa Rica. Seventeen participants recalled being read to in kindergarten, and the favourite type of story was fairy tales, both Chinese and Walt Disney. Ten participants could name a favourite book. Seventeen participants owned their own children's books, anywhere from one to hundreds. All participants reported that their children's books had been either given away or left in storage when they moved to Canada (See Figure 3).

ESL participants who attended preschool and kindergarten

FIGURE 3

NAME	PRESCHOOL				KINDERGARTEN			
	YES	NO	READ TO	FAVORITE STORIES	YES	NO	READ TO	FAVOURITE STORIES
Howard	✓			Chinese-Three Little Pigs	✓		✓	Heroes
Yonie		✓			✓		✓	The Little Ant
Danny		✓			✓			
Vikki	✓		✓	Cinderella	✓		✓	Fairy Tales
Jackson		✓			✓		✓	Fairy Tales
Ada		✓			✓		✓	Bird Drinking Water
Emerson	✓		✓		✓		✓	
Amanda	✓				✓			
Tony	✓				✓		✓	Three Little Pigs
Esther		✓			✓			
Ulysses	✓		✓	Snow White	✓		✓	
Lawrence		✓			✓		✓	Adventure
William	✓		✓	Chinese story about a monkey	✓		✓	Animals
Sandy	✓				✓		✓	
Carol	✓				✓			Disney Fairy Tales
Lulu		✓			✓		✓	Fairy Tales
Edwin		✓			✓		✓	
Samuel	✓				✓		✓	Animals
Connie	✓		✓	Chinese legends	✓		✓	
Pinkie	✓				✓			Chinese Story about a father and son
Vincent		✓			✓		✓	Three Little Pigs
Tim	✓		✓		✓		✓	

As the participants entered elementary school, the greatest variety appeared in their answers. Thirteen participants responded that they had been read to in elementary school. Lulu was read to in Costa Rica, but not after she returned to Taiwan. Tim was read to in Texas, but not after he returned to Hong Kong. He explained further that the system in Hong Kong was different. School was in session for five and a half days a week, and every other Saturday, the teacher would open a cupboard in the classroom in Hong Kong and students who had finished their work could select a book to read. William said he could remember being read to in Taiwan, but not often, and Howard, Yonie and Danny remembered being read to from the textbook, some very old Chinese stories. As Lawrence (Taiwan) explained,

Well, the teachers, if you are in a younger grade, the teacher will sometimes read the texts with you or they will ask the students to read certain parts just as we did here. But we focus more on meanings about certain types of words instead of look inside stories of how it relates to your life so the students don't require a lot of self to the story instead of learning

*more memory about the words that they are going to use,
certain meanings.*

Nine participants reported owning some more advanced books. The great variety, in the types of books the participants reported as favourites, was not surprising; heroes, Chinese history, Story of Bi, fairy tales, Little Women, autobiographies, animal stories, comics, adventure, science fiction, Power Rangers, Baby Sitter novels, romance stories, and detective stories. This variety does indicate availability of some types of literature for children.

Twelve participants remembered visiting the school library in elementary school. Seven of those were in schools in Taiwan. However the reports were not encouraging. Of the twelve, one went once, one went twice, two went to socialize, one went to look around, another did not go often, two went to read and five went to do research projects. Yonie commented that her elementary library *"wasn't very good, not like libraries here."* Eleven participants, five from Hong Kong and six from Taiwan, remembered visiting the public library, but only to find books for research.

Compared to the preview group, the responses from this group of participants indicated that involvement with children's literature

was much lower than involvement of similar age students in the Vancouver setting. However, the majority of participants remembered being read to at home, in pre-school and in kindergarten. Participant responses indicated a lack of involvement with literature in the elementary school. This finding corresponded with that found in the professional literature the literature which described a focus on academic work, and the use of literature was primarily within the study of Chinese language and moral instruction.

Reading Data

The questions in this part of the interview were designed to discover how the participants themselves felt about reading, including their perception of whether or not they were good readers, what they felt prevented them from reading for pleasure, if their families were supportive of reading, and what expectations their parents had toward reading for pleasure. I have included supporting evidence from the other participant groups. Examining the transcripts of the student participants' audio recordings as well as those of other participants, I discovered a number of findings which I shall report as themes. Since this is as much the participants' story as my own, I

shall quote the responses verbatim including the time fillers and false starts of oral language and inaccurate grammar.

What are the ESL students' perceptions of recreational reading?

Theme One: ESL students' perception of themselves as readers

The student participants' answers to the first questions underline the problem of reading in English as a second language. In the literature Krashen (1992) states that if students have the reading habit in their first language (L1), the skill should transfer to their second language (L2),

Once the ability to read is acquired, there is good evidence that much of this ability transfers to the second language (see Cummins, 1991).....there is reason to suspect that the pleasure reading habit itself transfers. A pleasure reader in the first language will become a pleasure reader in the second language." (pp. 87-88)

When asked what kind of reader they thought they were, the students either asked for clarification as to whether I meant in English

or Chinese or made the distinction themselves. This, and the answers they gave, indicated that to them there was a difference in reading for pleasure in their first and second languages . Their perception of themselves as readers can be classified into three different kinds of readers: slow in both languages, slow in English, and good in both languages.

Pinky (Hong Kong, five years) considered herself a slow reader in English and Chinese. *"Because I don't read often. I have to concentrate and I have to read slow to understand."* Danny (Hong Kong, five years), also considered himself slow in both languages.

Slow reader in both languages. I can't read Chinese ones because I try to concentrate but as I read I'll think of something that relates to that things that I'm reading. When I think of that, I think of all the other stuff. No even when I'm reading for like English class, I go daydreaming."

When I pointed out to Danny that part of reading is thinking of *"something relates to that thing,"* and it is part of making meaning of the literature, he expressed confusion. He was under the impression that he should be reading for a purpose and anything that distracted him from that purpose was wrong. We continued that part of the

discussion, but I felt Danny would not be comfortable with the idea of meaning making without further re-enforcement. Tim (Hong Kong, four years) described himself as a slow reader in English. He rarely read in Cantonese and found that when reading in English he was not used to long passages. *"I have trouble comprehending when I'm reading a big novel."* Tony (Hong Kong, five years), expressed the same difficulty: *"I find it, its okay, like I can scan it through, but not the whole page."* Amanda (Taiwan, three and a half years), described her reading as,

Pretty low level because I don't start reading until three years ago. In Taiwan most of the time I play softball and go out with friends, not really do school work.

Samuel and Yonie considered themselves average readers in both their languages, but neither read as much as they would like because of school work.

The following students felt they read better in Chinese. Vincent (Taiwan, two years), William (Taiwan, three years), Edwin (Taiwan, five years), and Howard (Taiwan, four and a half years). Connie (Taiwan, four years) and Vikki (Hong Kong, two years and 9 months) agreed but gave additional information.

I think I would be a fast reader in Chinese because usually I scan books instead of reading it. Not too slow in English but not too fast because I sometimes have to stop reading and find out a word in the dictionary. (Connie)

I don't read very often. I don't read well (in English) because there are many words that I don't understand. (Vikki)

Esther (Taiwan, five years) preferred to read in Chinese because she was familiar with the style.

I like to read Chinese better. I like to read the romantic kind of thing so and I can read quite fast with those but then because I think the writing style of English and Chinese is different. think the Chinese is basically, like normally they write about fiction like involving the personal struggle and maybe romance in it.

In English a lot of categories, like adventure, horror or science fiction and I'm not really into those that's why.

However, five of the students considered themselves good readers: Carol (Taiwan, five years), Sandy (Taiwan, two years), Ada (Hong Kong, five years) and Ulysses (Taiwan, five years). Jackson

(Hong Kong, five years), considered himself a good reader in both English and Chinese, but,

I think my English reading level is a bit better than my Chinese one because I don't remember some of the Chinese words because I have not read Chinese since I came.

When asked what language they preferred to read in, twelve students indicated they preferred to read in their first language. The reasons varied from, "I'm faster," "the vocabulary," to "it depends on what I'm going to read." Yonie preferred to read in English,

because I feel that there is still some things that I need to improve on and also grammar, little mechanical stuff and I also feel that I'm in the English country even though Chinese is still important to me, but I feel that English will be the most important one right now.

Theme Two: Many ESL students read for language and skills improvement.

Most of the students said they enjoyed reading, but after careful probing some interesting comments came forth which related to what

the students like to read and why. Lulu liked to read realistic stories such as journals and Emerson said,

I like to read books that will help me in my education, like medicine. Because other things outside of school and I think it will help me in my future education. I don't like school here, we waste time talking and taking subjects we don't need.

William, Tony, and Tim read for information and facts. Vikki read for facts and to improve her writing skills. Amanda read novels, but for the purpose of improving her English.

I don't really like school work, but I found out that I have to work on it and the way to improve my English, especially when sometimes in a class we have to write a class essay and the only way to improve my mark is to read a lot. My cousins have been telling me I have to read in order to achieve.

However, a few of the students I interviewed did read for pleasure. Lawrence did not consider himself a very

experienced reader. Because I still like adventure types. I don't really like interpretive stories. I more or less like the escape type. Sometimes I just read it for pleasure.

Only six of the twenty-two students admitted to reading for pleasure. This group was definitely a minority. In the study I was able to explore their responses and present my findings as to why this small group of students enjoyed reading and became readers.

Theme Three: The ESL students who read for pleasure had access to literature and were encouraged by a significant person to read

Danny remembered his elementary teacher in Taiwan reading to the class from the textbooks. He remembered liking Chinese fairy tales and recalled what his favourite book was about. Danny considered himself a slow reader, but I consider him a meaning maker. Two responses that I felt indicated what made him a reader are that he got books to read from a teacher and, even though both his parents wanted him to read more to learn more, he knew both of them read for fun.

Ulysses seemed to be a bit of a rebel. His parents wanted him to read textbooks and study more. He read for pleasure instead of studying and enjoyed adventure books and horror books. Ulysses' grandparents lived next door and he demonstrated an attachment to

his grandfather who had "a huge library" of all types of books. Ulysses borrowed books from his grandfather and discussed books with him.

Lulu remembered Walt Disney fairy tales in Spanish. She read about one hour a night and preferred real accounts about people because she liked to understand why people do things. She was a very social person and spent a lot of time with her friends. She visited the library often to borrow novels. Her father read for fun and the family talked about what they were reading.

Connie liked to read romances or books on reincarnation that she shared with her friends. Both her parents read for fun and "are not very strict - they allow me to read." Connie estimated that she read at least one book a week.

Lawrence did not consider himself an experienced reader because he read adventure stories for escape. He completed a book in two days. His mother was a teacher in Taiwan and always brought home the books her students were reading. Lawrence recalled his uncle and grandparents read to him as a child.

Vincent had two shelves of detective stories as a boy in Taiwan. He recalled his mother frequently taking him to bookstores to buy

books which were cheap in Taiwan. He now preferred mystery and science fiction books and read about four to five hours a week.

What makes a reader is different in each individual. However each of these six students who indicated a steady involvement with literature had another person, a grandparent, friend, or teacher, who encouraged him/her to read.

What influence does the age at which the students come to Canada and begin second language acquisition have on whether they read literature for recreation?

Theme Four: Many students did not read because reading in English is hard.

All the participants responded that reading in English is hard. Vocabulary, idioms, comprehension, grammar, and religious references were given consistently as reasons for difficulty. Esther and Emerson referred to the size of the books in English and the way the books were set up as problematic. Yonie described that her attempts at comprehension was a direct reference to the literature and the model

of teaching English as a foreign language, which was examining each word for meaning.

Very frustrating. Because I actually find all the words I don't know I just try to find the meaning for them, but when I put them together they don't make sense at all.

Students indicated concern with speed, vocabulary, comprehension and approach to both why they were reading and how they went about decoding. Yonie commented that the frustration of reading might be related to the age of the students.

I think it's because they feel that when they read it they find it hard being no way they're quite as grown up. They find they why it is so hard for me in English, but it's so easy to read in Chinese.

Tim felt it did not matter which language he read in:

I don't know a whole lot of words in Chinese and I don't know a whole lot of words in English. I think I came here before I had a chance to do any advanced Chinese grammar stuff and I also skipped that part when I came here. I skipped, I kind of missed the part when kids start learning vocabularies and grammar structure in both countries.

To find yourself as a young adult, in a situation in a new country with a new language that prevents you from participating easily in reading the same stories your peers are reading, because the stories have words too difficult for you to comprehend, must be frustrating, embarrassing and discouraging.

Theme Five: ESL students needed time to socialize into the Canadian school system

Another theme identified was the time needed to adjust to the new system. Lawrence talked of the issue of experience or background.

I think it's a very complicated issue because it depends on the students and the main problem like every student will come from Taiwan or Hong Kong will have that problem in interpreting the story and not every student in Canada do it because they were born here either. Actually it gives extra difficulty to students, to immigrants because we first of all they are not from this language and secondly they, sometimes when read the story we read it over, we understand it but we don't think much about it. So when the teacher pops

*up a topic, say, what is symbolism is this, we cannot say
because we cannot see anything, we just see a blank because we
don't know what it relates to, we have no tendency of thinking
that....*

This supported what a number of the other students had said about their difficulty in reading English and comprehending the meaning and understanding the idioms and religious references. Let me put this into the context of my own experience. My youngest son has a minor learning disability which causes him difficulty in bringing down the appropriate word when speaking. His elementary school provided extra help for him, and a speech pathologist taught him techniques to associate words. For example, if he had difficulty with a word he would say to himself, looks like...., sounds like...., rhymes with...., until he found the right word. When he went to secondary school and took French, he had an impossible time because when the French word he wanted would not come, his base vocabulary was too small to make associations. To me, what the students in this project were saying was, for the expectations of a student their age, their experience with the culture and their background in literature was too limited for them

to make the associations needed. They do not easily encounter age appropriate literature.

Miranda (Adult ESL) began sharing books with her children at a very early age. By the time the family came to Canada, her son was in grade six and he was already reading adult books in Chinese. *"But his English reading level is only about grade one or two, so those books would be too immature for him and it took me a long time before I could hook him into reading English."*

This was endorsed by Joyce (ESL Teacher) who expressed some concerns she had with using literature in the ESL classroom. She referred to a *"kids culture"* that students who have grown up in North America have. There was a common reference to stories, entertainment figures, foods, and possibly activities. She felt the literature was so focused on our culture that the ESL students felt excluded. She did not see the value for a fifteen year old of using children's books or nursery rhymes to fill in the cultural gap. Yet she saw the need to prepare the students with the background they would need for the literature they would encounter in the senior English courses. She suggested that teachers could use literature that focused

on universal values such as love, death, and thus explore the different value systems and talk about the similarities and differences.

This raises the issue of the age of the student when coming to this country. The younger the student, the longer the time they have to be exposed to more of the background needed for ease of success

Elaine (Adult ESL) came to Canada at the age of twelve:

it's a very critical age to move out of your own country and into a brand new one because at that time I just beginning to understand the world, you know the culture and what not and discovering who you are as a person. So and yet I discovered myself in North American culture.

However, not all Asian parents are aware of the need for socialization. All the parents of Asian adolescents whom I interviewed seemed anxious that their children graduate from secondary school in Canada. There was a great deal of concern that if the students did not graduate with their peers, it is a reflection on the ability of the students and on the family. This was consistent with references in the literature that a child's performance in school is a reflection on the immediate family and on the ancestors and family members yet to be born (Chyu, 1991, p. 133). The fact of learning a new language and

adapting to a different school system seem not to be seen as an impediment to graduating "*on time*." Parents consistently ask to have their children skip the ESL program or accelerate through it. I had been assured repeatedly that the students would have a tutor and would take summer school. We try to place the students in a regular math class and parents ask to have their children tested to be placed above the age level grade. Many times when I met with parents and a student during the year, because of a situation at school, we discussed what could be done at home to support the student. Often I heard that the student arrived home immediately after school, spent two or three hours with a tutor, ate dinner and then did homework for three or four hours. This pressure to excel and progress quickly ties in to the theme identified in the responses presented later in this report.

What impact did the educational model of their home country have on whether ESL students saw reading recreationally as an activity in which to engage?

Theme six: The ESL students' pleasure reading habits were affected by the education model of their home country

When I probed the sixteen participants who did not like to read on what type of reading they did in their home country, the information they responded with substantiates the information from the literature on the transmission model of teaching, and memorization. Howard, Carol and Ulysses, all from Taiwan, stated clearly that their literature readings in school were in a thin textbook.

The textbook, its like every section is a story so you read it.

You're supposed to write what you think about it but mostly we have a separate study guide; it tells you all the answers. Mostly we just copy from that. We just look at that, 'oh yea, that's it' and you just write it down as your own thoughts. (Ulysses)

... the study guide is very thick. It tells us everything we

need to know. So we memorize what the teacher and book tell and pass the exams.”(Carol)

Nina (Adult, ESL) recalled very clearly her early education in Taiwan, the structure, the strictness and the contrast to her education in Vancouver which was in comparison very relaxed. She was not read to in Taiwan by her teachers, but was read to frequently by her teachers in Vancouver.

Winnie (Adult ESL) had the opportunity to visit classrooms and libraries in Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia. She observed that few schools had libraries and that the classrooms were very structured and not very relaxed. In comparison, she considered classrooms here very relaxed, something she felt the students would have trouble adjusting to.

Nursery school in Mainland China left a very strong imprint on Elaine’s (Adult ESL) memory. She remembered, *“a very, very stern, rigid teacher, and if you don’t do things according to her way you’ll be punished.”* Nursery school combined curriculum and child baby-sitting. The teacher did not read to the students.

We did have a very structured schedule in the morning. We had to do certain things and then nap time and then free play in the

afternoon and we also have field trips once in awhile in the neighborhood area in our own community.

Elaine recalls her kindergarten teacher reading to the class. The stories were about war heroes, *"because it's a communist country and they often want to glorify soldiers and I remember quite a bit."* She did not own any books at that time; they were very expensive and only certain kinds of books were available.

In Hong Kong schools, there still seemed to be a focus on correctness or conformity to a model, and on moral education.

Miranda (Adult ESL) illustrated with this story:

In the Chinese way of education there is much emphasis on being correct, like for example, if you do a mathematics, you're giving 10 sums and you are asked to do it on a certain format like two underlines, two times or the answer or leave two space, even if the answer is right and the format is wrong. Then they ask you to copy the whole thing again. And then for Chinese essay for example, you write the essay and then you take it to the teacher then we would be asked to copy the whole thing again with the corrections. So having a good copy and having a correct copy is very important.

Grace (Adult ESL) had been in literature classrooms in both Hong Kong and Vancouver, and agreed that probably when a teacher was teaching English literature in Hong Kong, the teacher was teaching the correct meaning, the correct interpretation.

Hong Kong students who learn English Literature they are looking for something correct, they are afraid to say I read the poem and then I tell you...what I feel. They are afraid to do that because they haven't been taught.

She reminded me that the students in Hong Kong were very exam orientated, so the correct answer was very important to them.

Very few of the parents I interviewed were aware of the difference in education models between their home country and Canada. One mother was aware that there was a difference which she described as Canadian schools "*encouraging students to be creative.*" She believed Hong Kong schools "*give a good base of knowledge.* Without a good base of knowledge, you cannot do anything, you cannot achieve or be creative." This is very reminiscent of Chyu (1991): "How can one hope to be a great musician, or artist, or physician if he has not studied hard and learned from rote the basics of these art forms" (Chyu, 1991, pp. 99-100). One father from Taiwan criticized the

education system in Taiwan which he described as *"all memorization. Students have to learn to think. This system is better, students learn to solve problems."* As most parents were only familiar with the educational model of their home country, which did not encourage reading for pleasure, it does not seem likely that they would encourage reading for pleasure in Canada.

Another theme which is closely related is the expectations of the home culture and parents to recreational reading.

What are the expectations of the home culture and parents to reading recreationally?

Theme Seven: Parents did not encourage reading for pleasure

The questions in the final part of the interview were designed to try to determine the students' perceptions of the expectations of the parents to recreational reading for pleasure. The questions sought to find out if the parents read for pleasure themselves, if the parents had said anything to their children about reading for pleasure, and if the parents had indicated in any way an attitude toward reading for pleasure.

In answer to the question, "What have your parents said about reading for fun?" there was an indication that either the students misunderstood the question or the parents did not understand the concept of recreational reading for pleasure. I did find in the transcripts of many interviews that time had been spent defining recreational reading for fun. Even then, from the following responses I was not sure if the concept was truly understood. Two students reported that their parents encouraged them to read recreationally for pleasure. Yonie reported,

They just said it will help you a lot, so read. Because I think they learn it from experience and I also see that they always read, so there must be a reason, and I think I found the reason. You can really enjoy a lot and you can learn a lot too.

William's parents did not talk about those kind of things and the parents of Amanda, Connie, Ada, and Esther said "*it is all right to read as long as it does not affect your marks.*" The parents appeared to be assuming that reading for pleasure had a negative impact on the school work, not a positive effect which is what the literature would indicate. The parents of Howard and Vikki felt reading would help improve English skills and the parents of Samuel, Lulu, Tim and

Carol believed reading would improve English and increase knowledge. Ulysses was encouraged to read in both English and Chinese. He should read in English to improve his English and in Chinese so he would not forget his Chinese. Emerson's mother asked him to read more English books so he could then read more quickly and do better in his English course. Edwin and Pinky reported that their parents did not encourage them to read recreationally for pleasure, but wanted them to read textbooks and study to become smart. Sandy's parents said reading for pleasure was useless, "*They always go, 'why are you reading those junk books?'*"

What the parents said to their children certainly influenced their attitude to recreational reading for pleasure. Pinky's parents did not encourage her to read anything but textbooks and Pinky explained with some insight that her parents were "*part of a generation that didn't read, so they don't encourage us to read.*" Sandy's parents wanted her to read for a purpose, "*Why don't you read something that's more concrete like the new theory of molecules?*" Most students felt their parents' attitude to reading was positive because reading was seen as a way of improving English and increasing knowledge. The same attitude was detected in Grace's (Adult ESL) assertion that

....some parents do understand that reading for fun will be connected with improving their vocabulary and so on, but those that are new immigrants, they may not understand and so they and because in Hong Kong if you read for fun you are wasting time, the time can be better spent.

All the students felt that it was important to have their studying done first. Howard summarized it very well:

I think they believe that reading is very well, its good but usually they say I must take care of all my school work. I must finish my homework before reading.

Nina (Adult ESL) recalled her mother hiding books so she and her brothers would not read instead of doing homework. Winnie (Adult ESL) had some definite observations on what Chinese parents expected from watching the parents of her friends when growing up and her Chinese friends who were her age and had families now. Winnie observed that many parents considered reading and studying the same, because to them "reading" was reading a textbook for knowledge. *"They think reading a novel is frivolous and not having any benefit."* In the families in Hong Kong, Miranda (Adult ESL) reported a very strong expectation for high grades. Parents would

closely monitor the children, and provide a tutor if necessary. Parents did not see reading a novel as necessary:

Every Chinese parent wouldn't have the concept that you could learn by, for example, through playing, extracurricular activities, a child could learn the language through reading novels. They could understand if it's English novels, because then it would be made up of English words, but not Chinese novels. That's what they say it they read in English to improve your vocabulary, increase their comprehension - it's never to understand what the characters are feeling.....reading a novel - it's not the image of studying.

Theme Eight: "Be obedient, study hard, be successful"
summed up the expectations of the home
culture.

Howard told me a story which illustrates the expectations of the home culture very well and corresponds to the cultural emphasis on education found in the literature.

Most of the parents in Taiwan, maybe in China and Hong Kong believe that school is the most important things other than anything else. Like my sister learn ballet and always get in presentation or have some shows and she learn very well. I can always hear my mother say, "Ballet is only for you to be a hobby or interest. Studying is the most important things than anything else." They think education is just like our future and most important things.

The students felt that parents expected time to be spent on their school work first.

Nina (Adult ESL) enjoyed school in Vancouver, was expected to study hard and was not allowed to be involved in the social aspect of the school such as teams, clubs or dances as that time was for studying. Winnie (Adult ESL) confirmed that, *"Chinese parents really like their children to study and get good grades."*

In fact, studying was so much valued in Hong Kong that before the student entered school, a private ceremony was held at home initiating the students into studying. Miranda (Adult ESL) described this ceremony. She bowed to her father, also to the book, The three character classic.

All the lines on the books are made of three Chinese words and then you cover it practically everything from geography, history, moral like they tell you how, who was the first king or in three word lines, it's very amazing.

The last few lines of this book are the most important. Miranda's father read the last few lines, copied them out for Miranda and had her memorize them.

They say you should really study hard so you can make a success of yourself and then be the pride of your family and be a good citizen.

The philosophy expressed in those last three lines is the philosophy most Chinese have been brought up with. Miranda told me the story of the mother who was interviewed in Hong Kong with the first New Year's baby. The reporter asked what the parents' wish would be for the child. The mother replied, "*would obey their parents, be good children and study hard.*" We discussed if this philosophy was still prevalent in Chinese society and if it crossed all levels of Chinese society.

In Hong Kong, very recent years (last 10 or 15 years), because it's getting so commercialized, studying, well of course you study, you do, study is paramount importance - but then if you are able to earn money without studying, you still get the same recognition. So to obtain success through studying is I cannot say it's losing its importance but then you see like film stars for example, they usually earn lots of money and they still have lots of fans and people admire them.

Every parent I met in a reception interview assured me his or her adolescent was a "good student, study hard." I realize now that this phrase has special significance and is the expectation of an Asian parent. When parents asked if there is a textbook for their students to take home and I explain that ESL does not have a textbook, that the best thing to do to learn English is to practice speaking and to visit the library and borrow some books to read, I am often interrupted and a correction is made to what is perceived by them as a misunderstanding. They want something at home for their children to study. The parents and home culture see education as serious business; reading for pleasure does not meet that criterion. Because the expectations of the Asian students' home culture and parents to

reading recreationally are different from the expectations of schools in North America, it is not surprising that the ESL students I interviewed had difficulty adjusting to the expectations of schools in Vancouver.

Theme Nine: ESL students had difficulty adjusting to the expectations of schools in Vancouver

Student participants, ESL teachers, and ESL adults all referred to the difficulties students experienced adjusting to the expectations of the regular classroom in Vancouver. Lawrence was particularly eloquent about his own experience adjusting to school and had obviously spent some time reflecting on his experience and that of his peers. Lawrence talked about three areas of adjustment. When we discussed the type of classroom he was used to in Taiwan, and the expected response to literature, he stated:

We all use a standard text, we have reference books we use as well, so actually we don't express our own opinion to the textbooks, and so we actually not express our own opinion about the poem or the piece of reading, instead, we would dig into our reference book. We would find the standard meaning.

We don't think too much about our own opinion, our interpretation....In my English class (here) it still is a great difficulty to interpret it what I know in my words to interpret it what I think, I don't know what I think. Even though sometimes I have an idea, I don't know how to write it out....Yes, elements of feeling feared because we don't know it that's what the teacher thinks and we are afraid the teacher will say that's not what I think, you are totally wrong so I give you bad marks.

In this response, Lawrence indicated a lack of confidence in his, and perhaps speaking for his peers, ability to give an interpretation. He also gave us a glimpse into his background where he placed the teacher in a position of fear and authority. In the reference to marks, he also expressed the concern with evaluation and being correct.

The second area of adjustment that Lawrence discussed was time.

I think it requires time and an adjustment from each individual students to the environment we have here and I sometimes I find it really hard to interpret a story even right now when I'm in English class. I have little experience about the

interpretation of stories so I still find it difficult for me when teachers just pops up a copy and say 'you write something.'

I have to think a long time to get to what I'm going to write so I think it would be helpful if we can use some easier interpretive stories....Yeah, that's why I'm still trying to find the standard answer to do the texts or the story in the books because it's easier for me to understand what the story is instead of thinking because it takes more time to think myself.

This may be why, as a librarian, I encountered former ESL students in the library looking for a book that gave the meaning of the story or poem. If the meaning was written in a book, it must be the correct meaning; it would explain or make connections to literary background and it would take less time.

Joyce (ESL Teacher) taught ESL reading. Her course was based on literature. The idea behind the course was to introduce the ESL students to English literature, prepare them for the expectations of the regular English classroom, and make it an enjoyable experience. Joyce said it was not easy to get the students to respond. One of the regular teachers in the school, who had a large number of Asian students in her regular English class, described the year as the

"year of the silent stare." Joyce believed that she had to *"teach the students that their ideas are really valid."* At the beginning of every year, and with each new student who came into the class during the year, she began to teach them that there is no single or right answer when responding to literature.

....When it comes to feelings and relationships between people which you find in novels and short stories, when you talk about conflict, when you talk about character, that sort of thing, that there's often no right answer, that it's what you read into it and so it takes a lot for kids to understand that I'm not going to say no, you're wrong, this is the right answer.

Joyce said it takes about two months for the silent stares in her class to disappear.

Expectations for her classroom was something Pat (ESL Teacher) began to work on the first day of school. She had the students role model the class situation they come from. In vignettes they developed themselves, the students would take on the student and teacher roles they remembered from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Philippines and so on. Often they portrayed the teacher as a male, *"sitting there being the king,"* and not doing anything and the students

work out of a text. In her classroom, there were no rules except students were to cooperate with each other and help each other out. Pat hoped to promote a collaborative atmosphere in the classroom and played a lot of games with the students to introduce the role of teacher and students in classrooms. Pat used many different activities to initiate students into the expectations of the Western classroom.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The last puzzle piece has been placed; the picture is complete. There is a sense of relief and a feeling of accomplishment. On our vacation, if time permits, we usually like to leave the finished jigsaw puzzle out so everyone who has been involved has a chance to admire the completed picture and comment on his/her involvement. We will reflect on a difficult part of the picture, comment on the piece that did not seem to fit anywhere, notice if the intensity of the colours in the completed picture is true to the picture on the lid, and remark if the completed puzzle is an exact replication of the picture which had been our guide. Before dismantling the puzzle to return it to its box, we may decide that the next time we do this particular puzzle, we would change how we sort the colours, or how we approach the assembling. There is always the discussion of what we are going to do with the puzzle now that it is complete. We have sent some puzzles home with

visitors as their souvenir of the vacation. We have mounted one. Once we turned a puzzle over and wrote a letter on the back before dismantling it and mailing it. Usually though, the puzzle is put away until another rainy day.

I do not want this project to be filed away on a shelf somewhere until a rainy day. Therefore, in this final chapter I will briefly summarize the main ideas of Chapters One through Three and, using the findings from Chapter Four, present conclusions and recommendations based on my research. The conclusions of what cultural factors have an influence on Asian adolescent students' recreational reading habits will be discussed under the headings of the four research questions.

1. What are ESL students' perceptions of recreational reading?
2. What influence does the age at which the students come to Canada and begin second language acquisition have on whether they read for recreation?
3. What impact did the educational model of their home country have on whether ESL students saw reading recreationally as an activity in which to engage?
4. What are the expectations of the home culture and parents

to reading for pleasure?

Recommendations will be made for all groups involved in education to encourage Asian students of ESL background to read recreationally for pleasure.

This research was prompted by a concern that Asian adolescent students of ESL background were not reading recreationally in English. Being brought in an environment at home and school that valued "story," my experience as a teacher-librarian, and the underlying pedagogy that supports the benefits of recreational reading for pleasure, set the stage for the need for this study. Recreational reading for pleasure continues language development without formal education, contributes to the continuing development of human attributes, and helps adolescents identify who they are. Students who read recreationally for fun, have a good vocabulary, write better than those who do not read (Krashen, 1992), participate in class discussions with confidence, and have a strong sense of story. My belief in the value of recreational reading prompted this study which was designed to understand the educational and cultural background of Asian adolescent students and to make recommendations to ensure that all students in our English classrooms are equipped with the

skills and motivation to read for pleasure and thus are able to participate fully in class regardless of their previous educational experience.

A review of the literature on the history of literature and reading instruction in Western culture provided the historical context of the project, and enabled me to understand both cultures and how we came to be where we are now. The literature also provided an understanding of Western perspectives on why reading is taught, why literature is included in classrooms and what the recreational reading habits of Western adolescents are. The English classroom of today emphasizes the holistic understanding of literature with a focus on the aesthetic reading of a text and the individual meaning the reader creates from the text. Students read efferently and aesthetically from a great variety of sources. A special field of children's literature has developed, written for their pleasure, not for information and guidance.

I reviewed the literature on the education system and culture of China in order to begin to understand how three distinct education systems have evolved - Communist China, Hong Kong and Taiwan - and began to formulate interview questions. The education systems of

Hong Kong and Taiwan transmit Chinese values through moral lessons in literature and students look for one correct meaning of a literary passage to pass examinations. Traditional Chinese values encouraged students to study hard.

Chinese learners of English face two distinct challenges when learning English, in addition to the basic difference in the method of teaching. First is the difference in the language itself, based on symbols which must be memorized; the structure and the style of the language are very different from English. Second, when studying English in China, it is as a foreign language to be used for academic or business purposes, not as a language of day to day life. The method for learning English as a foreign language tends to be transmissive, grammar and text based (Kohn, 1992, and Tinberg, 1986).

The participants of the study, comprised of students, adult ESL, teachers of ESL and parents of ESL, were interviewed over a period of a year and a half at the two site schools. This study yielded results which supported my earlier conjecture that cultural factors influence the recreational reading habits of Asian ESL students. The conclusions of this study will be reported in the next section with corresponding recommendations.

Research Conclusions and Recommendations

1. What are the ESL students' perceptions of recreational reading?

Many of the ESL students recalled very little involvement in their home countries with story or recreational reading during their elementary school years. This lack of recollection includes being read to at home, visiting the public library and being read to for fun or encouraged at school to read on their own for fun. They recalled the emphasis was on academics, reading for information, and doing well on tests. The students developed the impression that recreational reading was a waste of their time, not important and not necessary.

The ESL students indicated that since their arrival in Canada they do not read recreationally as much as they should or would like to. There were a variety of reasons given which included the time needed to study their subjects and the difficulty of reading in English due to lack of vocabulary and background. Another reason could be the lack of age appropriate materials at their reading level, unfamiliarity with types of literature in English, and a lack of

understanding of why recreational reading for pleasure is beneficial. However, a number of the ESL students perceived recreational reading as a means to improve their English skills and to improve their knowledge base.

The type of experience the students had in their home country with the study of literature is different enough from the expectations of the English classroom in Canada that response to and interpretation of literature is difficult for them. They are used to reading for a single, correct meaning in order to pass an examination and feel a lack of self confidence, necessary background, experience and time when asked to respond aesthetically to literature.

Therefore, I would recommend that ESL teachers who have the mandate to teach the English language to their students and prepare them for integration into the regular classroom, be aware of the perceptions and experiences of their students with literature. They should emphasize the value North American culture places on recreational reading by reading to the students, encouraging them to read, providing access to books in the classroom that are age appropriate in English and in their first language. The ESL teachers should give the students the skills necessary to write and speak using

“story” and to interact with literature. Or as Joyce (ESL Teacher) recounts from her experience:

So reading a lot of literature to them and asking them for their ideas, asking them to relate or how they relate, if they do at all, to the literature, asking them for their ideas, discussing ideas as a class, and probably one of the most important things they see is how their teacher is enjoying the literature that they read.

The students should also be encouraged to express their feelings about literature in an atmosphere of acceptance. As Joyce (ESL Teacher) experienced, when that happens,

they start to become engaged then the class becomes exciting, the class becomes fun and to get totally outrageous ideas, they love doing that - they love experimenting with how far they can go with their ideas. And then the class wakes up. To me the light bulb is going on.

The regular teachers of English should not assume that all students in their classes are equipped with the skills necessary for interacting and meaning making with literature and review and practice the skills required on an increasing level of difficulty. This

will aid the ESL student and the regular student who are not sufficiently confident to “make” their own meaning. Regular English teachers should also read good literature to the class to both model an activity which is valued and to expose students of ESL background to a level of literature that would be difficult for them to read on their own.

The school library should prominently display and actively promote recreational literature and ensure that barriers do not exist for ESL students in accessing collections. Collections should include age appropriate materials in English and in first languages.

The school should publicly demonstrate that recreational reading is valued by scheduling reading periods into the timetable and ensuring adults in the building model this behaviour.

2. What influence does the age at which the students come to Canada and begin second language acquisition have on whether they read recreationally?

Developmentally, adolescence is a difficult time of life. To leave everything that is familiar and come to a new country is difficult at any age, but particularly for an adolescent. Socially and culturally Elaine and Miranda feel displaced and must forge an identity for

themselves as individuals in an alien environment and a strange culture.

Educationally adolescents are placed in an ESL program where their past achievements in school and their ability to read at the same level as their peers have little value. What is important now is how quickly they can learn the language and retain the status of "grade ____ student" as opposed to "ESL student." They fear during the process of being an ESL student, before moving into the "regular" classroom, that they are missing knowledge that they would have acquired in their home country or in the regular classrooms of the new country. Reading in English at a grade level anywhere from grade one to grade six does not present much literary content of interest an adolescent.

Pressure from parents to quickly master the language and move into the regular program, and graduate with their peers, places the students in a situation where they are not confident in their language ability, have trouble with vocabulary and comprehension, and lack the background knowledge necessary for enjoying literature. Therefore, reading recreationally becomes work rather than a pleasure.

ESL teachers, as the initial contact teachers, can begin to introduce the "kids culture" of North America so that the students begin to acquire the background they will need for the literature they will encounter in the regular English courses. The regular English teachers should be aware that many of their ESL students do not have the cultural background necessary for understanding some of the literature studied and should incorporate that need into unit introductions.

School libraries should introduce programs for ESL students which familiarize students with information in the library and teach them how to locate information in print and electronic formats, thus giving the ESL students the skills to find resources quickly, and a sense of independence.

3. What impact did the educational model of their home country have on whether ESL students saw reading recreationally as an activity in which to engage?

In general, it appears that the classrooms in the three Chinese education systems are more formal than those in Western culture. Education is considered a very serious undertaking. The model of

instruction most commonly identified is the transmission model. The teacher as the authority figure presents information to the class. Students are expected to behave quietly and submissively. Much of the academic work is textbook oriented and the students receive the one correct answer needed to answer the examination questions. This focus on the correct answer is applied to the study of English literature and Chinese literature.

Chinese literature is the vehicle used to transmit Chinese values and morals. Therefore, the reading of Chinese literature involves the search for the moral lesson. Reading and studying are seen as the same activity, the acquiring of a lesson or knowledge.

To read in Chinese a child must memorize at least three thousand symbols. Rather than starting with books to build motivation to learn to read, the child is expected to learn many of the symbols first and access to a book is the reward for hard work. Learning the language requires memorization of the symbols and is taught through copying and repetition. Reading is seen as a reward for the development of maturity and patience in being able to discern the message of the literature (Smith, 1991, pp. 51-52).

When reading in English, the Asian adolescent is often examining the text word by word in order to translate the passage for an English as a Foreign Language class. Foreign language instruction tends to be grammar, vocabulary and exercise based. (Kohn, 1992) Therefore attention is not focused on interaction with the literature.

Students indicated that throughout their elementary school, they had very little involvement with literature other than what was in the textbook and rarely used the library for research or to borrow books for pleasure reading.

Given that there certainly must be teachers who encourage their students to read literature for pleasure, in general it would seem that the educational models of Communist China, Hong Kong and Taiwan do not encourage students to read recreationally for pleasure.

To encourage ESL students to feel comfortable in the North American classroom, ESL teachers should introduce Western cultural role expectations for student and teacher behaviour, introduce group work, and foster an atmosphere of acceptance to encourage all students to contribute to class discussions on all subjects, particularly in literature. Both ESL and regular teachers should consciously plan activities that are not textbook based but rather literature based and

systematically present the processes needed to successfully meet objectives.

4. What are the expectations of the home culture and parents to reading recreationally?

The traditional beliefs that education is important, that children are urged to study books written by the great philosophers, and that they should be encouraged to study diligently, still appear to be the expectations of the parents. Parents expect the children to study hard and bring honor to their family. There is also an indication that the true motivation may be changing from education for the sake of learning to education for the sake of a good job.

Parents expect their students to study hard. Reading for pleasure is considered frivolous and a waste of time, time that could be spent increasing the base of knowledge. Asian students are encouraged to read their textbooks and other books that will teach them things they do not learn in school, or to read English books to increase their vocabulary. The expectations of the home culture and parents do not encourage reading literature for pleasure.

At every opportunity, it is recommended that the school community should help ESL parents understand the benefits for the students of reading recreationally in English.

Lynn (ESL Teacher) emphasizes to parents in the first parent-teacher meeting that they should be taking their students to the library or the bookstore and have them choose whatever they would like to read. Then at home, set aside a time for pleasure reading. The parents should read to the students and the students read to the parents.

Additional findings

How did the students who indicated they read become readers?

I did not intend to investigate how students became readers but the nature of the study provided responses that revealed that some of the students do read recreationally and suggested some common factors. Earlier I indicated two instances of negative evidence, the student participants who spoke more fluently than the other student participants, and the group of student participants who indicated

that they enjoyed reading, and read fairly lengthy popular adult novels.

The four student participants mentioned who spoke English more fluently than the other participants spend at least one hour a day reading. Even though only one of the four students indicated he was reading for pleasure, there is an indication a correlation exists between reading and oral language.

The six student participants who read for pleasure read at least one novel a week. In their personal stories they also indicated that there was an individual who in some way encouraged them to read and that the involvement with that individual included their elementary school years when reading for pleasure was not encouraged at school. This emphasizes the importance of personal encouragement as a motivation to read. All adults in our education system should accept the responsibility of modeling recreational reading, promoting recreational reading, and encouraging individual students to read recreationally.

Cultural factors do have an influence on Asian adolescent students' recreational reading habits. As young people come to the

Lower Mainland from Hong Kong and Taiwan we should give them every opportunity to be aware of what is valued in our culture, what is expected in our classrooms, and the skills necessary to succeed. The traditional culture of China is very strong and supported by the parents. As the "graft" grows in our educational setting, with the necessary training, there is every expectation that recreational reading for pleasure will become part of the Asian adolescent's life.

However, this study has not answered all the questions which were raised while I carried out my investigation. Is the focus on aesthetic reading in North America a unique situation? What kind of adolescent literature is available in Asian cultures? Is "story" or "narrative" intercultural? Has reading instruction discouraged students because of their perceived difficulty in finding the "correct answer"? Will adolescents be able to recall their early experiences with story and reading? These are questions I would recommend for future study.

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TO: Student After Receiving Parental Permission

Your parent/guardian(s) has agreed that you may participate in a research project on reading. The project is to investigate if culture has any influence on the recreational reading of adolescents. You have been chosen randomly because you fit the criteria of the student profile. The project would involve a 30 - 45 minute taped interview after school, at your convenience. Although your participation would be greatly appreciated, if you decide not to participate, your decision would in no way affect your grades or the quality of service provided to you by the school. Would you be willing to participate in this project? If yes, an interview time will be arranged.

I _____ agree to participate in this reading project.

TO: Student Before Interview Begins

Thank you for agreeing to this interview. There are two things I would like to review before we begin.

1. Earlier you agreed to this interview, but people often change their minds. Are you still willing to proceed with the interview?
2. I mentioned earlier as well that the interview would be taped. is to ensure I do not miss or inaccurately recall what you answer. Do you have any objections to using the recorder? You will have the opportunity to read the transcript of the interview at a later date to clarify the text or correct any errors or add any additional information that you would like to share.

x_____

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

Personal Data

How old are you?

What grade are you in school?

Where were you born?

How long have you lived in Vancouver?

How long have you been attending this school?

Were you enrolled in the ESL program at this school? For how long?

Tell me about your family.

What are your plans after graduating from high school?

What are your long term goals?

What are your favorite subjects in high school?

What subjects are you doing well in?

What kind of student do you consider yourself?

How much time do you spend a day on homework/studying?

Reading History

When you were small, before going to school, do you remember anyone reading to you or telling you stories?

Did you go to a Public Library when you were little?
What did you do there?

Did you go to a PreSchool or Play School?

Did your teacher read to the class?

Can you remember any of the stories?

Did you go to Kindergarten?

What was your favorite type of story?

Can you name the title of a favorite story book from that time?

Did you have a collection of children's story books at home?

Do you remember how many?

In Primary/Elementary School did your teachers read stories to the class?

What was your favorite type of story?

Can you name a favorite story book from Primary/Elementary school?

Did you have your own collection of story books that you could read yourself?

Do you remember how many?

Did your elementary school have a library?

Did you go with your class?

Did you go alone?

What would you do there?

Did you have your own public library card when in elementary school?

Did you go to the Public Library when you were in elementary school?

How often?

What would you do there?

Reading Data

What kind of reader do you think you are? Why?

What language do you prefer to read in? Why?

Do you find reading in English hard to do? Why?

How do you feel about reading?

What do you like to do in your free time?

Of those, which is your favorite activity?

How much reading do you do in your free time for fun?

Where do you get material to read for your own enjoyment?

Do you have a current public library card?

How often do you go to the public library?

What do you do there?

What kind of material do you like to read? Why?

When do you like to read?

Where do you like to read?

Do you have a collection of your own books now?

About how many?

What is your favorite type of book now? Why?

What is the title of a book you have recently read and enjoyed?

Why did you like it?

Do your siblings read at home?

What?

Do your parents read at home?

What?

Do your parents read for enjoyment?

Does your family talk about what they are reading?

What have your parents said about reading for fun?

What are your parents attitudes toward reading?

Do you receive and give books as gifts?

How do you find out about books you read?