

ACADEMIC TASKS AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY

By

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ABSTRACT

The majority of second language research pays scant attention to the importance of context and social setting in language learning. However, a small group of researchers recognizes that context is very influential, context in the sense of the organization of units of social interaction beyond the sentence and even beyond the discourse. Using the latter perspective, this case study investigates how a group of eight Chinese students were able to succeed in a graduate level course even though their skills in English language were very limited and the students had no background in the field.

While traditional second language research focuses attention at the sentence level, this study discovered that the larger unit of the whole course and the required assignments had central importance to the students' success. Theories of language and context, and language socialization were helpful in examining systematically some of the factors involved. The study not only included the individual class period and lesson, but also considered the organization of the whole course, the organization of the homework assignments, and the way class work supported the assignments.

The study indicates that the organization of the course was particularly cohesive and was clearly communicated to the students at the beginning of the course; the assignments were integral to the course and were coherent with each other, and there was a clear format to each assignment. The assignments engaged students in actual work, not simply exercises in comprehension, and class sessions provided background knowledge and feedback that enabled students to participate successfully and presumably learn the culture of the classroom. With this larger perspective the study underlines the importance of context in language learning.

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Our daily lives involve countless circles of receiving and extending requests and responses, spoken and unspoken. This feature is particularly apparent when one embarks on further study which includes a research project such as this. During the course of this investigation, I made numerous requests to many individuals to assist me with my task. It is with pleasure now that I acknowledge some of the unique contributions. At the outset I'd like to offer a special thank you to the professor and the students who were the focus of my study. Their receptivity and openness provided the impetus to begin the project and remain committed to its conclusion. Sincere appreciation is due to my Faculty Advisor, Dr. Bernie Mohan for his belief in the value of the study and his unflagging encouragement in my capacity to complete it. Moreover, I am indebted to him for his insights and advice on the structure and theory of the study. He has made the entire exercise a fascinating opportunity of discovery and understanding.

When I consider the endless stream of requests that I have made over the past two years, I am reminded above all of my family and my extended family who have remained constant in their patience and assistance. I hope they can take pride in the completion of this work also. In response, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my daughter, Paris whose inquiring mind delights in posing questions and seeking answers.



ISN'T IT A PLEASURE TO LEARN SOMETHING
AND APPLY IT WHEN APPROPRIATE? ISN'T
IT A JOY TO HAVE FRIENDS COME FROM
AFAR?

Confucius

CHAPTER ONE

SCOPE AND FOCUS OF THE STUDY

This thesis will investigate how a group of Chinese students participated and succeeded in a graduate adult education course, despite the fact that they had scored below the required level on a language proficiency test (TOEFL). The policy of using such tests assumes a view of language proficiency and language learning conceived in abstraction from sociocultural proficiency and content learning. By contrast, this study will use the theoretical perspective of "language socialization", which views language learning and cultural learning as interrelated. Consequently, language socialization will be contrasted with language acquisition.

1.0 Background to the Problem

1.1 Rationale for the Question

The eight subjects in this study are "student-trainees" sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to study in Canada for one year. They are part of a large bilateral program negotiated by the Canadian and Chinese governments to expand China's resource pool in the areas of agriculture, forestry, communications, transportation, and human and social development. Training situations in Canada vary enormously, ranging from hands-on agricultural projects, such as seed or cattle breeding, to

new technologies in marketing, telecommunications, management and education. The common prerequisite for successful training in all fields is an adequate knowledge of French or English and their respective cultures.

The students in this study can be regarded as representative of other Chinese trainees with similar training placements. Additionally, they may also be prototypes of other non-native speaking (NNS) students who are required to participate effectively within an unfamiliar academic environment and in a language which is not their mother tongue.

The question of what is an adequate level of English language proficiency for non-native students and what is the best instrument to determine that proficiency has been debated for years by language teachers, admissions officers, university faculty and student support personnel. At present there is no simple answer to these questions. Various studies have examined the relationship between test scores and academic success. The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the most widely used measurement in the United States and Canada (Light, 1987), is accepted as an indication that the "person can function in English" (Palmer and Woodford, 1978) but it is not a good predictor of academic success (Graham, 1987). The same can be said about the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP)

and the Comprehensive English Language Proficiency Test (CELT).

With all three tests proficiency is defined by performance on the test (Graham, p.515). Although they were never designed to predict how a student would fare once enrolled, universities and colleges extrapolate from these scores to screen applicants. Despite the obvious influences of other factors, including homesickness, background knowledge in the subject area, motivation, acceptance of the host culture, administrators invariably rely on language test scores to determine a student's eligibility. Recently a number of faculties and departments within the University of British Columbia have opted to increase the minimum TOEFL score to 570 for graduate foreign students. What this decision fails to acknowledge is the great importance of other factors.

It has been suggested by some second language professionals that a more compelling approach would be to establish minimum scores for each discipline, and then to examine each candidate's application within a sphere of related information (Graham, p.517). Even though this suggestion can be considered an improvement over the present system, it is typical of the current, dominant view that equates language proficiency with a score on a test.

Over the past twenty years an immense amount of research has been conducted by the Educational Testing

Service (ETS) in Washington to measure language proficiency levels. However, very few detailed studies have been devoted to the actual analysis of performance in order to gain an understanding of tasks and difficulties faced by students. Studies exist to assess TOEFL's capacity to predict, but very few have been conducted to examine the learning situation thoroughly. Rather than continue to assess an applicant's proficiency in English in the abstract, aside from all considerations of socio-cultural context, it would seem to be worthwhile to analyze what a student needs to do and how it is carried out in a relevant social context where English is the medium of learning. The TOEFL test, of course, aims to measure general language proficiency at the sentence level, not language proficiency in a given socio-cultural context.

Case studies such as this need to be conducted in order to establish a profile for each discipline. It is clear that the performance of all eight students in Adult Education XXX (ADED XXX) demonstrates that there are other factors which account for their academic success. Had the TOEFL cut off of 550 or 570 been applied to their applications, not one of them would have been admitted. Although it may be easy to dismiss their success as unique, it will be profitable to examine why and how they succeeded.

1.2 Researcher's Background

My interest in this topic springs from several years involvement in preparing foreign students for study and work in Canada. As a member of a team of teachers in an international program in the People's Republic of China, I often struggled with difficult questions, such as what are the real language needs of foreign students, how do new entrants into a society comprehend what is required, acceptable and so on. Similar issues arose when I was charged with the responsibility of designing and implementing a national orientation and support program for newly arrived Chinese, Thai and other Asian students. While reference to journals and other scholarly sources did point the way, there appeared to be a paucity of literature regarding what students actually do and how they go about their tasks.

2.0 Scope of the Study

The students in this investigation were able to accomplish the academic requirements in a graduate course despite their lack of background in the field and their limited proficiency in English. The study seeks to understand how and why they succeeded. By examining the entire cycle of the course and the surrounding environment, the study takes several aspects into consideration, for example, the background of the students, their preparation

for the course, their relationship with the professor and other students, the nature of their tasks, and other factors. However, it is not my intention to identify what cultural learning occurred and had been learned, but rather to examine how these students incorporated content matter, cultural learning and language tied together in a real activity. Further, it is not my purpose to note specific language learning or linguistic aspects. Instead, the study views the situation as a language socialization process.

Data have been gathered from a variety of sources: extensive field notes gathered from two participant observation periods (the first involved an adult education course that they attended during 1988, and the second period involved the actual course under question in this study occurring during the same year), interviews with each of the students and the professor, all of the students' assignments, materials distributed from the course, and a field diary. In addition, I had ample opportunity to meet and discuss issues informally with the students over a five month period. This provided an abundance of rich data from which to draw.

3.0 Task as Focus

Before outlining the paper's theoretical foundation, it may be helpful to establish why task is being used as a focus. All of life involves activity. Our daily routines

consist of simple and complex tasks (Harre, 1972). Similarly, classroom activity involves work or tasks which relate theory to practice and vice versa. Doyle's review of literature (1983, p.159) maintains that "a curriculum can be regarded as a collection of academic tasks". Curricula involve the products that students are required to formulate, the operations to be used, and the resources available for the work. Erickson's definition (1986, p.19) goes beyond the process-product interpretation of researchers such as Doyle. For him context "means more than that which surrounds a behaviour--that which stands outside the text." "Current social scientific research suggests that one does not see an action and then a context around it; one looks at the set of relationships between actions that mutually construct the context. The original Latin term, *CONTEXERE*, is a performative verb meaning 'to weave together separate strands.' That is what people are doing. As my colleague Ray McDermott puts it, 'people in interaction create environments for one another'. In other words, the disparate strands of social action are woven together into an ecosystem, and the ecosystem itself is the context, from the social constructivists point of view." In this study I will approach task from a social constructivist view, assuming that the environment or context is socially constructed by the students and professor through their interactions. In this view, context is inherent to the

notion of task. Since we wish to identify how students were able to carry out their tasks and why they were successful, a close examination of the assignments for the course is pertinent. However, a detailed inspection of the assignments is not enough. We need to be aware of the task environment within the class.

The discourse in the classroom assists us in our understanding of the environment. In this situation, language is being used to set up the tasks and also to convey the contents of the course. In other words, language learning is occurring while content is being learned. The recognition that language learning and content learning are linked represents a fundamental shift from current thinking in second language learning. A brief overview of these two perspectives will help to set the stage for the theoretical component of the study.

4.0 Theoretical Framework: Language Acquisition versus Language Socialization

One of the most controversial factors in second language acquisition (SLA) is the role of input to the language learner. Borrowed from first language research (FLA), the concept increased in prominence with Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982, 1985) which maintains that effective language learning occurs when there is "a great deal of

comprehensible input that is interesting and relevant to students" (1982, p.41). Defined as sentence grammar which is slightly above the proficiency of the learner and commonly referred to as $i+1$ (input plus one), this construct has had considerable influence on second language research and pedagogy. During the early 1980's a concentration of SLA studies investigated styles and length of input and their effect on language production (Chaudron, 1983; Gaies, 1981; Gass and Varonis, 1982; Long, 1985; Pica and Doughty, 1986). All of these studies approach language from fundamentally the same perspective: the target of language learning and teaching is essentially sentence level grammar.

A 1985 study by Long and Porter extended the notion of input by examining the interlanguage between non-native speakers in classroom group work. Their findings cautiously suggest that group work may offer a good alternative to lessons which are exclusively teacher-fronted. In doing so, they raise several questions about which tasks are best suited to language learning. However, despite their efforts to examine language learning more broadly, the perceived goal of language learning is still limited to sentence grammar. They shift the focus of data analysis from the grammar of the sentence to the function of the utterance and, to some extent, to pairs of utterances in the exchange. For example, they are concerned with interactive exchanges as students negotiate meaning. But interaction and

negotiation are seen as a means to the acquisition of sentence grammar, not as learning targets in themselves. In other words, social context and cultural learning are seen as peripheral to the main activity of language production.

As mentioned above, SLA research has drawn heavily from FLA research, and because of this influence, it is useful to summarize the concept of input from the FLA viewpoint. During the 1970's FLA researchers such as Snow (1981, 1983, 1986) sought to understand the nature and importance of an adult's linguistic input to a young child while his language skills were developing. The special language that occurs between caregivers and young children has become known as "motherese". Studies of this phenomenon were largely concerned with the length of the utterance, the number and kind of repetitions, the kind of vocabulary, and so on. While this yielded some interesting results, Snow's later work illustrates a view that language development encompasses much more than discrete item input and analysis.

Later studies (Bruner, 1983; Snow & Goldfield, 1983; Snow & Ninio, 1986) acknowledged that the processes which make language acquisition possible required investigations of the social context as well. Prior to this, language acquisition and context had been treated as separate topics in language learning. (Snow, 1983, p.552) In Bruner's seminal book Child's Talk, he describes in detail the actions, sequences and roles played by two caregivers and

their young children during games of peek-a-boo and its variations. What becomes apparent is that the child learns much more than the vocabulary, sentence grammar, and intonation patterns of the discourse.

In the beginning of the study the mothers initiated the games, played both roles, and maintained all the routines. Quickly the children began to respond orally; then they participated actively. Moving on, they assumed one of the roles, then both, finally they took charge of the entire format and context. In doing so, they had mastered all of the language, transactional routines and concepts which could be applied elsewhere. Bruner observed that "[these] lessons are obviously as much cultural as they are linguistic. Language acquisition seems to be a by-product of cultural transmission. The engine that drives the enterprise is not language acquisition per se, but the need to get on with the demands of the culture" (p.103). In Bruner's language the cultural unit is the game.

Bruner's contention that language is "passed on" through a series of patterned situations, such as games between adults and children, gives central importance to the notion of activity and context in language learning. Studies like these reconstruct the whole picture of dynamic collaboration between caregiver and child. Notes, observations and analysis take in all the elements of the situation including actions, gestures, moods, negotiation

procedures, intentions, surroundings, time, speech routines. The findings show that as the child is learning language he is acquiring cultural knowledge at the same time. This kind of language learning research, known as language socialization, calls for a qualitative approach in order to build up layers of detail and meaning. In contrast with this holistic method, most SLA research still focusses on smaller and more discrete levels of input.

In the investigation at hand, I have chosen to use a case study approach to explore how the group of eight Chinese graduate students fulfilled the academic requirements for their course of study. The theoretical framework outlined above necessitates that the entire cycle of the course be scrutinized in order to understand how tasks were completed. Where Bruner used the game and moves in the game as the contextual units, this study will use the course, and the tasks or assignments within the course as contextual units.

5.0 Some Assumptions

The essence of this study lies in the belief that language and culture are inextricably woven together. Teaching language without establishing an understanding of some of the fundamental patterns of the culture limits the learner to, at best, a superficial glossary of prescribed rituals. Compiling an inventory of "do's" and "don'ts" will

never give learners a command of how and why a society operates as it does.

But what is culture? How can it be defined? There are a multitude of definitions, each emphasizing a slightly different approach. This study is shaped by an anthropological perspective and Spradley's definition underlies the work: "culture is the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experiences and generate social behaviour" (1980, p.2). This definition suggests that culture is learned, that it defines norms and standards, and that it is a powerful tool in the socialization process.

6.0 Some Caveats

The theoretical framework has some of the characteristics of a hybrid form. It does not follow a totally ethnographic approach which dictates that a researcher investigate a situation openly to let the predominant themes reveal themselves; nor does it adhere to a positivist position which initiates a slate of hypotheses to be tested. Instead, I have narrowed the field by establishing certain philosophical and theoretical boundaries. Once the basic assumptions were identified, the initial questions - why and how did the students succeed - were examined in an inductive manner.

It is also important to reinforce at the outset that this inquiry does not follow a nomothetic model. As a case

study, it does not try to establish causal relationships. Instead, the emphasis lies in interpreting the situation that surrounds the students. Referred to as hermeneutic science, this method proceeds: " a) without controlling the existing realities, b) without presuming a researcher's objectivity, and c) without generalizing towards causal laws" (Ochsner, 1979, p.54). Thus, the work evolves into a systematic, though personal discussion.

The remainder of the thesis follows: Chapter Two contains the review of literature; Chapter Three outlines the narrative events of the course; Chapter Four interprets and discusses the data; and Chapter Five summaries the study with conclusions and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A fundamental concept in language learning is the role of input to the language learner. In both first and second language theories, researchers have explored the nature and influence of language directed to young children and novice speakers. While second language researchers still establish most of their findings from an "input" perspective, first language researchers have broadened their theories to include activity within the language learning context.

In reviewing the literature for this study, input and activity become key factors in understanding the data. Chapter two is divided into four main sections: second language acquisition and first language acquisition, and under each, input and activity are considered; language socialization; and tasks in school. Concluding the review is a section which outlines the research design for this study.

1.0 Second Language Acquisition

Second language teaching has experienced many changes in methodologies over the past fifty years. Teachers have moved from a grammar-translation approach to an audio-lingual method which emphasizes oral repetitions that are cued to visual or aural stimuli. The basis for this method is the stimulus-response pattern developed and outlined by Skinner in his book Verbal Behaviour (Stern, 1986:299). But

it wasn't long before this method came under scrutiny. "In a long and famous review article on Verbal Behaviour, Chomsky made a fundamental attack not only on the thesis and the concepts developed by Skinner but, through this review, on the entire behaviourist position in contemporary psychology and psycholinguistics" p.299. During the 1960's and 70's a variety of other systems were developed and promoted as effective: Silent Way, Suggestopedia, Community Learning, Cognitive Code and others but none were the result of grounded theories.

Influenced by Chomsky, Krashen (1982) introduced a series of five hypotheses related to language learning: the Acquisition/Learning Hypothesis; the Natural Order Hypothesis; the Monitor Hypothesis; the Input Hypothesis; the Affective Filter Hypothesis. Krashen's Hypothesis theory has had considerable impact on the field of second language learning, spawning a number of studies based on his central premise. Despite subsequent research however, there exists no evidence to substantiate his claims. Gregg (1986:121)

1.1 Input

Since Krashen's ideas still represent a considerable force in SLA, it is important to examine his Input Hypothesis. It bears most relevance to this study and

according to Krashen, is the most crucial of all. Two key points are:

1. "We acquire by understanding input containing structures that are beyond our current competence. [He calls this comprehensible input and simplifies it as $i + 1$]
2. The best input is not grammatically sequenced and involves genuine communication." (1987:38)

In an attempt to make sense of second language learning Krashen, like most SLA researchers, focuses narrowly on the shape and content of the input to the learner. In fact he reduces his approach to a single claim "People acquire second languages when they obtain comprehensible input, and when their Affective Filters are low enough to allow the input "in". Thus, comprehensible input is the true and only causative variable in second language acquisition." (1987:40)

Using the concept of comprehensible input, Wesche and Ready (1985) studied the speech adjustments made by two psychology professors in their lectures to first language (L1) and second language (L2) students. Their results identify a series of linguistic features such as discourse markers, syntactic structures, vocabulary items, and communicative devices for example comprehension checks and repetitions. Wesche and Ready recognized that extralinguistic behaviour also plays a role in comprehension and for that reason included qualitative data gathered from

observation sessions. The authors point to several differences between the L1 and L2 lectures: more frequent use of gestures, more time spent at the blackboard and greater schematic and representational information written on the board. In other words the professors supply more contextual support for the L2 students.

The Wesche and Ready study is interesting because it includes both qualitative and quantitative data thereby acknowledging the limitations of statistical analysis, a rare occurrence in ESL research. Further, for the purposes of this study it is helpful because the two situations are closely paralleled: non-native speaking students participating in a university course. However, having chosen to approach the problem from an input perspective, the authors have delineated the environment as a one-way communication situation. The primary focus is the professor's lecture. The orientation of the present study is exactly the opposite: the students and the professor are both seen to be establishing "shared meaning".

Many SLA studies refer to input within the classroom setting as foreigner talk or teacher talk. In a notable investigation Wong-Fillmore (1985) examined communication patterns in successful "limited English proficiency" (LEP) classes. Although many of her findings relate to discourse characteristics such as repetitions, consistent patterns and signals for instructions, rich and playful language (as

opposed to reduced foreigner-talk terms), Wong-Fillmore also points to organizational patterns which make a positive difference. For example, formal lessons with clear boundaries marked by a change in location or props, formulaic cues marking beginning and ends, regularly scheduled events, clear lesson formats from day to day (scripts), clear and fair turn-allocation procedures, as well as tailoring elicitation questions to allow for different levels of participation. In her attempt to understand the influence of instructional practices on language learning, Wong-Fillmore moves away from the simple confines of analyzing input factors and considers the larger context. However, she doesn't go to the next step of examining what tasks the children are engaged in and how they use the input and context to accomplish their tasks.

Numerous other SLA studies tackle the issue of input in language learning in the classroom. Chaudron (1983); Long and Sato (1983); Schinke-Llano (1983). Gradually researchers began to see that one-way communication, typically teacher-fronted lessons, was limited in the range and degree of input available to learners. Other studies explored the structure of two-way interaction between students. Selinger (1977); Pica and Doughty (1985). However useful these investigations may be, the analysis remains firmly rooted at the sentence-grammar level.

1.2 Activity

In an important article Long (1985) presents his concept of a task-based syllabus. He defines task "as a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others freely or for some reward. In other words, by "task" is meant the hundred and one things people do in everyday life at work, at play, and in between." p.89. While he cautions readers not to draw hasty conclusions regarding the process of such a syllabus, it is clear that his research is based on the comprehensible input principle.

In the search to provide empirical evidence which would guide language teaching methodologies SLA researchers examined the types of tasks that result in greater language production Doughty and Pica (1985) (1986); Long and Porter, (1985); Gass and Varonis (1985). These studies look at various aspects of interactions: one-way tasks, two-way tasks, teacher-to-student; and student-to-student, the object being to determine what task types and what interaction patterns facilitated language acquisition. All such studies follow the same basic rationale "In keeping with second language acquisition theory, such modified interaction is claimed to make input comprehensible to learners and to lead ultimately to successful classroom second language acquisition" Doughty and Pica (1986:322).

It is important to note how "task" is seen in the tradition of psychological experiments: the participants in

the task are "subjects", engaged in an experimental task; task characteristics are seen as independent variables; and characteristics of task discourse are considered to be dependent variables. As we will discuss later in this paper, task is viewed very differently in the anthropological tradition; it is taken to mean the entire social context.

2.0 First Language Acquisition

The field of L1 has been subject to many of the same influences from psychology and education as L2. For our purposes it is sufficient to say that behaviourism, Gestalt psychology, pragmatism and cognitive theory have all played a part in shaping theories related to L1 learning. Although a trend has been emerging "to look increasingly at the contexts that enable human beings to act as they do" Bruner (1983:124), it wasn't until 1983 with the publication of Bruner's work Child's Talk that context has been given significant treatment in language learning. Bruner's work marks a significant change in psychological approaches to language acquisition, along the lines which had been argued earlier by the linguist Halliday (1975). Up to that time input had been regarded as the key factor in first language acquisition.

2.1 Input

Snow's article on situation-specific language acquisition approaches input from a contextual perspective.(1983) By examining recurrent picture discussions, it was possible to trace the child's acquisition for talking about a given picture. Snow's analysis centres largely on the utterance that the child was able to say after hearing it in a similar situation. She hypothesizes that children use a strategy such as, identify a situation, remember what is said, and say it yourself the next time the situation recurs. If this mechanism is prototypical, it has interesting implications for language learning, for it recognizes the value of context in language learning. Although Snow's study does include the picture book activity, she fails to incorporate in her analysis the broader cultural patterns that are also being learned. For example, we sit down to read; the book is held in a certain manner; the book is looked at and read, not eaten or thrown; and finally we discuss what we have read with others. However, she does acknowledge that these patterns are being learned.

2.2 Activity

Bruner's study on mother-child communication patterns was one of the first to focus attention on the activity which supported conversation.(1983) Where other studies

have exclusively analyzed the talk that resulted from interaction, Bruner concentrated on the activity between mother and child. In this research, an example of activity is the game of peekaboo played between two mothers and their children over the period of nineteen months and fifteen months respectively.

At the core of Bruner's thesis are two primary concepts: first, human action is systematic and ordered and much of our cognitive processing appears to operate in support of goal-directed activity; and second, human activity is extraordinarily social and communicative. (p.25) This position allows Bruner to see the game of peekaboo as something more than a catalyst to produce language. According to him "each of the games played by children and their parents is a self-contained 'form of life'. The games are, in a word, an idealized and closely circumscribed format. They have 'deep structure' and a set of realization rules by which the surface of the game is managed." (p.46) As the child participates in the activity, he learns all the rituals that go along with the game - the set of sequenced performances, the roles, the negotiation procedures, the moves, the language utterances. Language input is surely important but it is part of a broader pattern of "cultural acquisition". (p.55) During these predictable formats of interaction children learn how to interpret the cultural context: what is obligatory, what is discretionary. (p.120)

This knowledge then becomes transformed and applied elsewhere. Clearly so much more is being learned than routinized utterances. Language learning from Bruner's point of view is dependent on rich routines which can be diversified, to allow for the increasing initiative and competence of the learner as he executes the moves. (p.60)

Input is only one part.

It is worth noting that Bruner's theoretical framework is closely linked to Harre's (1985) conceptual system regarding human actions. Harre's ethnogenic method seeks to identify an approach in which the focus of interest becomes the actions for which human beings are called to account. He believes that humans are self-regulating, rule-following agents who have the capacity to monitor their behaviour and provide accounts of their behaviour. Through a series of improvised scenarios with implicit scripts and tacit rules, participants learn roughly how to proceed. One important feature is that the situations must contain some form of feedback in order to self-monitor performance. (1972:22)

Influenced by Bruner, Snow's later work (1986) proceeds to look more fully at the context surrounding young children as they acquire language.

3.0 Language Socialization

Although many L1 and L2 researchers still consider the sentence as the natural frame for linguistic inquiry and

play down the importance of context, a growing number realize "that vocal and verbal activities are generally socially organized and embedded in cultural systems of meaning". Schieffelin and Ochs (1986a:164) Drawing on "sociological, anthropological and psychological approaches to the study of social and linguistic competence within a group", (p.163) these researchers are more concerned with the process of language socialization than language acquisition per se. To distinguish between the two it is useful to point out that "the study of language acquisition has as its ultimate goal an understanding of what constitutes linguistic competence at different developmental points. Whereas, language socialization has as its goal the understanding of how persons become competent members of social groups and the role of language in the process. (p.167) This suggests that we should not take for granted a learner's understanding of the requirements of academic tasks, particularly in a cross-cultural situation. The accomplishment of an academic task in fact, is likely to involve important communicative and interpretive work both by the instructor and student.

Language socialization studies typically investigate the interaction and communication between mothers and children or caregivers and young children, but research may also include novice speakers such as L2 students. The talk that results is often termed "motherese" or "baby-talk",

modified speech patterns and vocabulary. In classroom research this same pattern is frequently referred to as foreigner talk or teacher talk. This points to the second major difference between most language acquisition studies and language socialization: the role of input. As we have said before, in L2 research input is largely regarded as the single most important variable. However, an essential tenet with regard to language socialization is that because people use language to accomplish specific goals in socially and culturally organized activities, children and novices must take active and selective roles in socializing contexts. (pp.169-70) Consequently, input is analyzed in the context of activity.

A further difference with Krashen's position is the importance placed on the child-caregiver relationship as a joint enterprise. All interactions between small children and others is viewed as a linguistic resource for both parties. And rather than see input as a one-way communication pattern, language socialization considers it a mutual process of sharing.

Scheffelin and Ochs and others have noted additional important features of language socialization: a) shared knowledge is often made up of "stock knowledge". Members of a cultural community possess a wealth of background knowledge that is implicitly understood in any given situation. For example, at social engagements or business

meetings, "insiders" will be aware of subtle cues which signal the end of the gathering. Similarly, participants quickly understand references made during conversation, requisite degrees of formality and politeness, and so on; b) members' perceptions and conceptions are related to their individual experiences. Consequently they bring different points of view to interpersonal encounters (p.165); and c) individuals participating in social interaction are active contributors to the meaning and outcome not just passive recipients. It is through constant negotiation procedures that members conform and inform one another through language (McDermott et al in Scheffelin & Ochs, 1986a).

Up to this point several words have been used to refer to a common concept, namely "activity", "task" and "game". Activity and task may be taken as synonymous, generic terms, although task is widely used in reference to classroom work. Bruner also uses the general term activity and in the case of his study of mothers and children, the activity was a game (peekaboo). However, Bruner applies "game" more widely speaking of games as sets of rules and manoeuvres. The next section of the paper deals with research concerned with tasks in school settings.

4.0 Tasks in School

Parallel to activity research in language learning, there has been a growing body of research into the nature of

tasks in school work. Although this literature does not stem from a language socialization perspective, it bears some similar characteristics. What follows is a brief review of the salient features, then a link is made between language socialization and task research.

Over the years the nature of classroom work and teachers' and students' roles has been viewed from many different perspectives. Yet dating from the 1890's (Mead in Erickson), and renewed again by Dewey (1938), there has been a long tradition of looking at the classroom as a place of tasks, time and social relationships. This theme reappeared again during the 1970's when social constructivists began to think systematically about the ways in which teachers and students construct environments for each other. The social, interactional nature of learning is at the heart of this research approach. Erickson (1986:14-5)

Many researchers investigating tasks in school come from a background in cognitive psychology and so it is natural that they look at tasks as a series of products that students produce. Consequently, task research is often concerned with the operations and the resources used to produce the tasks (Doyle, 1983; Erickson, 1986; Blumenfeld & Meece, 1988). Marx and Walsh (1988) suggest that task research should also include the cognitive plans used by students to accomplish academic work.

4.1 Task Conditions

What are the factors which affect students doing their work? Two aspects which are invariably examined are setting and instructional delivery.

4.1.1 Setting

Given the importance placed on interaction and context within classrooms, it is not surprising that setting is a prominent consideration in many researchers mind. Some call it "task environment" (Anderson, Stevens & Prawat (1987); Erickson;) some refer to context as "setting" or "social setting" (Doyle; Edwards, 1988; Marx & Walsh) but all seek to understand the dynamic interaction that occurs between teacher and students, and students and their peers.

Allocation of time, degree of teacher control, explicitness of 'ground-rules'; and the social configurations within classrooms are pertinent areas of investigation.

4.1.2 Instructional Delivery

Another important variable is instructional style. Who established the learning goals? How are these conveyed to the students? What methods of assessment are used? Are students instructed directly or indirectly about the cognitive process required for the task? What is the role of feedback in the teaching plan?

4.2 Products

Looking more closely at the tasks themselves, researchers (Doyle; Marx and Walsh) have identified four main types of operations: a) memory; b) procedural; c) comprehension and understanding; and d) opinion. Doyle believes that tasks regulate the selection of information and the choice of strategies for processing that information. In effect, students will learn what a task leads them to do, a theme reinforced by Harre's contention that human activity is goal-directed. But lest we narrow our analysis of the task, it is pertinent to remember that task is more than content, it is also the situation in which it is embedded.

5.0 Conclusion

At this point it is useful to return to language socialization in an attempt to link the two streams of thought. Scheffelin and Ochs and others have made us aware of the vast reservoir of stock knowledge that we bring to social situations. Much of this knowledge is assumed to be communal, and through complex, flexible manoeuvres, assumptions and perceptions become clarified and understood. Participants try to find the missing parts in any interaction. Similarly in classrooms, students and teachers must make their way through a maze of unstated, incoherent

and often ambiguous encounters in order to make sense of the subject matter and the tasks required of the participants. To make matters more complicated, there are local conventions for performing tasks, such as those that pertain to the particular environment in that class (who can leave his seat, for what reason and under what circumstances, et cetera); and broader conventions which apply to educational practices within a specific society, for example is the teacher considered a friendly guide who facilitates learning or an authoritarian "task-master". In their study, Anderson et al note that one of the most important features of highly rated classrooms was the teacher's role in reducing the inference burden on students. Teachers deliberately and explicitly presented information that would aid the child in constructing the desired understanding about the class and ways of responding to task demands. (p.17) It makes good sense that teachers become aware of the content and structure of the subject matter, and the content and structure of social relations in the class in order to help students accomplish their tasks. Building on an ethnographic principle to make the known obvious, both task research and language socialization seek to understand the social context and the role it plays in learning. Language is the means for interpreting and regulating this process.

6.0 Research Methodology

In keeping with the theoretical perspective outlined above, it was important to approach the study holistically, gathering the data over the course of several months in the natural setting of the classroom and related outside environments.

A methodology which lends itself well to this kind of intensive data collection is the case study. Based on ethnographic principles, the case study attempts to build up layers of detail over a long period of time in order to come to an understanding of the forces that shape the behaviour of the group involved.

This case study is an systematic examination of a particular group of students as they went through a graduate credit course. It involved participant observation, formal and informal interviews with the professor and students, sustained contact with the students over three months, and collection of pertinent documents.

Direct observation as a participant was necessary in order to gain access to the classroom situation. As a participant-observer I had "opportunities to "see" the covert aspects of communicative, social organization, variables in room behaviour, and the interactional "work" that organizes patterns of classroom behaviour" Mehan (1982:83). In addition, I could observe patterns that occurred before and after class, and during coffee breaks.

Prior to the beginning of the course in question and after its completion, I had informal contact with the students as they continued their training. This "prolonged face-to-face contact with the members of the group and direct participation" in the course Mehan (1982:61) resulted in rich and varied observations which provide support for a process-oriented interpretation of the data Schmidt (1981:201).

During this period a field diary was maintained and notes written during the observation session were classified and coded. This data combined with the interview transcriptions and document analysis provides triangulation. Defined as "qualitative cross-validation", triangulation is valuable because "it assesses the sufficiency of the data according to the convergence of multiple data sources or multiple data collection procedures" Wiersma (1986:246).

Having built up a data base, I used it as relevant evidence to compose a narrative and then later to document the connection between specific pieces of evidence and various issues in the case study. Yin (1984:94) This section follows in Chapter 3.

Before moving on to the "story", it is important to point out that case studies, like all research methods, have inherent weakness which must be taken into account. In his description of case studies, Yin raises three concerns. First, it is not unusual for the researcher to become a

supporter of the group and hence, develop a bias which may affect the interpretation of the data. Once one develops a degree of rapport with individuals in the group it is difficult indeed to maintain a clear perspective. To guard against this I had a knowledgeable outsider read the narrative.

Second, a role conflict may emerge as one participates and observes at the same time. Indeed it can be a problem to act as a participant in a group discussion and to observe and take notes at the same time. Undoubtedly, some observations were lost and notes were less detailed due to my participation. However, in some instances I felt that it was more useful to participate like a regular group member than remain detached with my notebook poised for inscriptions. A certain tension always exists between participating so that other members do not view you as an outsider, and remaining distant in order to observe more broadly. Gaps in this process were compensated by the length of the observation (I attended all classes), the repetition of content (certain material, activities and patterns reappeared), and the opportunity to observe and have contact with the students across several settings.

Third, a general risk exists with interviews because the respondents may not answer the questions well for example, they may not recall their impressions or the information. In addition, respondents may give answers that

they perceive to be appropriate but which may not reflect their own experience. Wiersma (1986:181) This danger is particularly real with Chinese students because they place great value on conforming to acceptable patterns (of action or thought), and in saving face.

Two strategies were used to offset this possible weakness. First, the researcher sought to establish and maintain a rapport with the students which would allow them to speak frankly. In addition, the students felt that the study was worthwhile, especially if it resulted in assistance to other students. Further, they were assured of absolute confidentiality in the reporting of the data. Second, the interview was structured with a variety of descriptive questions. According to Spradley (1979:67) ethnographic interviews are characterized by asymmetrical question-asking, repetition, the seeking of explanations and the posing of different types of questions, including descriptive questions, structural questions, and contrast questions. See Appendix II for survey questions. It should be remembered that, in contrast to questionnaires, one of the values of an interview is that points can be clarified and areas of interest amplified, thereby allowing the respondent full opportunity to express him or herself.

The final characteristic of case studies which needs to be raised is that "observed conditions are not static and are subject to influences from beyond the immediacy of the

social organization of the institutionalized moments, for example the lesson, space and time routines, et cetera." Cazden (1982:223) In other words, the search for meaning is elusive and the researcher can not rely on a single example to justify an explanation. The dynamic character of a naturalistic setting can be mediated by using other sources to check one's hunches, sometimes other participants can clarify impressions or the data may verify findings. Essentially the researcher is looking for a convergence of data to build a chain of evidence.

Because of the characteristics of a case study, one does not seek causal relationships or try to generalize to other populations. The value of a case study lies in the intense examination of a particular group over a period of time in order to build up a data bank full of rich and varied detail.

CHAPTER THREE

CASE STUDY NARRATIVE

Chapter Three seeks to tell the story of this case study. Here the events will be outlined, and the social and academic environment will be described. Narratives have a particular importance in case studies, and in ethnographic research as well. For, as Erickson says, "the very act of telling a story about what happened - producing an account of sequences of actions that occurred in the past - can be a means of developing deeper understanding of the organization of those action sequences" (p.9). Stories help people to make sense of the past.

Three sections follow: the first presents the picture from my point of view; the second gives the professor's perspective; and the third outlines the students' interpretations. By including all three perspectives we have the advantage of both the professor's and the students' visions and opinions, as well as my observations about the course.

1.0 Researcher's Interpretation

1.1 What was the situation?

A group of Chinese students were participating in a graduate Adult Education course (ADED XXX).

1.2 Who were the students?

Two distinct student groups composed the class. There were eight Chinese students and six other graduate students, who were native speakers of English (NS). The NS were graduate students in the Adult Education department and had taken several courses in this field. They were all older than the Chinese students and had several years of professional experience in related fields.

The Chinese students were attending the course in order to gain an understanding of the field of Adult Education, but they were not registered for credit. They were in Canada for one year of study as part of a co-operative training program between an Adult Education Institute in the People's Republic of China and the Canadian Association for Adult Education. Funding and approval is provided by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Their objective is to become knowledgeable about the field of adult education in order to establish an adult education institute in their city in China. Their motivation to succeed is high. All are young, bright with reasonable levels of English (they would score approximately 500-550 on TOEFL).

The eight Chinese students are graduates of various institutes in Wuhan. Their undergraduate studies included: physics, marine engineering, pharmacology, chemistry,

English literature. None of them had any background in either program planning or adult education.

Prior to starting the three week course, the Chinese students were introduced to Vancouver, and Canadian lifestyles through a six-week orientation at UBC. Following this, they attended four sessions of another graduate course in Adult Education, International Dimensions of Adult Education. After completing ADED XXX, they continued their studies in other graduate adult education courses. During the interviews, frequent reference was made to these courses as points of comparison.

1.3 What was the nature of ADED XXX?

ADED XXX - Adult Education Program Planning Practice - is a regular departmental offering which examines the application of planning and evaluation principles in specific adult education settings and explores the practical utility of various approaches to planning and evaluation. The prerequisite for ADED XXX is a companion course which provides theoretical and conceptual perspectives in adult education. The Chinese students had not taken the prerequisite.

The objective of the course was to provide an opportunity for students to understand the relationship between theoretical, conceptual and philosophical perspectives when they are applied to program planning in

adult education. The following topics were covered in the course: (Refer to Appendix I for course outline)

1. planning as an anticipatory decision-making process
2. analyzing the planning context and client system
3. identification of educational needs
4. developing educational objectives
5. formulating an instructional plan
6. formulating an administrative plan
7. developing an evaluation plan

Lectures were the predominant mode of instruction with small group discussion and brainstorming added to vary the pace.

The professor's presentation followed the course outline closely. He often referred to the readings during his lectures and occasionally asked students to examine some aspect in detail or used passages on an overhead projector. Topics of the assignments were the focus of the lecture preceding the due date. Because classes were four hours long, two breaks were provided during each session.

1.4 The Professor's Instructional Style

The professor conveyed an air of benign support toward the students, and in particular, to the Chinese. During the first lecture, he offered hints on how to use the print material in relation to the assignments and how to work efficiently. "Keep a list of the assignments in front of you when you are doing your reading. Make a notation if it

relates directly". "Refer to your notes when doing assignments". "Don't re-read the articles six times".

His speaking style was slow, calm and direct during ordinary conversation and in class. He was conscious that half the students were non-native speakers and thus he avoided jargon, slang or idiomatic references. Often he would clarify a term for the Chinese students: "Do you know what 'LaLeche' means?" ("single mothers", "seniors").

He had a particular tendency to be clear and explicit. Whenever a new point was introduced it was re-phrased or repeated. "It is very difficult to eliminate, get rid of wrong information". "I must anticipate a number of things. I must plan, predict".

In addition, the professor illustrated his remarks with frequent concrete examples, such as all of the physical actions involved in driving a car with a manual transmission. Furthermore, he gestured with his hands to simulate movements, demonstrate relationships and sizes. At the end of each section, he summarized the main points, perhaps providing one more example. In short, his lectures were very repetitive, giving the Chinese students ample opportunity to hear the important point and relate it to an example.

1.5 The Professor's Relationship with the Students

The professor sought to establish a relaxed and co-operative atmosphere during the initial class. Sitting on the edge of a table, he provided background information about himself and invited students to ask further questions. The Chinese students were identified as a group, and some history was provided to the other class members about the purpose of the Chinese participating in the class. The professor introduced and welcomed me including a few statements about my presence and purpose in the course.

During the breaks, the professor made a point of mingling casually with the students, chatting about common areas of interest. He was always waiting for students, well in advance of the beginning of class, and he lingered after the lecture. One had the impression that he enjoyed contact with the students and made opportunities to be available to them.

A factor in the relationship between the Chinese students and the professor is his role as their training director. In addition to being their professor for this particular course, he was also responsible for their participation in the joint training program and for monitoring their progress over the course of the year. Both the students and the professor were stakeholders in the successful accomplishment of ADED XXX.

1.6 Classroom Environment

The overall atmosphere among the students of the class was one of short-term cordiality and arm's-length co-operation. All classes were held in the evening in an annex building away from the centre of the campus. For this reason, students took turns bringing refreshments to share during the break period. This co-operative endeavour facilitated conversation and exchange as people mingled around the food. However, although the two groups of students found common topics for conversation, essentially they remained separate. Spontaneous, easy chat was usually conducted with "like" members. In other words, Chinese students talked among themselves, and native speakers with each other.

Another factor which contributed to a relaxed atmosphere was the seating arrangement for the students. The professor had organized the students into three groups around three large rectangular tables. A name card at each table indicated where everyone should sit. The groups were evenly balanced with three Chinese and two native speakers. Once a week the groups were shuffled, allowing everyone several new partners. These groups formed the discussion or buzz groups.

By and large, individuals appeared to be receptive to learning more about fellow students and their assignments for the course. However, despite the friendly and cordial

atmosphere none of the Chinese students ever asked any of the other students for information or assistance with the course tasks. There are may be two reasons for this: 1. they were able to ask me or the professor, 2. many said they felt hesitant to "bother" others. In summary, many people had a stake in the students' success.

2.0 Professor's Interpretation

The following passage attempts to present the professor's perspective. The statements were made by him either during discussions or interviews with me, or during the lecture or break periods. Also, his remarks and comments on the students' assignment papers have been incorporated into this section so that we might understand more fully his treatment of the assignments.

The professor's primary objective for the Chinese students was to introduce them to the principles and processes of program planning in adult education. In addition, he wanted to provide an opportunity for the students to apply these concepts to an "authentic" situation, either through a specific example from their own experience, or through the case study which had been prepared for students to use. By their completing assignments and participating in class, he expected them to demonstrate an understanding of the key elements of the course.

Although the professor didn't dwell excessively on his personal philosophy, he did make clear his views on the role of evaluation in education: "I strongly believe that no one should fail". Also, he expressed the view that a teacher's first responsibility was to provide every support to the students in order to help them learn. This point was reiterated during the section on evaluation when he remarked that evaluative procedures should help students to demonstrate what they know rather than penalize them for what they do not know.

Concerning the assignment papers of the Chinese students, he stated that he did not expect graduate level writing from them. During the first session of class, the professor offered some guidelines to everybody about the quality expected on assignment papers. He advised students not to be "too concerned about the first assignment, just do it. They'll get better and better with each one". As Bazerman (1980) suggests, the professor wanted them to familiar with the "conversations of the discipline" (p. 658).

2.1 Interpretation of the Assignments

How much latitude did the professor allow? In general, it seems that surface level errors were largely ignored, but misconceptions regarding the specific topic of the assignment were not. Students were not penalized for

incorrect spelling, faulty grammar or stylistic weaknesses. Moreover, untidy submissions were not criticized either. However, severe spelling mistakes didn't go unnoticed; for example, "medicate" for "moderate" and "resigstate" for "register" were corrected.

In the area of content, the professor seemed to give the students ample praise for their efforts. Correct responses were reinforced with a check mark for every correct point. Frequently he would add "good" or "correct" to distinguish particularly clear answers; for example, "the passing score of the exam is 80%"; "the students will be able to identify and use the instruments". Often when an idea was extended or synthesized the professor would add comments such as "good idea". Similarly, if the student offered a new idea or a creative solution, such as, "use sentence completion to obtain needs assessment from prospective candidates", the professor would write a positive comment beside it.

All this does not mean that any answer was acceptable. Those that were blatantly incorrect were treated with an emphatic "No", plus a question or two to direct the student to re-think his or her reply. For example, "your questionnaire is very obtrusive. Why not" With answers that were not well formulated, or those that were mildly off the mark, the professor would pose questions to

help the student clarify the answer, for instance "What are the prerequisites?"

Each assignment received an overall grade in the form of "good", "very good", "excellent". In addition, for the first two assignments a percentage figure was applied. It seems that a paper was judged "good" when most of the major points were addressed, perhaps with the exception of one missing element, for example "What about formative evaluation in your plan?". "Good" papers were rated between 75% - 85%. "Very good" was the next level on the scale. These papers presented all the information asked by the questions, demonstrated a grasp of all the major points and were clearly presented. The numerical scale was 85% - 90%. Two of the papers were rated as "excellent" and judged to be worth 100%. The professor's comments regarding these assignments were "very consistent and well organized", "You have demonstrated a good understanding of program planning. Congratulations!" Although it may be unusual in some courses to have such a narrow range of marks for student assignments, this method was characteristic of the professor's style of evaluation.

The professor's approach can be summarized as this: pay great attention to content and structure feedback so that the student can achieve the desired outcome. Pay little attention to form and rhetoric if they do not interfere with meaning.

From the perspective of Erickson, the professor seems to be meeting the students where they are. By structuring the tasks and the desired outcomes, they are within the grasp of the learners and allow for individual differences and development along the way.

3.0 Students' Interpretation

This section summarizes the students' interpretation of their tasks. Their comments fell into three general categories: a) their feelings about the tasks, b) a description of how they carried out the assignments, and c) particular difficulties they experienced in the process.

3.1 Their Feelings About the Tasks

All students stated that they felt considerable anxiety about how to begin assignment one, "The first time, I don't even understand what the assignment said." (Subject 8) "For the first unit, we had lots of questions. We don't know what he means and what he wants us to do." (Subject 1) However, once their first assignment had been marked and returned, they felt great relief. Although every one acknowledged that the first two assignments were the most difficult, three students in group one confessed that doing the case study was harder than they had anticipated.

"At the beginning it was very difficult since we had to analyze the society which we didn't understand very clearly." (Subject 7)

"I didn't know this society quite well, so 'what responsibilities and authority do you have' are quite different in Canada. I don't know this."
(Subject 1)

"At first I thought it [the case study] might be easier but when I got into it, I felt it was very difficult. I had to stand in another position to look at it. The Alma Society -I had no idea about it." (Subject 5)

In addition to a limited knowledge about the Alma Society in particular and the Canadian society in general, the students were also largely unfamiliar with the subject underlying the assignments which was child abuse. This might be the case with anyone who had not read or learned about this problem.

3.2 Their Approach to the Tasks

The approach that most of them took to complete the assignments was a fairly predictable one.

1. "I read the assignment." All Subjects
2. "I read the material."
3. "But in order to do the assignments, I had to look back over my notes and think about it."

3.3 Their Difficulties with the Tasks

The difficulties they experienced could be divided into three main categories: a) a lack of knowledge about the society, b) difficulty with specific terms or vocabulary which made it problematic to answer the questions, and c)

difficulty with formulating and organizing the information into a coherent response.

As mentioned above, the students who used the case study lacked an in-depth knowledge about the larger community. They had no experience with the workings of a non-profit organization, they were not aware of the structure of social services within the public domain, and, on a more general scale, they had only vague notions about adult or community education endeavours.

As Subject 7 stated,

"we analyzed the correct characteristics of the context ...[but] I think maybe I'm wrong, maybe I'm analyzing by the Chinese way. So when I explain how these characteristics influenced the later steps - it is very confused for me. If it was Chinese society we could explain but in Canada I'm not sure."

Subject 6, who developed a case study using a Chinese situation, admitted to a lack of understanding about some aspects of the assignments because he hadn't finished reading the course material. Several students (Subjects 1,2,4,7) acknowledged that even if the course had been given in China using a Chinese context, they still might have encountered difficulties because in their own work history they had no experience with program planning, administration, evaluation, budgeting. Furthermore, what might prove to be problematic in a Canadian setting might not be in China; for example, "finances are not a problem

[in the PRC]. If a work unit decides they'll do something, like a workshop on child abuse, the money is available. As a planner we never worry about the money".

More specific problems arose because of their limited vocabulary. Words such as "philosophy", "strategy", "instruments", which are not subject-specific stumped the students when they tried to match them to the translations they found in their Chinese-English dictionaries. The meanings just didn't mesh with the uses they read or heard in the class. For example, in Chinese the word 'strategy' (策略/战略) has a much broader, more complex connotation than its use in adult education, which generally uses it as a synonym for "technique".

Other phrases, such as "desired state of affairs" and "well-defined", proved difficult because they couldn't be located in a standard dictionary, and like idioms, the individual parts make no sense in isolation. In the words of Subject 5, "So sometimes I just had to guess the meaning".

Difficulties didn't stop at the word or phrase level either. Some concepts, in spite of discussions in class, were totally foreign to them and required that students accept them almost on trust. Subject 8 described his bewilderment over a concept which was embedded in the course case study. The assignment states that the Alma Society hires you (an outsider - on contract) to organize a workshop

on a particular theme. Subject 8 said, "I thought about it and thought about it because in China this would never happen. A unit would never bring in someone from outside to organize a project on his own". Other students gave examples of similar confusions.

Once they began analyzing and writing they had to put themselves into another frame of mind. Subject 1 summarizes the process,

"When I did my assignments, I just pretend I'm a Canadian and someone hired me to do something. I just use my imagine and try to fix the situation here. If something is known I'll base on my experience. If something is new I'll base it on what [the professor] taught us."

When they ran up against a concept or term they didn't understand, they would sometimes discuss it among themselves (although they didn't all live together) or they would ask the professor or me. The students also had the benefit of additional meetings with the professor four mornings a week during this course in which they examined other aspects of adult education in Canada. Sometimes the Chinese students used this opportunity to clarify points.

Putting the material for the assignments down on paper proved to be yet another hurdle. Subject 5 expresses the task this way:

"I tried to catch the meaning of the assignment by reading it - tried to find relationships between the points or questions. I'd think about it -

trying to organize it according to the content. Sometimes I'd discuss it with my friend."

"Another problem is how to organize. I'm not familiar with how to organize. I'm familiar with logical and mathematical [material] but not this form. Also to think about it is different than to write about it." (Subject 8)

Other students tackled the writing in another way. "After going through the notes and readings, then I answered the questions one by one." (Subject 3) "If I find I can collect some parts together, I try to do that. If I don't, I try to do it step by step." (Subject 8)

Although the students found themselves muddled and stretched intellectually, they were able to complete their tasks successfully. When questioned about their feelings regarding their work, some comments were:

"Even though I know my assignments weren't good, I spent lots of time at it." (Subject 6)

"I think I have a good basic grasp of the material now." (Subject 2)

"It's very important for us to get some outcome [output]. It's a pressure for you to do the things [but] producing something is good for us." (Subject 4)

"Just after finishing this class, I am excited and want to step right into adult education." (Subject 6)

The students' reactions to and interpretations of their tasks raise an interesting paradox, one which becomes apparent once it's articulated. Learning is often most easily accomplished if experiential tasks are required. The

paradox arises because in order to do the task, one must have already learned the task.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF DATA

1.0 Data Collection

The data collected comprised extensive field notes, taped interviews, completed assignments, readings and hand-outs from the course. Several steps were taken to gain an overview of the data. First, the field notes were reviewed many times. Some of the questions guiding the examination of the notes were as follows: What is the nature of the professor's discourse? Is there a structure to the lectures? How does the professor prepare the students for their assignments? What are some of the social patterns within the class? How do the students go about completing the assignments?

From these questions it was possible to see that there were distinctive patterns with regard to the nature of instruction, the style of discourse and the social fabric of the class environment. What was not clear was the influence that these factors had on the students and their participation.

The next step involved transcribing the taped interviews. The interviews followed an open-question format in which each student was asked the same basic question and allowed to answer as fully as she or he wished (Appendix II). In some cases, this meant that the students referred to their notes from class or their assignments in order to

answer as precisely as possible (Subjects 1, 4, 8). In other cases, students took a more round-about approach and replied with anecdotes, quotations from popular Chinese culture, illustrations from class, and so on (Subjects 5,6). In many instances, the students amplified their feelings or interpretations during informal conversations with me, and I added these comments to the chronological field diary. Similarly, I recorded comments from discussions with the professor prior to the course, during and following the course. The total collection represented a rich source which could be reviewed and analyzed. The narrative was developed from this base. For the analysis portion of the study, it has been necessary to read the transcript and the notes again and again in order to see what relationships existed.

The organization of the course was a major issue. Gradually it became apparent that the entire enterprise (course content and structure, instruction, assignments and classroom environment) was a particularly co-operative endeavour. The Chinese students and the professor were engaged in a harmonious dance: the professor led the students through the steps of program planning for adult education, and although the students were unfamiliar with the themes, they were able to grasp the patterns as explained by the professor. To say it another way - the students and the professor began to share a mutual understanding of what was necessary in order to complete the

course. As the narrative reveals, an understanding was not firmly established at the outset of the course. But little by little the students perceived what was expected of them in this context.

In order for us to gain a better understanding of the forces and mechanisms at work in this situation, the data will now be examined in light of several theoretical approaches. A central method of achieving the co-operation noted between the professor and students was the completion of the course assignments. Because these assignments are examples of academic work, "task" will provide the central focus for the analysis. The remaining sections of this chapter will examine the data under the following headings: 1.Characteristics of tasks, 2. Task as game, 3.Task as vehicle for socialization, and 4.Task as an example of theory and practice.

2.0 Characteristics of Tasks

Almost every researcher examining classroom tasks considers at least two primary features: what activity is being conducted, and what is the nature of the environment or context in which the task takes place. Marx and Walsh shift these two categories somewhat. They examine task under three main headings: a)setting, b)instructional delivery, and c)students' cognitive plans, and in doing so go a step farther than researchers such as Doyle, for example.

2.1 Setting

Within this category Marx and Walsh consider three features: i) teachers' control, ii) allocation of time, and iii) the social system of the classroom. By and large, it is teachers who are the primary determinants of the task itself and the environment (Anderson et al, 1987, Doyle, 1983, Edwards, 1987, Marx, 1988, Snelbecker, 1974). They establish the structure of the activity, the opportunities for practice, the resources, expectations about the outcome and conduct along the way. With regard to the adult education course in this study, all of the above characteristics are true. The professor organized the course structure (content and process), the materials which accompanied the tasks, the sequence and timing, guidelines for assessment and the overall organization of the classroom. While allowing students to choose the topic for the required assignments, students were expected to participate according to the course as defined. As far as I could tell, there was little variation in the format of the papers with the exception of occasional delayed submissions of assignments.

Anderson et al maintain that the teacher is also responsible for the students' perceptions and beliefs about their own competencies regarding the tasks. They suggest that concepts of self-competence, success and failure, and the intrinsic value of the task bear some relation to the

outcome of the task. In addition, students must learn how to respond to the demands of the task. From the narrative and passages within the analysis, it is clear that the Chinese students were greatly influenced by the professor's confidence in them and his support of their attempts. Furthermore, they confided during the interviews that it was incumbent upon them to learn as much as possible from this course because they were responsible for "their" portion upon return to China. What this suggests is that the students' self-competence and motivation were extremely significant factors in their participation in and completion of tasks. Conversely, they paid less attention to the material and tasks in an earlier course in International Education because "it didn't interest me" (Subject 1); "I knew it wasn't my field so I just skimmed the readings" (Subject 4).

The second feature under setting is allocation of time. Researchers (Erickson, 1983, Marx and Walsh, 1988) have argued that it is not how much time a student spends on a task (as earlier educators have maintained) but what actions the task requires of the student. While time per se may not be the crucial feature of task accomplishment, non-native speaking international students will frequently say that they need considerably more time to complete assignments. In this study, the Chinese students had the same amount of time to complete the assignments as the other students, but

the standards used to evaluate their assignments were different. Also, the Chinese students had access to the reading material one month prior to the start of the course. However, these adjustments were not enough to equalize the time factor between the Chinese and the other graduate students in the course. For one thing, the Chinese lacked the overall knowledge of adult education that the other students had acquired, and they were handicapped by limited general knowledge of Canadian society and the academic system. Secondly, their English proficiency was limited. Therefore, it can be argued that their time spent on a task was an important factor in completing the academic requirements. The following statements summarize the situation:

"The time between the classes is very short so it's difficult to complete all the readings and assignments. So sometimes I just do the assignments" (Subject 2).

"Even though my assignments aren't very good, I spent lots of time at it" (Subjects 1, 8).

"During the course I had no time to re-read the material" (Subject 1).

There is another consideration with respect to time on task. Frequently during the lectures, many of the students, while looking engrossed in the presentation, were not focussing on the topic. Despite the urgency of taking in everything, like all students, they daydreamed. Comments from the interviews to this effect are: "Sometimes I didn't

focus on the class. I looked out the window. I couldn't concentrate [in English] so long" (Subject 6). There were also other occasions when some of the Chinese students were clearly not paying attention.

This data suggest that the time factor has several dimensions and for non-native speakers with limited background knowledge, time does affect how well a student is able to attend to the activities. Moreover, how thoroughly he comprehends the material may also be related to the amount of time available for each task.

The third aspect under "setting" is described as the social system of the classroom. Marx and Walsh and others suggest that "academic tasks are social activities in their broadest sense" (p. 209), and features such as social interaction and social configuration, for example seating arrangement, are important descriptive elements.

ADED XXX was to a large extent an open forum. Although the professor presented the lectures at the front of the room and directed most of the interaction, the students were in full view of one another all the time. The 14 students were grouped around four tables which were placed on an angle in an approximate horseshoe configuration. Thus, if a student wanted to make some comments or ask a question, it was done publicly in front of all the other students. In fact, it was only the more out-going students (Subjects 5,6,7,8) who ventured to speak publicly in front of the

whole group. Interestingly, these four subjects were all males. Only on two occasions did two female students ask a question while class was in progress. In general, they reserved their queries for the morning tutorials with the professor: "we always asked questions in the morning" (Subject 1).

Further, within the small group discussions, there was a responsibility on each student to participate in the exchange. When the Chinese students were asked whether being involved in the discussions facilitated their understanding, all eight said yes. When asked how they felt about participating, 2 of the eight said they felt nervous; three commented that they didn't always understand the task and for that reason didn't participate. Also, sometimes they didn't understand the comments of the other students. From the field notes I noted that the Canadian students rarely asked the Chinese students for their opinions or directly included them in the conversations. If the Chinese students had something to say, and the language was organized in their minds, they participated in the discussion. On the whole, they were much less vocal than the native speakers. However, they found it useful to hear the ideas of the other students.

As mentioned above, the organization of the tables and the seating arrangement (roughly two native speakers, two Chinese per table) was deliberately staged to foster

interaction among the students. This was successful to a degree but did not result in natural spontaneous mixing. Sometimes the Canadian students engaged one or two Chinese in conversation during the coffee breaks, but the conversation was exploratory, with the Canadian asking questions about the Chinese situation, rather than a mutual exchange. The Chinese students rarely initiated conversation with the others and were not good at small talk patterns that we normally associate with casual conversation.

The distribution of tasks, or sub-tasks in this case, was equitable, but as discussed above, the Chinese were not equal partners in the small groups discussions. In some cases, this occurred because students didn't always understand the task or the language of the native speakers. In some instances, they were reluctant to break into the conversation or lacked knowledge or information about the topic. When the discussion topics were outlined by the professor, the tasks were not designated to one or two individuals within the group. Also, the assignments and the readings were the same as those required of the native speakers. Thus, from this standpoint the tasks were equitable.

2.2 Instructional Delivery

Within Marx and Walsh's overview (1988) of task characteristics, a second category called instructional delivery is identified. Factors listed here include: i) management of the task, ii) medium of delivery, iii) instructional goals.

The first feature, management of the task, was touched upon earlier under teacher control. It was mentioned that the teacher exercised almost complete control over the structure, delivery and outcome of the task. The classes were organized around a lecture base with small group discussions added to explore various topics. These topics, the tasks related to them, and the amount of time were all determined by the professor.

During the lectures the professor frequently used an overhead projector to present material from a text or other sources. Also, the blackboard was used for illustrations, summaries, charts and other graphics. When the overhead transparencies were taken from the reading materials, they gave students another opportunity to deal with the material, the print being reinforced during the lecture with a visual, "... the content and the lecture were very related to one another. But sometimes the content wasn't so easy to find, for example in the evaluation section" (Subject 6). However, if the information was projected for only a short time, students were not able to listen, view and write

quickly enough. Further, Subjects 3 and 7 remarked that the notes on the blackboard were not consistent.

"Sometimes, he'd write new things on the board, sometimes illustrations, but not always. Whatever, the professor writes down on blackboard, I write down. I think it's important" (Subject 7).

"In China, the professors always write important things on the blackboard, so when Dr X does I write it in my notes" (Subject 4).

The final area to consider under instructional delivery is the relationship between instructional goals and task. In this study there seems to be a very clear match from both the researcher's point of view and the Chinese students'. During every interview, the students commented that the lectures and the course organization were clear. Similarly, the reading material directly matched the topics outlined. In the words of Subject 7 "All topics are detailed, following step by step, specific and logical from beginning to end."

The collection of required readings were provided to the students prior to the beginning of the course. The lectures in turn set up the knowledge needed for the assignments. In addition, small group work (discussions) offered an opportunity to apply the information in a new situation or to examine an aspect in greater detail. This meant that the Chinese students heard other points of view or if necessary, had another chance to hear (and comprehend) the information again. If students still had difficulties or

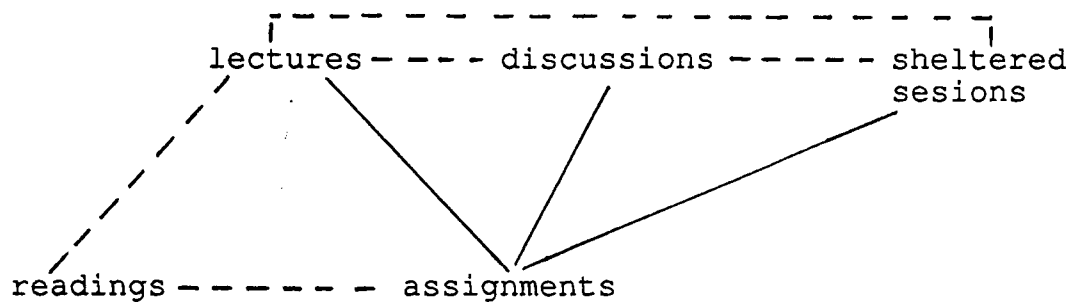


Figure 1 Connection Between Activities Within the Class and the Relationship of Those Parts to the Assignment.

inquiries, they had one more opportunity during the special morning sessions organized just for them.

The goals of the course were explicitly stated in the course outline and the professor reviewed these during the first class. Students were aware that the course was designed to provide practical application of the general principles and stages in planning adult education programs. The students reiterated that these goals coincided with their personal learning objectives vis-a-vis gaining knowledge about various aspects of adult education.

In spite of their agreement regarding what was to be accomplished, a discrepancy did occur between the instructional goals, the assignments and the students' understanding of how to complete the assignments. All eight students stated that they were uncertain how to begin the first assignment. Recalling the comments of Subject 8, it is clear that the student had to learn how to go about doing the assignments, "... the first time I don't even

understand what the assignment said. "...another problem is how to organize and how to find what we should do the first time." However, by the fourth assignment all the students were able to examine the questions in the assignment, locate the information and then answer the questions in a straightforward manner.

Using these topics to examine the data, it can be seen that the instructional style, the medium of delivery and the relationship between the goals and the assignments all played a part in how well the students were able to complete their tasks. See Figure 1 for a graphic representation of the connection between class activities and assignments.

2.3 Cognitive Plans

The final category that Marx and Walsh use to examine tasks is called students' cognitive plans. This topic can be separated into operations and products, terms that are also employed by Doyle and Erickson.

The concern here is that tasks require different mental operations and that those which ask students to comprehend a situation, make judgments about it, select procedures and apply them to the new conditions involve "higher-order" thinking skills. From this description, it is apparent that the assignments required these kinds of skills, and thus they were more difficult than simply memorizing a list of characteristics and re-stating them on a test. It is worth

noting that this kind of integrative task is not a common feature of Chinese education. Chinese teachers and students rely heavily on memorization of discrete items and long passages of text which are then recalled almost verbatim in examinations. Therefore, when the Chinese students stated that the assignments were difficult for them and they were at a loss as to how to proceed, the comments were not insignificant. It is quite likely that they had never faced such a task.

The professor facilitated their task completion in several ways. Many have been cited earlier. But in summary, he modified his discourse, used frequent examples, provided ample support and encouragement, and structured the course tightly using the lectures to illustrate the main themes of the assignments and matching the lectures to the reading material.

Marx and Walsh refer also to the products of tasks. They raise the issue of criteria for assessment of students' products and the role of products as foci for feedback.

The professor did not explicitly outline how he arrived at the marks for students' papers. Referring to section 2.1 in Chapter Three, we see that he applied basically three grades: good 70 - 75%, very good 75 - 85%, and excellent over 85%. From this study, it is not clear how these marks equated with those of the native English speaking students.

The assignments were marked in such a way that the professor tried to guide incomplete or inaccurate answers by posing a question, for example, "It is necessary to ask client representatives. How will you do that?" (Assignment 1, of Subject 8). "What authority does the program planner have?" (Assignment 1, Subject 2).

Also, he systematically checked every correct point and praised original ideas with remarks such as "good suggestions". Therefore, the students had a very clear idea when they were on the right track and when not.

As mentioned earlier, the topics of the assignments were explicitly outlined with questions. In some instances, the students had difficulty with specific vocabulary items, such as "desired-state-of-affairs", "instruments" and so on. Three students also stated that some questions were confusing for them, "Dr X's assignment description was very difficult to understand, the sentences, the way he describes the things is hard for us to understand" (Subject 1).

In other words, despite the explicit nature of the assignments, the actual wording left some students guessing about what was expected. Winne and Marx (1982) show that considerable discrepancies exist between teachers' and students' representations of what is required. Indeed, when one examines the individual questions of the assignments, some of the wording is vague or laden with jargon. Also,

questions seem out of order. For example, in assignment one, students are asked to define the goals of the program and then in the same line asked to specify their responsibility and authority within the organization. Clearly these questions are not related and should be separated. Had the assignment questions been revised they may have alleviated some of the language burden experienced by the Chinese students.

The last feature of this section is the affective value of feedback. The fact that the professor graded their first two assignments with a percentage mark was received very positively by the Chinese students. Numerical values are easy to understand, especially for those not entirely familiar with the system. Moreover, all the students felt great relief when they received their first assignment; they knew they could succeed and their confidence increased.

The products of tasks are important vehicles for understanding the complexity of classroom work. The features of specificity and feedback are important for shaping how the tasks are perceived and carried out.

Using the nature of task to examine the data has provided a comprehensive and structured framework for understanding how these students were able to fulfill the requirements of ADED XXX.

Once again, we see how important it is for the instructor to prepare the students, structure the classroom

work and environment, and define the goals and the tasks clearly. In addition, we see that the students worked in concert with the professor to complete the assignments and develop their knowledge of planning in adult education.

3.0 Task as Game

In his study of mother and child interaction through games, Bruner (1983) proposed that the game provides the "format", the patterned situation that enables adult and child to cooperate in passing on language and culture. His thesis raises several important issues that can be used to understand how the students and professor achieved their goals.

3.1 Deep Structure of Games

Games have a "deep structure" and a set of realization moves by which the surface of the game is managed (p. 46). The deep structure of the game can be compared with the topics or themes of the assignments: 1. Analyzing the Planning Context and the Client System, 2. Assessing Needs, 3. Developing Objectives, 4. Designing an Instructional Plan and an Administrative Plan, 5. Formulating a Summative Evaluation Plan. Further, each assignment had sub-themes. The questions which delineated each assignment can be regarded as subordinate rules which help students to interpret their assignments. Having the themes and the

questions allowed students to participate in the "game" - a simulated activity of program planning. Despite the structured format, the students still experienced difficulty with the first two assignments. Nevertheless, it did provide them with an entree into the regular work of a graduate course.

3.2 Structured Format

The context for the games between mother and child were highly constrained and systematic. Similarly, the structure of the classes was predictable and routine. The classes were task-based, so that each lecture presented the content and the methodology needed for the subsequent assignment. The professor highlighted this point during the first class. In other words, it was a deliberate strategy to tailor the lectures to the content of the assignments. For instance, during one evening the professor reviewed on the blackboard a sample budget which could be applied to a continuing education program. The next assignment due the following week, included a section in which the students were to propose a budget for their hypothetical program.

The situation was confined even further by the professor's instructional style. Each section of the lecture was summarized, and he often previewed a topic and then reviewed it as a conclusion. Frequently, important concepts or vocabulary were "revisited"; for example, the notion of

planning as an "anticipatory decision-making process" was mentioned in lecture 1 and again in lecture 6.

In addition to the systematic organization of the lectures, the professor's discourse was also very constrained. He constantly rephrased ideas, repeated new words; clarified concepts; and defined words or terms that might be unknown to the students.

3.3 Handover Principle

One of the key concepts in Bruner's study of mother and child is that of "handingover" control of the game. As the child becomes familiar with the patterns and the moves of the game, he increases his initiative and learns how to execute the role of agent. He takes charge of the entire interplay. We can look at this principle on two levels just as Bruner does: a) as content -the child learns the principles and sequences of the moves. Then he learns to reapply them in a new context, and b) as role model handover - the child learns the participant's role in the game, and he learns the initiator's role.

Using the professor's grades and comments on each paper, it was possible to determine to what degree each assignment had accomplished the required tasks. In Bruner's terminology, the question might be: To what degree did the professor "handover" the control of the game?". As a cross-reference to the professor's grading system, the assignments

were reclassified according to three basic categories (Incomplete, Complete, Extended) as developed by Schmidt (1981). The papers were coded according to the percentage grade, the rank accorded by the professor, and other comments and remarks written on the completed assignments. Since it was the professor who determined the acceptability of the papers, it was important that the researcher refrain from assessing the assignments by her standards.

Table 1 indicates that although five students accomplished the first assignment in a more than basic manner, three did not, and in two cases, two questions were not attempted. Although six students held their own in the second assignment, two students had barely satisfactory papers. In assignment three, all but Subject 3 slipped to a lower score. Comments from the students indicated that they had trouble with the concept learning objectives, especially "higher and lower" level objectives. By assignment four, all students comprehended the nature of the task and completed it in an extended manner. This pattern is maintained in assignment five with the exception of Subject 8.

The "handover" concept may not be a perfect fit for this situation, but it does give a technique for examining what occurred in the assignments. We see, for example, that while the students were able to handle most of the content, the role handover was never executed.. But this was not part of the goals of the course; students were never expected to

Table 1 Assignment 1

Subject	<u>Incomplete</u>	<u>Complete</u>	<u>Extended</u>
1	X		
2			X
3			X
4		X	
5			X
6			X
7			X
8		X	

Table 2 Assignment 2

Subject	<u>Incomplete</u>	<u>Complete</u>	<u>Extended</u>
1		X	
2			X
3			X
4	X		
5			X
6			X
7			X
8			X

Table 3 Assignment 3

Subject	<u>Incomplete</u>	<u>Complete</u>	<u>Extended</u>
1		X	
2			X
3		X	
4	X		
5		X	
6		X	
7		X	
8		X	

Table 4 Assignment 4

Subject	<u>Incomplete</u>	<u>Complete</u>	<u>Extended</u>
1			X
2			X
3			X
4			X
5			X
6			X
7			X
8			X

Table 5 Assignment 5

Subject	<u>Incomplete</u>	<u>Complete</u>	<u>Extended</u>
1			X
2			X
3			X
4			missing
5			X
6			X
7			X
8		X	

Incomplete = some questions not answered, answers superficial, wrong answers

Complete = all questions answered, few original answers - quotes from readings and notes, highly organized

Extended = uses lecture material or readings but amplifies with own knowledge

become initiators. Perhaps a more telling observation would be that the professor never re-adjusted his speech and instructional style once the students had demonstrated proficiency. In other words, his scaffolding was incomplete because it did not make room for their growing knowledge and skills.

Before leaving this section it is interesting to draw attention to one more point made in the Bruner study. He maintained that during the course of the game the mother acts as if she knows the child's intention and presupposes that the child will infer and accept her intention (p. 41). It is possible to recognize that same leap of faith between the professor and the students. These students were not typical international students who had been subjected to standard university admissions procedures: their English language skills were minimal; they had no background in the field and had not participated in academic study in a western institution. In short, the professor did not know whether they could handle the academic tasks of ADED XXX. However, he acted as if he knew they could. Even a rudimentary knowledge of psychology supports the notion that confidence begets confidence. The students knew that the professor was supportive of their endeavours and they were encouraged by his conviction.

4.0 Task as Vehicle for Language Socialization

In Chapter Two the concept of language socialization is discussed in a comprehensive manner, but before examining the data under this heading the theory will be summarized here.

Scheffelin and Ochs explain language socialization as "an interactional display (covert and overt) to a novice of expected ways of thinking, feeling and acting" (1986b, p.5). Generally, the notion of socialization is applied to young children and caregivers, but we have seen that patterns of socialization also pertain to "novices" (Berry & Kim, 1987; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986b), such as sojourners in a new culture and immigrants. It is appropriate to relate this theory to international students, such as the Chinese group, because they are participating in a new environment and learning the social norms and rules. It is through their participation that students come to internalize and gain competence in this social-cultural context. An analysis of how students carry out their classroom tasks, such as the assignments, provides a useful vehicle for examining the socialization process.

4.1 Interaction

The process of becoming a competent member of society is realized to a large extent through language. Children's behaviour is often guided, moderated, reformed through

verbal interactions with their caregivers. Similarly, teachers instruct, praise, criticize, adjust the perceptions of students through oral and written feedback. However, an important feature in language socialization is interaction. The child or the novice is not a passive recipient but rather an active contributor to the meaning and outcome of the exchange. In addition, there are other characteristics that Scheffelin and Ochs identify: a) individuals are selective in what they contribute to interactions, and b) members bring different realities to interactions. In other words, individuals are unique, and their learning is not uniform.

4.2 Selective Participation

In this study, the Chinese students, while novices to this particular academic community are not uninitiated to academic study at the post-secondary level. All are graduates of a first-level degree program from a Chinese institution. They are, however, unfamiliar with the routines and expectations of graduate level work in a "western" university. Prior to and at the beginning of the course, they expressed apprehension about whether they could fulfill the requirements. The following excerpts from several interviews are characteristic of their concerns:

"I felt afraid to participate [in small group discussion] because I wasn't sure if my understanding was correct" (Subject 2). "When we

do the assignment, everyone has difficulty to understand what we should do" (Subject 5). "I didn't participate as freely [during class discussions] as I do in my native language. You have to organize and that means slowly, not quickly, before you can express your own ideas" (Subject 6). "I was reluctant to speak in front of the whole class" (Subject 3).

Many of those anxieties were eased after the first few sessions and when their first assignments were returned to them. The students used their morning tutorials with the professor to ask questions about the previous class, material or the assignments rather than raising those concerns in front of the group. "We always asked questions in the morning. I think we felt we had better control and we were not worried about wasting other students' time" (Subject 7).

4.3 Individual Realities

Despite the fact that their initial fears were allayed, students still had to grapple with tasks that were very different from their previous academic experience. Some comments to that effect are:

"We didn't find what sentence gives a very clear answer to the question, so you have to answer yourself. You have to re-organize and do your own concept. In Chinese text you'd never find this. There would be definite answers or definitions" (Subject 8). "I'm not used to skimming, in this course it's necessary" (Subject 1). "[in China] ...we have much more memorization. Students just listen, sit in class and listen to what teachers say. Here students are active, involved in teaching. Sometimes argue and debate

with the professor. Professor not formal"
(Subject 5).

Learning to come to terms with these differences was handled in different ways. As one might expect, they talked among themselves, discussed differences with the professor and with me. It is clear that whatever overt mechanisms they used to comprehend the new material and environment, a great deal of internal readjustment also took place. In order to do the assignments, all the students had to grapple with new concepts and forms of organization. The following excerpts from the interviews reflect some of the reconciliation that went on:

"Since our backgrounds are different and also the language, we have to think in another way. For example, I have no religion and our political systems are very different" (Subject 5).

"I just pretend I'm a Canadian" (Subject 8).

"I just want to absorb the experience, so I try to, I didn't interpret what Canadians do, I just accepted that in this situation 'they' do this" (Subject 3).

"We are always guessing. I had to stand in another position to look about it" (Subject 7).

In summary then, their socio-cultural knowledge was very different from other members of the class, who had come through Canadian educational systems. As individuals they brought different views of reality, and they made personal and selective contributions to their tasks. In co-operation with the professor, each student constructed his or her

particular view of how adult education programs should be planned and administered.

4.4 Stock Knowledge

There are two other important aspects of language socialization that should be raised in this discussion. First, the notion that all situations or contexts are imbued with "stock knowledge". Many researchers, Bruner, Cazden, Edwards, Mohan, Hymes, Scheffelin & Ochs to name a few, agree that within any context there exists a set of implicit understandings that participants need in order to participate. Often referred to as "shared knowledge or shared meaning", participants rely on others to fill in this implicit background knowledge (Scheffelin & Ochs, 1986a:165). For example, in classroom situations, students wait expectantly at the beginning of a lesson for the teacher or the professor to initiate the routines unless otherwise directed. Students do not begin organizing one another or their tasks. From the responses of the Chinese students we can see that they were quite familiar with some "common knowledge" about classroom routines, such as "the professor lectures, we take notes", but other patterns were new, for example, debating and arguing with the professor. Thus, while many actions were shared, many had to be learned.

One of the reasons that all the Chinese students highlighted for their success was the professor's capacity to intuit or sense what concepts, vocabulary, activities would not be familiar to them. Hence, he made explicit that which was normally shared knowledge. However, it was inevitable that some concepts escaped this special clarification. During the interviews the students identified several which caused confusion or were unknown: a) the word "philosophy" which was used frequently throughout the course; b) the concept of evaluation in Chinese education is almost completely different; c) the process of analyzing a client system; d) terms such as "strategies", "instruments", "desired-state-of-affairs", and so on. An examination of their assignments reveals that there are other concepts or terms which were not thoroughly understood also. But the words of one student, "I just try to find ways to answer the question even simply because I knew I must finish" (Subject 6), suggest that even they knew there was information missing.

4.5 Communicative Accommodation

The other aspect of language socialization which Scheffelin and Ochs raise is communicative accommodation. Although it is considered mainly in regard to baby talk, they suggest that caregivers may adjust their speech and topic to the interest and level of the child. This

accommodation may take the form of helping the child to communicate his intent or helping him to understand the utterances of others. In the case of this study the professor did both: he adjusted his own discourse; he mediated the message of others, for example the materials distributed for required reading; and he assisted the students in presenting their own points of view by accepting less than a graduate level standard of written English in their assignments. Where this analogy weakens is that as the child's language development progresses, the caregiver adjusts and advances his communicative accommodation. However, as mentioned in section 3.3 of this chapter (Bruner's handover concept), the professor did not change or advance his communication strategies for the students as their competency developed. His discourse remained consistent throughout the course. By this I mean, he continued to speak in a slow, clear manner, with relatively few idioms and with frequent repetitions. These are characteristics of what is normally referred to as "foreigner-talk". In other words, the professor did not shift his style as the students gained in knowledge.

It is useful to explore the data from the perspective of language socialization. By viewing the experience as an interactive process, it is apparent that the students were active participants, selectively adding to and taking from the exchanges in order to construct their own notion of

program planning in adult education. Further, by examining their language and that of the professor, it is possible to see that background knowledge can not be taken for granted or assumed to be common knowledge when participants have different cultural perceptions. Finally, language socialization gives us another tool, that of communicative accommodation, with which to understand the adjustments that occurred.

Although second language research has primarily focussed on the efficacy of controlled input, this study suggests that there are many more factors that influence comprehension and competency than simply the length or complexity of individual utterances.

The work that has been done in language socialization is a great resource for those wishing to understand how cultural beliefs and knowledge are transmitted to second language speakers and how novices gain competency within a new environment.

5.0 Task as Example of Theory and Practice

In the study, task is regarded as having a theory and a practice component. The practice is essentially what is done, the sequence of actions that the students go through in order to complete the assignments. The theory is the background knowledge relevant to and brought to bear on those sequence of actions, the knowledge drawn on to

complete the assignments. This inquiry, therefore, examines not only the direct actions taken by the students in completing their assignments, but also examines the background knowledge necessary to complete the assignments and the relationship of that knowledge to the communicative interactions in the course.

According to Piaget (1923), Harre and Bruner, human action is systematic and ordered. Mohan's theory (1987) of the knowledge structures expands on this perspective by providing a framework for analyzing activity. The basis of his theory is that all activity has a theoretical and a practical level: an upstairs and a downstairs component. At the lower or practice level an activity contains at least the following elements: description, sequence, or choice. These functions and their related skills are governed by broader and more general concepts namely: classification, principles and evaluation. See Figure 2 for a graphic of the framework.

The knowledge framework provides another useful tool for analyzing how the students were able to accomplish their task. An excerpt from the handout which describes ADED XXX states that "the objective of these written assignments is to provide an opportunity for you to apply, in a systematic way, the knowledge and insight you have attained through reading, discussion and experience". The professor reiterated this point during the first lecture. His

Classification	Principles	Evaluation
Description	Sequence	Choice

Figure 2. Mohan's Knowledge Framework

objective for the Chinese students was closely aligned, if not as ambitious. He stated that he wanted the Chinese students to be familiar with the basic concepts of program planning and to apply them in a hypothetical situation. In Mohan's language that can be phrased, an opportunity to explore the theoretical aspects of program planning and a chance to demonstrate comprehension of the concepts by applying them to a simulated situation: theory and practice.

The professor goes about this by defining and describing the steps in a sequential pattern. In turn, the students work through this knowledge by carrying out assignments which are organized so that the students must deal with the basic aspects of each topic. This instructional approach helps students to learn by doing. They are presented with the "background knowledge" and then given an opportunity to apply it. In doing so, they describe roles and relationships, outline the content and order of the program, decide on budget levels, methods for advertising, make choices about the relevance of information, give reasons, state opinions and finally

provide a plan for evaluating the success of the program. The professor structures knowledge systematically so that students will have a better chance of comprehending it. The students' comments reflect their ease and satisfaction with this approach.

6.0 Summary

In this chapter the data have been examined from four different approaches: a) academic tasks, b) Bruner's activity theory, c) language socialization, and d) Mohan's theory and practice model. Although each brings a slightly different perspective and aids our understanding of the forces at work in this situation, it is important to bear in mind that each view gives central importance to context. Also, it may seem somewhat arbitrary to separate the analysis into four categories. Perhaps we would have a deeper and more comprehensive understanding if the study could be portrayed in a painting or mural which depicted themes mingling in layers and patterns all over a huge canvas. For then we would see how the influence of one aspect or another is never far away.

Chapter Five

CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to discover how and why a group of Chinese students was able to succeed in a graduate level course, despite the obvious deficiencies of inadequate background knowledge about adult education and limited language skills. Under normal circumstances these students would never have been admitted to a university program, but the subjects in this investigation came through "the back door" under special federal government sponsorship. It became clear through doing the study that there were difficulties other than language that these students faced: course content assumed knowledge of Canadian society; and course process differed from the "culture of the classroom" in China. Their academic performance rewarded the professors and administrators who had faith that these Chinese students could learn the major elements of program planning in adult education.

The students' achievements have been examined from several different theoretical perspectives. Both language and context, and language socialization place greater emphasis than second language research does on the role that social setting and communication play within an environment. That is, we become more interested in "how" something is achieved, rather than "what" the result is. In order to come to some understanding of the larger picture, I have examined

the whole course, the assignments as examples of student tasks, and the relationships between classroom sessions and course assignments. As stated in Chapter 2, this study did not attempt to itemize what cultural learning occurred, nor note specific language features which had been incorporated into students' writing or speech. Often these items are studied separately, or in isolation. This study shows how these aspects work in concert in a real situation. What emerges is not a startling revelation but the obvious result of how students manage academic tasks. The following section describes those elements of communication which support the students in their tasks.

The main finding of this study is the way the plan and the conduct of the course enabled students to complete their assignments successfully. Specifically this process operated at the level of the organization of the whole course, the organization of course assignments, and the organization of the class sessions to support the class assignments.

1.0 The Organization of the Course

The organization of the course was important for students' comprehension and achievement. The plan of ADED XXX was a cohesive package in which lecture material, readings, and assignments were systematically co-ordinated. There was a conceptual and philosophical framework, and practical methodology for planning adult education programs.

Relevant theories and applied research accompanied the step-by-step approach taken in this course.

The plan was carefully communicated to the students. The structure of the course, goals and objectives, reading list and material, students' requirements, and assignment outline were all carefully described and distributed during the first class. The Chinese students took great comfort from this. First, it gave them a clear view of exactly how the course would be structured and what they must do. Second, they could refer to the outline and see how various sections related to one another. When participating in a new endeavour, it often helps to have a systematic overview to refer to. This is especially true for Chinese students who have a penchant for wanting to know what lies ahead.

Linking lecture material and readings to sequential assignments provided a solid foundation for the Chinese students to do their tasks. They cited this higher level of organization as a significant contribution to their success. Traditional ESL research, which focusses on the sentence level, fails to take into account the influence that larger organizational patterns may play.

2.0 Assignments were Integral Units in the Course

First we will discuss the relationship of the assignments to the course. The function that the assignments played in the Chinese students' success is not

insignificant. Several factors can be noted. First, the assignments were designed to simulate the actual steps that one might take when planning and implementing adult education courses. The assignments provided the practical application of theory and research. Second, they were sequenced in such a way that they followed the typical progression used when planning programs. In other words, the tasks were not random nor were they isolated. Third, the course supplied the background knowledge so that the Chinese students could proceed with the assignments. The professor consciously organized this specific relationship between theory and practice; it was not coincidental. To summarize, a cycle existed: background knowledge was provided, assignments were completed, and feedback was structured for continued learning.

Although this may seem an obvious point that students require background knowledge before carrying out a task, lecturers frequently by-pass this step, assuming that students can gain adequate background information by reading on their own. In the case of second language learners, this assumption is faulty and shortsighted.

We now turn to the structure of each assignment. An important point to note about the assignments is that they functioned as routines or formats. From Bruner's perspective this means that they have a deep structure and surface features. All five assignments have the same pattern: each

has a central focus, such as assessing needs, designing an instructional plan, and so on, followed by a series of questions which led students through the complete assignment.

The deep structure implies rules for successfully completing the tasks. In some cases there were helpful, explicit rules stated for completing questions, for example, "use proper form and avoid fussiness", "if you plan to use a questionnaire then attach it". Informal course processes provided opportunities for learning what was an acceptable format.

The surface level of the assignments concerns the actual content of the answers - did the student use the prepared case study or develop his or her own; did the student choose to answer in broad descriptive sentences or chart format; did the student make analogous connections or were the answers straightforward and concrete. In Bruner's language, the surface level of the assignments is concerned with the "moves of the game", for while the deep structure remains constant, it is the surface structure which varies.

The assignments were a comprehensive, integral part of the course, and they reflected a high level of organizational input.

2.1 Doing Assignments Enables Students to Participate in Real Work

At the beginning of the course, the Chinese students expressed grave concerns about being able to handle all the tasks required of them. They were anxious about participating in class discussions, uncertain about how to do their assignments, and didn't know whether they would be able to follow the lectures and take notes. In short, they were unfamiliar with this new domain. Gradually, as they became engaged in the activities, their participation increased in scope and confidence. They were able to make points in discussions, raise questions in front of the whole class, and they learned how to take adequate notes in English. As active members of the class, they were able to not only observe a new social dynamic but participate as well. Thus, they became socialized into a new role of graduate students in a western academic environment. This progress appeared to be a result of participating in the real work of doing assignments.

The assignments and class participation were evaluated as evidence that the student understood the contents and could apply the knowledge to a practical situation. The Chinese students were engaged in doing the same tasks as all other students in ADED XXX. This meant that the Chinese students had to do the assignments, the required reading, and participate in the small group discussions. Several

students mentioned the value of doing "real work" that was related to their area of responsibility in China. In contrast, Chinese students involved in other Canada-China development programs do not have the advantage of participating as active members in credit course work. Instead they audit courses, and there is no systematic method for evaluating their new skills or knowledge. Understandably then, there is no compulsion for them to dig deep and come to grips with difficult, new material. They are not full participants in these courses. They are merely listeners and comprehenders. This study suggests that learning is facilitated by full participation with responsibility for equal output. By contrast, the concept of comprehension of verbal input may be seriously inadequate. By doing assignments, students can check their own comprehension, and the professor can also evaluate the extent of learning that is taking place.

Another important feature of doing real work on assignments is that a student's work is accompanied by structured feedback from the professor. In the case of the Chinese students who had limited background knowledge, their "output" was accepted and modified by the professor's response. He in turn could adjust his "input" to their language level and comprehension. Thus, a process of negotiation developed between the students and the professor. Through the regular submission of assignments,

additional morning sessions, and the interplay during class, the professor was able to "scaffold" his input to the Chinese students. As the students' knowledge and confidence increased, they were able to respond at their level. Examining input and interaction within this larger frame of assignment work is a marked contrast from second language research which looks at exchange at an utterance level only.

3.0 Class Sessions were Organized to Support Class Assignments

Classes consisted of lectures, small group discussion and in addition, there were sheltered sessions. Effective communication in this course occurred at every level - the overall organization of the course, the relationship of the assignments to the lectures and reading material, the professor's feedback to the students, the informal communication between the professor and the students, and finally the professor's individual style of interaction. Identifying these elements is useful because each promoted effective communication, which in turn supported the students in accomplishing their tasks.

A brief summary of how the professor carried this out will suffice. On the first day of the class he distributed and discussed the complete outline of the course and assignments. Students were introduced to the overall philosophy and conceptual basis of the course, the

professor's background, desired outcomes from the course, and students' responsibilities. There was a discussion about the marking scheme for the assignments and the scope expected. Students were encouraged to submit their first assignment without undue concern. The professor explained that it was an initial piece of work and that future assignments would get better. His feedback on the papers reflected the same approach, asking questions, making statements to prod the students' responses. Gradually the Chinese students began to understand what was expected of them.

Ample opportunity was provided for students to talk to one another, to me and to the professor. Additional morning sessions gave students "sheltered" situations to ask for assistance or clarification. They used these, but as the course evolved their confidence and knowledge increased, and they began to speak out more frequently during the regular lectures. Within the class, the professor arranged the seating so that Chinese students were engaged in discussion with other students who were native speakers and graduate students in adult education. Special topics were discussed within these small groups giving the Chinese students another opportunity to comprehend a point if they hadn't grasped it earlier. To sum up, the organization of the course, the atmosphere of support within the class and the

professor's clear style of communication supported this co-operative, collaborative endeavour.

Although it may seem like I'm belabouring a common-sense argument, it is important to bear in mind that research in second language has consistently failed to acknowledge the impact that context and communication have in learning. SL research continues to analyze discrete items at the level of discourse. Even those studies which recognize "task" as being a useful focus still base their argument on an analysis of surface level features, such as incomplete sentences and false starts.

Finally, I believe that this situation is more than just an example of "good teaching". Literature on effective teaching emphasizes the role of the instructor - her organization, management, communication style, and so on. However, it does not recognize that learning is a two-way street. Students and teacher are engaged in a collaborative endeavour to bring about some desired results. "The communicative task is not simply a matter of making things familiar by the use of comprehensible input, but of ensuring that the correct association or interpretive resonance is evoked" (Bruner, 1988, p.16) To do this, the learning situation must be structured to facilitate a joint learning enterprise. The Chinese students' participation in ADED XXX is an excellent example of how this can be carried out.

4.0 Implications of the Study

Because this study is impressionistic and based on a small group of subjects it is unwise to make specific recommendations based on the findings. However, the principles of language socialization have implications for SLA research and teaching.

First, language socialization reminds us that context is significant and must be taken into account when studying language teaching and learning. Even though Krashen pays lip service to the notion of context in his theory, he fails to define what context is or to examine in detail ways in which it can facilitate SLA. Further, language socialization calls researchers to analyze more than sentences and more than exchanges. We should examine larger units, such as how assignments are embedded within a whole course.

Second, language socialization calls into question the validity of tests like TOEFL. Because these tests are based on limited responses to grammatical structures, they ignore the complex situational factors that support or hinder comprehension. Consequently, institutions that use TOEFL scores as the only admission criterion may be doing a disservice to themselves and to the applicant. Other factors may be far more crucial to a student's success than a particular score. For example, how stable is her funding base, what support exists to ease his adjustment to a new environment, how extensive is her background in the field?

A more equitable system might consider admission based on a sliding scale of language scores, then depending on the strength of related factors determine the merit of a candidate in a more holistic manner.

Finally, language socialization suggests an orientation to teaching which encompasses the larger picture. Learners are not merely listeners and comprehenders; they are active and selective participants, and learning is most productive if the learner does something with the information. Using Bruner's model teachers might establish circumscribed routines that fit into a natural situation. This study suggests that assignments in content courses provide natural tasks of language use if they are well-integrated into a supportive course structure. It is important to clarify that this approach does not recommend organizing random lists of activities and items within them. But once an activity has been identified, the teacher must stand back and assess what a student needs to know in order to complete the task. Mohan's Knowledge Framework is very useful in helping teachers to begin the analysis of a task and its environment.

5.0 Summary

I have maintained that a case study was the best method for gaining a comprehensive picture of the course and the students. Indeed, acting as a participant observer has

permitted a continuous, insider view of what occurred from several points of view. However, case studies by their nature are not generalizable, nor can a cause and effect relationship be made about the findings. Furthermore, any observed conditions are not static and are also subject to influences beyond the immediacy of the classroom (Cazden, 1982, p.223). This is particularly true in a cross-cultural situation such as this.

In addition, the scope of the study precluded a micro examination which might have led to greater depth of understanding. It would also have been desirable to move from the level of the assignments as routines to a finer analysis of the Chinese students' papers.

This study has been an attempt to examine closely the context of a graduate course, the classroom environment and a group of Chinese students who participated and succeeded in that situation. Because it represents a first look at how a group of non-native English speaking international students went about their tasks, there is great scope for further work. It would be useful, for example, to know how students in other disciplines manage their work, how other courses are structured and how assignments and classroom relationships affect the process. It would also be valuable to study other national groups and to see how they manage their academic work. Finally, as stated above, there is a

need to analyze more closely students' work, and students' and professor's discourse.

Not withstanding these limitations, the study can be considered worthwhile. By using perspectives of language and context, and language and socialization we have gained valuable insight into the larger process of how students who had limited language proficiency and no background in the field could succeed. We see the benefit of arranging special encounters in the form of structured assignments and cohesive course organization so that students can grasp what is intended and interpret that content according to their own points of view.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

ADED XXX - ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM PLANNING PRACTICE

Program planning is the mechanism through which theory and research related to adult development and learning, to management, instructional design, evaluation and marketing are applied to design educational interventions. A program is the framework in which instruction is delivered. Delivering well-planned programs is the major goal of most providers of adult education.

Perfection in decision making and, therefore, perfection in planning can never be attained because we never have all the needed information, know all the alternatives, use all the correct criteria, understand all the important cause-effect relationships, or employ the best decision-making systems. However, by studying the process and by practicing making the kinds of decisions which must be made, we can reduce our errors to a minimum.

Although it may be possible to learn the technology of planning without a thorough understanding of the theoretical, conceptual, and philosophic perspectives which undergird practice, this course will emphasize the development of such understanding and the important relationship between theory and informed, insightful, and reflective practice.

Expected Outcomes

At the conclusion of the course, participants should be able to:

1. Articulate the nature and function of planning in relation to adult education programs;
2. Identify the various organizational/institutional environments in which adult education program planning occurs;
3. Describe in detail at least two different formal planning models reported in the literature and be able to compare and contrast the elements of the models;
4. Identify potential barriers to effective planning and prescribe strategies for overcoming such barriers.

Suggested Reading

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Course Outline

The following topics will be covered in the course:

1. Planning as an anticipatory decision-making process.
2. Analyzing the planning context and client system.
3. Identification of educational needs.
4. Developing educational objectives.
5. Formulating an instructional plan.
6. Formulating an administrative plan.
7. Developing an evaluation plan.

Instructional Processes

A variety of processes will be used throughout the course. Because many questions related to planning theory have not 'right' or 'wrong' answers, a good deal of time will be spent discussing and debating alternative views and the implications of adopting each alternative. The planning experiences (both good and bad) of class participants and the instructor will be used to illustrate problems and opportunities often confronted by program planners. Since this course will emphasize exploration of conceptual, theoretical, and philosophical issues found in the literature, the instructional format will be participatory. Students should, therefore, be prepared to engage in discussion of relatively abstract ideas as well as situation-specific problems.

Learning Resources

Textbooks and other materials used in ADED XXX, which is the prerequisite course, will be useful in this course. Since participants may have had varying experiences and materials in their prerequisite course, a set of print material garnered from a variety of sources will be distributed in class.

In order to cover the cost of this material, a materials duplication fee of \$9.00 will be collected from each student. This material will be sufficient background to complete your written assignments, but you are encouraged to do additional reading.

Class Schedule

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Class Topic</u>
	Introduction to the Course and the Systems Design of Instruction
	Planning Context and Client System Identifying Needs
#1 due	Developing Objectives
#2 due	Instructional Planning and Administrative Planning
#3 due	Choosing Appropriate Techniques
#4 due	Evaluation and Testing
#5 due	Review and Summary

Assignments

The objective of these written assignments is to provide an opportunity for you to apply, in a systematic way, the knowledge and insight you have attained through reading, discussion, and experience. Critique from class participants and feedback from the instructor are intended to facilitate your increased understanding about the process of planning educational programs.

Due to the nature of some projects, one or more of the following questions may not apply. If you feel that a particular item does not apply to your project, then simply state that together with a brief explanation of why you think so. On the other hand, there may be additional items not listed below which clearly apply to your project and should be included.

The project you choose to examine may be an actual real-life program or may be a hypothetical program. In either case, it should be a substantial program and not trivial. Each of the five units will have equal value.

Each assignment should be relatively brief, tightly organized, and highly focused. You may use point form wherever appropriate, rather than an essay style. Some 3-5 pages (typewritten if possible) may be sufficient if you are succinct in your explanations.

The instructor will try to provide feedback on each assignment in the week following each submission.

UNIT 1 - Due

Analyzing the Planning Context and the Client System

Provide a comprehensive description of the organizational context and client system and explain how these characteristics may influence latter steps in the planning effort.

What are the goals (primary and secondary) of the organization and how does educational programming fit into these goals? What responsibility and what authority do you have within the organization? What relationship to other organizations serving the same clients?

What constraints to your planning efforts - financial, physical, geographical, philosophical?

How well defined are the characteristics of the client system - demographic, geographic distribution, possible barriers to participation, possible motivation?

How well are the roles defined and differentiated between: content expert(s), process expert(s), representative(s) of the organization and of the clients, others?

Make clear if this is a MS, ES or PS program, and the implications for your planning.

UNIT 2 -

Assessing Needs

What strategy would you employ to assess the needs of the client system and what specific needs do you think you would identify if the strategy was implemented?

Would you use a single or multiple methods and how extensive would be your coverage of the client group? What relationship do these needs have with the goals of the sponsoring organization?

How unobtrusive are your 'instruments' and how could you use existing data? If you plan to use a questionnaire, then attach an example.

How will the "desired state of affairs" (DSA) be determined and who will be responsible for writing needs statements? How will priority among identified needs be established and who will make this judgement.

NOTE: Because you will not actually conduct the needs assessment for this assignment, you must develop a set of needs statements which are your "best guess" of what you probably would discover if you had done the actual assessment.

How well developed and convincing is the argument that these needs are amenable to an educational program? Separate educational from non-educational needs.

UNIT 3 -

Developing Objectives

Formulate the learning objectives in outcome statements rather than process statements. Use proper form and avoid fuzziness.

How clearly related are the program objectives to the needs described in Unit 2? Are outcomes clearly related to the 'desired state of affairs'?

Is there a clear relationship between lower and higher level objectives?

How clear and complete are the assumed entering level of competence of clients?

UNIT 4 -

Designing an Instructional Plan and an Administrative Plan

(a) Specify the content and the process of instruction, the sequence and the timing of various elements of the program.

How appropriate are the activities for each objective - duration, distribution of time within the program, variety in schedule? Are media used to best advantage?

How clearly defined are the human and physical resources needed to run the program - instructional personnel, type of facility, arrangement of seating, equipment and materials required, etc.?

(b) Specify the administrative arrangements necessary to ensure financial and educational success of the program.

What strategy is proposed to publicize the program and what information would be provided? Attach an example of your "announcement".

Include a proposal budget which itemizes all anticipated expenditures and receipts/contributions and which reflects realistic pricing.

Provide a list describing all the administrative tasks to be performed (before, during, and after the event) including target dates for completion and who to be responsible for completion of each task.

UNIT 5 -

Formulating a Summative Evaluation Plan

Describe a comprehensive evaluation strategy which will result in valid judgements of the worth of the program.

How clear is the relationship between evaluative questions and the objectives and design of the program?

How and when will data be collected?

Include a sample of all evaluation instruments. These should reflect clarity of instructions for completion, appropriate question construction and sequencing, choice of response format, ease of tabulation.

Who will carry out the evaluation strategy and how will the results be processed?

Provide a timetable of evaluation and processing activities and a justification for who will receive the results.

NOTE: Since each unit builds upon previous units, you may want to keep a copy of each assignment submitted so that succeeding assignments will flow smoothly out of previous units, on the assumption that you will be working on the next unit while the instructor is analyzing the current submission.

The following Case Study may be chosen by those who do not have a real-life program or have not developed a hypothetical program of their own.

CASE STUDY

The Alma Society was founded in 1956 as a community service organization by a group of citizens who were concerned about the welfare of children. The Society secures its funding from an annual campaign in the community, gifts and charitable donations, interest from investments, and moderate fees from various public activities. The population of the community stood at 178,263 as of the last Census.

The Constitution of the Society states, among other things, that: "The Society will be an advocate within the community and within the Province for the improvement of the welfare of the family, with particular emphasis on the child ... through a variety of means, including; lobbying of legislators, public information campaigns, provision of educational programs, and, liaison with provincial welfare authorities."

The Society leases office space for its five full-time staff, including an Executive-Director, a cashier/bookkeeper, a scenographer/typist, a clerk/receptionist, and a director of publicity. These premises contain no extra room for Board or other meetings, which must be held elsewhere.

The Board of Directors is elected at the Annual General Meeting of the Society. The Board meets quarterly to receive activity and financial reports from the Executive Director, and to discuss ongoing fund-raising activities. The day-to-day operation of the Society is left completely in the hands of the Executive-Director, guided only by the Objectives of the Society and the approved budget.

The pattern of educational services over the past several years has been to provide at least one workshop in the Fall and one in the Spring. The annual budget usually makes provision for hiring a short-term program planner for each workshop.

Lately there has been much writing in the local newspaper concerning child abuse. Even at the last Board meeting, several Board members noted that two local cases of child abuse had become prominent in the news and that criminal charges might be laid in at least one of the cases. The Executive-Director concluded that it would be timely to

give focus to this theme at the next Workshop. There should be interest among social workers, teachers, parents, court workers, and other concerned citizens.

The Executive-Director has just hired you to plan a Workshop on Child Abuse. In addition to your salary, the Society budget has set aside a \$150 subsidy for the Workshop, so as to reduce the participant fee.

Previous workshops have varied from 1 to 2 days and fees have ranged from \$8 to \$20 person. Attendance has ranged from 16 to 44. The Spring workshop has always been held in March to April, often coinciding with Easter school holidays. The Executive-Director shared these statistics with you for information only. You are free to develop your own proposals. However, the Executive-Director wishes to be consulted and to have final approval on the budget and the fee. The program design and all administrative arrangements are in your hands. As the Executive-Director suggested, "You are in charge of all program and administrative arrangements, but I hope you will develop a rationale or good reason for each decision you make, just in case a Board member should ask."

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APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

General

1. Have you ever planned a program before?
How did you go about it?
2. Now that you've completed the adult education course, are there differences in the approach taken in China?

In Class

2. I noticed that some students took more notes than others. How extensive were your notes? Did you write in Chinese, English, both?
3. How did you know what to write down?
4. If you didn't understand something the professor said, what did you do?
5. Almost every night we had some small-group discussions. Did the small group discussion make any difference to your understanding of a topic?
6. If the lecture and material had been in Chinese, how would you have responded during the class?

Readings

7. Here are a list of the readings. How did you feel about them?
8. The readings are based on particular philosophical and theoretical points of view. Were there ideas that you found unusual?
9. How did you resolve the difference?

Assignments

10. Did you choose to use the case study or did you write about your situation in PRC? Why?

11. How did you go about doing the assignments? Were some more difficult than others? Which ones? Why?
12. Were there some concepts which were new to you? How did you go about understanding them?

Overall

13. As you think over the course are there some topics which you feel unclear about?
14. Do you think your English level was adequate for your successful participation in the course?
15. What preparation do you think is necessary for Chinese students entering graduate studies?
16. Suppose that you were the instructor designing this course, what measures would you take to help the ESL students in your class?
17. Can you add anything that I may have overlooked?