

CLASSROOM LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES IN A CHINESE AS A
FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASS OF YOUNG BEGINNERS

By

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To my dear parents, whose love for language teaching has led me into the world of language education.

Abstract

The present study is a qualitative one concerning classroom language activities in a foreign language classroom.

Studies in language education have in recent years focused on the integration of language and content as one possible way to benefit the students both linguistically and cognitively. Among the research efforts on a content-based approach, Mohan's (1986) Knowledge Framework (KF) provides a systematic way to organize classroom activities combining language and content. However, it is believed by some people that a content-based approach can only apply to learners above the beginning level and that beginners' language classes should be organized solely around language categories. The present study attempts to investigate the feasibility of adopting a content-based approach in a regular Chinese as a foreign language class for young beginners by examining the on-going process of classroom language activities organized around Mohan's KF. The empirical evidence provided by the study indicates that it is feasible to apply a content-based approach in teaching a foreign language to young beginners in normal classroom situations: (1) By engaging in activities organized around the KF, the students in the study used Chinese (though in combination with English) in their interactions, seemed to understand the topics or content of the activities they were engaged in, were involved in certain thinking processes, and represented knowledge structures with graphics; (2) The study shows that classroom activities on a chosen topic can lead to the systematic use of features of language by foreign language students at the beginning level, in the ways indicated by the KF analysis of the topic.

In providing an analytical description of the on-going process of classroom language activities around the KF, how the KF was adopted, and how the teacher and the students worked with the KF, the study further supports the argument empirically that the principles underlying the KF apply not only to learners above the beginning level, but also to learners who are beginners; not only to second language learners, but also to foreign language learners. On the basis of the study, suggestions on program improvement and recommendations for further research are considered.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Reasons of the Study

The program of teaching Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language in elementary schools is relatively new in Canada by comparison with other language teaching programs. To improve the program, research undertaken in classrooms is very important and necessary. As Chaudron (1988) points out, "the ultimate objective of classroom research is to identify those characteristics of classrooms that lead to efficient learning of the instructional content, so that empirically supported L2 teacher training and program development can be implemented" (Chaudron 1988:1). Since what is central to education is the concept of activities (Mohan 1986), this study attempts to find out how some classroom language activities could benefit foreign language learners by investigating the on-going process of classroom language activities.

In language teaching, there exist two basic contrasting approaches: language-based and content-based. In a traditional language-based approach, people treat a language class only as a language class without considering other educational potentials. Language development is regarded as the only objective of a language program in which the class is organized solely by language categories, such as vocabulary items, sentence structures, grammar points, etc.. Such a language-based program not only dilutes the richness of a language program, but also hinders the target language development because the use of language elicited from the students is often nonauthentic in that the language practiced is

not related to any authentic situations meaningful to the students. The other approach is a content-based approach in which the language program is organized around a series of themes or topics. Thus, the language to be learned becomes meaningful because it relates to content. The language program discussed in this paper belongs to this approach.

A content-based approach can be partially seen as one of the results of the change in people's perception of language teaching. In today's world of education, people perceive the process of language learning and teaching as language education. Then, from an educational point of view, it is important to find ways to continue all students' academic and cognitive development while they are in the process of acquiring a second/foreign language (Early *et al.* 1986). Hence, the value of a language program may be enhanced and the educational outcomes multiplied. In the situation of foreign language learning, even for those students who in the future might not use the target language, the course is also useful in the sense that what they gain from a language class is not only one more language but also various skills and knowledge useful in their future life. But, is there a way for a language program to develop both cognitive and language abilities?

Recently, Cummins' (1981, 1984) view of language proficiency has drawn attention to the difference between basic conversational language and academic language proficiency and underlined the importance of recognizing and respecting the resources of both the bilingual's language and the opportunities for positive cognitive transfer (Mohan ms.). Some research efforts have been made to explore the possibility of integrating second language development and academic achievement for second language learners. Most of the studies in this area have focused on the integration of language and content and have regarded the content-based approach as one possible way to benefit the students both linguistically and cognitively or academically (Mohan 1986; Cantoni-Harvey 1987; Crandall 1987; Chamot & O'Malley 1987; Benesch 1988; Enright & McCloskey 1988; Snow & Brinton 1988; Brinton, Snow & Wesche 1989). However, it is important not

to confuse the content-approach teaching with content teaching. It has been realized from the language immersion program that "content teaching is not necessarily good second language teaching" because of its lack of focus on form-meaning relationships (Swain 1988:81). What language learners need is activities which bring with them a full range of form-function relations. A good content-based approach is supposed to integrate language and content.

Among the research efforts to integrate language and content, the Framework of Knowledge Structures proposed by Mohan (1986) provides a direct and systematic way to help classroom teachers organize classroom activities combining language and content in order to benefit the students both linguistically and academically. Influenced by the ideas of the anthropologist Malinowski (1935), and working with the systemic, functional model of language development by Halliday (1978, 1985), Mohan bases his organizing framework on the concept of situation. "The choice of situation is deliberate and appropriate for the integration of language, content, and thinking processes because each situation has its own tradition of knowledge. The ways in which knowledge is structured are similar from situation to situation. This raises possibilities for the transfer of certain language and thinking skills across different content areas and situation, and thus across the curriculum" (Early 1990:569). Besides, since the Knowledge Framework breaks any one topic or theme into six Knowledge Structures, every one of which has its distinct linguistic features, activities organized around the framework could provide the students with opportunities to use the target language in a broad functional range within one topic. So, theoretically, by adopting Mohan's Knowledge Framework to organize classroom activities in a language class, there exists the possibility of exploring more educational potentials of a language class, among which is the students' concurrent development of both language abilities and cognitive skills and the foundation for the transfer of learning across contexts.

In terms of practice, the research that has been conducted in relation with the Knowledge Framework in ESL curriculum design indicates the possibility of applying the framework in curriculum design for both K-12 students and college level students and provides the evidence that by designing activities or tasks around the Knowledge Framework, language, thinking and content can be integrated at the level of curriculum design (e.g. Early *et al.* 1986; Low 1989). In terms of classroom instruction, the findings from the studies undertaken in relation with the Knowledge Framework in the actual teaching situation have provided empirical evidence that the Knowledge Framework has successfully been applied in the classroom for ESL students. These studies show that the Knowledge Framework is a feasible way of analyzing content or topics and that classroom activities on interesting topics can lead to systematic use of features of language by the students, in the ways indicated by the Knowledge Framework analysis of the topic. By applying the framework in the actual teaching situation, what the students could benefit from is not only the language development, but also the continuous cognitive growth which is vitally related to their academic success across the curriculum or their vocational success throughout their lives (Early 1989a, 1989b, 1990, in press; Mohan 1989; Early *et al.* 1989; Henry 1989; Oszust 1989; Tang 1989).

Nevertheless, up till now, it appears all the studies in relation with Mohan's Framework have been undertaken in ESL situations. Little work has been done in a foreign language classroom, especially with students who are young beginners. Since the principles underlying the Knowledge Framework "apply to the whole field of language education" (Mohan 1986:3) and the application of the Framework has gained positive responses from ESL classrooms, it is worthwhile trying the Framework in foreign language teaching and investigating the effects of such an application. However, when considering a content-based approach, some people believe that "some basic proficiency" in a language "needs

to be established before children can profit from even simplified subject matter instruction" in that language (Chamot 1983:125). This means that a content-based approach in language teaching can only apply to learners above the beginning level and as for true beginners, a language class should be taught in the traditional way, i.e., the language class is organized solely around language categories. Then is it really not feasible to apply a content-based approach, which links language, content, and thinking processes together, in a language class of young beginners? To answer the question, empirical evidence is needed. The present study attempts to investigate the feasibility of adopting the Knowledge Framework in a foreign language teaching/learning setting by examining the on-going process of classroom language activities organized around the Framework in a Chinese as a foreign language class of young beginners.

1.2 Research Questions

The present research, the focus of which is on the classroom language activities, aims to investigate the feasibility of applying Mohan's Knowledge Framework in the situation of teaching a foreign language to young beginners. Specifically, this was a case study which involved a detailed examination of classroom activities organized around knowledge structures in a Chinese as a foreign language classroom at an elementary school. The underlying assumption is that the classroom activities organized around the Knowledge Framework which combines language and content should be able to involve the learners in the use of the target language over a wide "range of activities within the topics and subjects to be covered" (Swain 1988:77) as well as help the students to engage in various thinking processes so as to develop both language abilities and various cognitive abilities. The general questions which directed the research are:

1. Can Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language be taught to young beginners using the Knowledge Framework?
2. How are classroom language activities organized around the Knowledge Framework in a Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language class of young beginners?
3. In this particular class, how do the teacher and the students work with the Knowledge Framework and what can the students gain by engaging in the classroom language activities organized around the Knowledge Framework?

The specific questions which the study seeks to answer are:

1. Is the Knowledge Framework a feasible way of analyzing content or topics in a foreign language classroom?
2. Do the classroom tasks on a chosen topic lead to systematic use of features of language by foreign language beginner students in the ways indicated by the Knowledge Framework analysis of the topic?

These five questions are directly related to the feasibility of the adoption of the Knowledge Framework in a foreign language teaching/learning setting. It is hoped that the answers to these five questions can possibly throw more light on exploring various educational potentials in foreign language education.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The present study is the first attempt to investigate the application of Mohan's Knowledge Framework in the situation of teaching Chinese as a foreign language to young beginners. From a researcher's perspective, it could be regarded as a starting point to investigate more aspects of classroom language activities around the Framework in a

foreign language teaching/learning situation on a larger scale, at a deeper level. From a practitioner's perspective, it might provide some indications or implications on the possibilities of adopting the Knowledge Framework in other language teaching situations, such as in teaching ESL to young beginners, or in teaching other foreign languages to beginners.

In addition, by presenting a whole picture of the on-going process of classroom language activities organized around the Framework, the study is hoped to open a window from which one might perceive the dynamics of the application of the Framework in an actual foreign language classroom linguistically, cognitively, pedagogically, and/or personally. In return, the perception one obtains from such a picture might provide indications for the improvement of such a language program in terms of curriculum design and classroom instruction.

1.4 The Plan of the Thesis

Chapter 1 discusses the reasons, purpose, and significance of the study, with the explanation of some technical terms relevant to the thesis.

Chapter 2, by reviewing some related literature, aims at introducing Mohan's (1986) Knowledge Framework, presenting what has been accomplished in relation with the Framework in the research area, thus revealing what has yet to be done. It points to the need for a study in relation with the Knowledge Framework in a foreign language learning setting.

Chapter 3 describes in detail how the study was designed and conducted and explains why the study was thus designed and conducted.

Chapter 4 deals with the findings of the study, accompanied by data presentation. By means of providing an analytical descriptive narrative, it attempts to draw a whole

picture of the on-going process of classroom language activities organized around the Knowledge Framework in an actual foreign language classroom.

Chapter 5 draws the conclusions of the study by means of answering the research questions directing the study. It also gives some suggestions on the possible improvement of curriculum design and classroom instruction. In view of the limitations of the study, some recommendations for further research are made.

1.5 Definitions of Terms

Since some terms used in the study are somewhat unique to the discipline, the terms relevant to the study are defined below.

Cantonese

Cantonese is one of the Chinese dialects spoken in the Guangdong area, the southern part of China. It shares most of the characters with other Chinese dialects but has independent pronunciation, tones, different vocabulary items, and some different sentence structures. Approximately 5% of the people in China speak Cantonese as their native language (Wu 1984).

Chinese

Chinese covers many dialects such as Mandarin (which is the official language in both Taiwan and the mainland of China), Cantonese, etc.. However, in this study, whenever Chinese is used, it refers to Mandarin Chinese. In China, approximately 70% of the people speak dialects similar to Mandarin as their native languages (Wu 1984).

Chinese Characters

Chinese characters are the written symbols of the Chinese language. Every syllable in Chinese is represented by a character. A character is not necessarily a word that conveys a meaning. A Chinese word is made up of one or more characters.

First Language (L1)

In this study, all the subjects involved speak English as their first language. Even though the teacher also speaks Cantonese and two of the students are from the families where East Indian languages are occasionally spoken, “L1” in this study refers to English.

Foreign Language

In this study, “foreign language” refers to a non-native language learned and used with reference to a speech community outside national or territorial boundaries. For instance, Chinese learned by Canadians in Canada is a foreign language to these learners. Usually, a foreign language, whose speech community may be thousands of miles away, is learned with much less environmental support than a second language. (See Stern 1983:16).

Hanyu Pinyin—A Chinese Phonetic System

Hanyu Pinyin is a Chinese phonetic system. It is made up of alphabetic letters from the internationally-accepted Latin alphabet to indicate the pronunciation of the Chinese characters. As the characters themselves do not represent sounds, the Hanyu Pinyin is a convenient tool which helps overcome difficulties in reading, writing, and remembering. Hanyu Pinyin is sometimes abbreviated as Pinyin. (See NoName 1963).

Interaction

“Interaction” refers to talk between one or more individuals.

Second Language (L2)

In this study, “second language” refers to non-native language learned and used within one country in which the language is used and in which it has official status. For instance, English learned and used by non-native speakers of English in Canada is a second language of these speakers. Thus, a second language, because it is used within the country, is usually learned with much more environmental support than a foreign language.

Task vs. Activities

In this thesis, “task” and “activity” are sometimes used to convey the same meaning: a segment of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting (See Nunan 1989:Chapter 1); sometimes, especially in Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis, they are used slightly differently. For example, the task of making a family tree might include several classroom activities which are conducted to accomplish the task. Thus, “task” refers to a goal achieved through a series of steps and an activity refers to a step leading to that goal.

Tone

In Chinese, the pitch and change in pitch of a syllable make for a difference in meaning. Such pitch contours are called the “tones”. There are four basic tones in Mandarin Chinese, shown by the following marks:

— : 1st tone, high and level;

/ : 2nd tone, rising;

∨ : 3rd tone, falling-rising;

\ : 4th tone, falling.

In addition, in common speech some syllables are pronounced both weak and short, known as the neutral tones, which are shown by the absence of tone marks. The tone mark is always placed above the main vowel. (See Zhao *et al.* 1982; NoName 1963).

Chapter 2

Review of the Related Literature

“(E)ffective research will be based on well-reasoned theory and synthesis of previous knowledge, so that these sources are not investigated randomly.”
(Chaudron 1988:1)

In today's world of education, language teaching is viewed as language education. Language learning experience is more often perceived from the perspective of educational experience. Then what do we mean by “education”? What sorts of experience comprise “an education”? While it is hard for people from different cultures to give the same answers to these questions, it might be agreed that “many objectives would be shared ones, e.g., a capacity for independent thought and judgment, a tolerance of personal and cultural viewpoints that differ from one's own, and a readiness to adapt to changing circumstances” (Abbott 1987:48). Since no school subject is exempt from the process of education, then a foreign language course must contribute to such objectives. From this point of view, a foreign language course should, theoretically, aim at at least four goals so as to establish the links between language teaching and useful educational theory concepts (Stern 1984): 1) the development of the target language abilities which is the major goal of any language program; 2) the development of various thinking skills which is indispensable for “a capacity for independent thought and judgment”; 3) the awareness of different cultures which forms part of the basis for a “tolerance of personal and cultural viewpoints that differ from one's own”; 4) the ability of transfer of learning which provides “a readiness to adapt to changing circumstances”. Then, practically, is there a way to

realize these goals concurrently in a language program?

2.1 The Introduction of the Knowledge Framework

2.1.1 A General Model of Activities as Contexts for Discourse

Current views of language teaching can be broadly termed "communicative". Communicative language teaching derives from a contextual view of language which relates discourse to extralinguistic context or situation (Mohan 1986). Thus, in the field of language education, the importance of the context has increasingly been recognized. In order to make use of context in language learning, many studies have been undertaken on how to combine context and the learning materials. The Total Physical Response method (Asher 1977) tries to put learning materials into context through physical actions. The audio visual method utilizes films, pictures, cartoons and other visual aids to bring context to the learning materials. Drama techniques introduce theatrical work into the language classroom (Maley *et al.* 1978). "Learning while doing" (Nelson *et al.* 1980) is another way to bring context to learning materials. Though all these methods do help in bringing context to learning materials, none of them has fully exploited the various components of contexts. For instance, all of them mainly focus on action situations in which the target language is used while the role of background knowledge of activities has been ignored. This incomplete employment of contexts in language teaching might be due to the contextual view of language which lacks an adequate model of contexts: while a contextual view of language relies on activities as contexts for discourse, there does not exist a general model of activities and of their relation to discourse (Mohan 1986).

Recently, with the development of the schema theory (Carrell 1985), many researchers have begun to investigate the role of text structures in reading (Carrell 1983, 1984, 1985;

Carrell *et al.* 1989; Meyer 1985; Urquhart 1984; Carrell, Devine & Eskey 1988; Wang & Qi 1988). It is found that being familiar with various text structures is helpful in bringing the learners' background knowledge to reading materials which facilitates the utilization of context in comprehension. Indeed, in the reading research, text structures are shown to play a very important role in reading comprehension (Carrell 1984, 1985; Urquhart 1984; Bartlett 1978; Armbruster *et al.* 1987). However, a question was raised by Mohan (1989): Are we dealing with the structure of text or the structure of knowledge? "Reading researchers speak of the interaction between the organization of expository text and the formal schemata of the reader, where formal schemata are taken merely to mean familiarity with text structure. Yet cognitive psychologists like Abelson speak of such formal schemata or 'knowledge structures' as explaining 'how people organize their knowledge of the world so as to understand and retain new information' (Abelson & Black 1986:1)" (Mohan 1989). Thus, with the belief that "knowledge is schematized" (Abelson & Black 1986:1), Mohan (1986) proposes a "Knowledge Framework", which serves to describe what a model of contexts could look like.

According to Mohan, what is central to education is the concept of an activity. Action and theoretical understanding are the two aspects of an activity. The practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge are the two sides of the Knowledge Framework (KF). "The two aspects of an activity, action and theoretical understanding, match the two sides of the framework" (Mohan 1986:42). Thus, the KF can be perceived as a general model of activities which provides contexts for discourse.

Mohan further argues that an activity can be divided into at least six major types of Knowledge Structures or knowledge processes: describing, sequencing, making choices, classifying, formulating principles, and evaluating. A topic or content area can also be broken down into six types of knowledge which make up the KF: description, sequence,

Classification	Principles	Evaluation
Description	Sequence	Choice

Table 2.1: The Framework of Knowledge Structures (Mohan 1986)

choice which are included in the action situation of an activity and classification, principles, and evaluation which are included in the background information of the action situation (See Table 2.1.1). Since each Knowledge Structure (KS) has its distinct linguistic features, and accordingly when one is engaged in one of the activities of a certain KS under a topic, the particular language attached to that KS is required, the KF plays the role of linkage between language and content. Furthermore, since all the six KSs are common to all activities, the framework provides for transfer of learning from one activity to another. This transfer of learning means both the transfer of thinking skills and the transfer of language learning (See Mohan 1986:46).

2.1.2 An Organizing Framework to Organize Language Taught and Learned as a Medium of Learning

“Language is normally a medium of learning about the world” (Mohan 1986:3). And the world is inseparable from human activities which provide the context for human communication. Thus, learning a language as a medium of learning is inseparable from

learning activities. Since the KF provides a general model of activities and each KS has distinct linguistic features, it could serve as an organizing framework to organize language taught and learned as a medium of learning.

According to Mohan, the KF is divided into action situation and background information and the communication about the KSs in both aspects is inseparable from discourse development:

“All action situations ... contain description, sequence, and choice. ... [The] language resources necessary to talk about description, sequence, and choice are common to all language situations, and ... developing discourse about the three knowledge structures calls for a broad competence in the language.” (Mohan 1986:53-69)

“Background knowledge is the general, theoretical aspect of an activity, and contains classification, principles, and evaluation. ... [T]hese three knowledge structures can be keyed to their associated thinking processes, ... and related to language items that can be used in the classroom....

“Learning to talk and write about these knowledge structures is then an important part of development of competence in academic language.” (Mohan 1986:95)

Thus, based on the concept of an activity from which language is inseparable, the KF can be perceived as a framework to organize language taught and learned as a medium of learning.

2.1.3 A Framework to Organize Classroom Activities Involving and Accordingly Developing Various Thinking Skills

"There is no reason for the language classroom to be restricted to teaching language for its own sake" (Mohan 1986:3). If language is taught and learned as a medium of learning, the position of cognitive development must be emphasized. }

People have studied the relationship between human development of language and cognitive abilities for a long time (See Ringler & Weber 1984:48-49). In spite of the controversy over the issue as to which comes first, all the research "emphasizes the close interrelationship of language and thought and suggests the need for teachers to consider both in planning for language-related activities" (Ringler & Weber 1984:49).

Ellis, Standal, Pennau, and Rummel (1989) hold a similar point of view. They argue that "language and thinking spring from experience and support each other.... It is utmost important to realize that language and thinking are vitally related.... Thinking is a basic element in all the language arts" (Ellis *et al.* 1989:3).

In the book *Thinking Through the Language Arts*, Nessel *et al.* (1989) address the same issue from the perspective of teaching language arts through activities. They argue that by "promoting active student involvement and by giving attention to priorities, the language arts teacher will help students develop as thinkers.... Thinking should not be isolated and taught separately from the language arts; it is an integral part of language comprehension and use" (Nessel *et al.* 1989:21). From the perspective of activity planning, they further point out that "students will improve their thinking to the extent that they are given the chance to see relationships, reason logically, and synthesize information in their regular language arts and content area work. They will be more likely to perform well if the teacher plans activities specifically to elicit such thinking within the regular day-to-day activities" (Nessel *et al.* 1989:22).

Some useful studies have been undertaken to investigate the relationship between communication and thinking skills from the perspective of curriculum design (See Resnich & Klopfer 1989). Yet, to effectively plan activities which could develop the students' language abilities and elicit thinking processes at the same time in language classrooms, there exists the need for a framework which can essentially and systematically combine the two. Mohan's (1986) KF attempts to provide such a framework.

The framework is based on the concept of an activity. To be efficiently engaged in an activity, people not only have to communicate about the activity, but also have to be involved with various thinking processes related to certain cognitive aspects of the activity. Since the KF is a general model of various activities, it can be perceived as a framework to organize classroom activities involving and accordingly developing various thinking skills. More importantly, "knowledge structures ... provide an understanding of fundamentals and aid in transfer" (Mohan 1986:92):

i) "The three knowledge structures of an action situation are a key to communication, discourse, and thinking across the curriculum. ... they provide a framework which makes possible the transfer of thinking skills and language skills to all areas of learning." (Mohan 1986:70)

ii) The "three knowledge structures ¹ can be keyed to their associated thinking processes communicated through graphics, and related to language items that can be used in the classroom." (Mohan 1986:95)

iii) "By recognizing and using the knowledge structures of an activity, the content teacher and the language teacher can develop a common approach in teaching for a transfer of thinking skills across the curriculum." (Mohan 1986:96)

¹Refer to the three KSs in the background information.

2.1.4 Summary

The KF, based on the concept of an activity, links language and content in a systematic way. It provides us with a general model of activities which integrates contexts, communication, and thinking processes.

2.2 The Application of the Knowledge Framework

2.2.1 The Application of the KF in Curriculum Design

Since Mohan's KF was proposed, some efforts have been made to apply the framework in language curriculum design. Early, Thew, and Wakefield (1986) utilized the KF in designing activities in a resource book for teaching English as a second language across the curriculum. Keeping in mind the belief as summarized by Swain (1988) that "because content teaching is considered communicative language teaching par excellence that through content learning second language learning will be enhanced" (Swain 1988:68), Early *et al.* tried to bring the teaching of language and the teaching of subject matter knowledge together by means of applying the KF. During the process of compiling the resource book, they examined several BC Ministry of Education curricula, resource guides, and text books with the six KSs of Mohan's framework in mind. They found that, although sometimes hidden in the verbiage, these structures recurred in texts, tests, and as thinking skills to be developed. Consequently, based on content or topics, a series of classroom activities was planned around the KF, with the design of relevant key visuals graphically representing the six KSs. On the basis of the principle that "efficient instruction aims to meet several objectives concurrently" (Early *et al.* 1986:15), the resource book aims at integrating language and content instruction by means of systematically combining experiences, context, key visuals, thinking skills, and language skills (Early *et al.* 1986).

Emphasizing content-based language learning, Low (1989) studied a content-based curriculum designed for international students participating in a summer English language program. The curriculum designed around Mohan's KF, as is the ESL resource book of Early *et al.* (1986), aims at integrating thinking, language and content in a language program. The study focused on the development, implementation, and evaluation of the curriculum. Though the findings raised concerns at the task design level related to language and other aspects of tasks, the instructors involved in the program, after having implemented the curriculum in the classrooms, responded positively to the curriculum principles and supported such a content approach to language learning. As stated by Low, this "approach goes beyond a traditional view of language teaching and encompasses a broader perspective of language education" (Low 1989:55).

As a summary, certain investigations focusing on ESL programs (Early *et al.* 1986; Low 1989) have shown the possibility of applying the KF in curriculum design for both K-12 students and college level students. Both studies have provided evidence that by designing activities or tasks around the KF, language, thinking, and context can be integrated at the level of curriculum design.

2.2.2 The Application of the KF in Classroom Instruction

In addition to the work that has been undertaken on the application of the KF in curriculum design, several studies have also been conducted in relation with Mohan's KF in the actual teaching situation. The following analysis of several available empirical studies summarizes what has been achieved by those studies in terms of applying the KF in the actual teaching situation and what is possibly yet to be done.

There are seven studies included in this review. The end products of these seven studies are six academic papers (Early 1989a, 1989b, 1990a, 1990b; Mohan 1989; Early *et al.* 1989), two master's theses (Oszust 1989; Henry 1989) and one doctoral dissertation

(Tang 1989). Among the seven studies, the six academic papers and one dissertation (Tang 1989) are based on the data collected from the Vancouver School Board Language and Content Project (See Early *et al.* 1989) while two theses are based on independent research.

Studies Based on the Vancouver School Board Language and Content Project

Early (1989a) and Tang (1989) studied the relationships between the application of KSs graphically represented by key visuals and the effectiveness of improving ESL students' language and content learning. While Early focused on key visuals as a tool to prepare students for reading tasks, Tang focused on the effect of graphics on student learning. Based on a large-scale project in the Vancouver School District to help ESL students increase their academic achievement, Early has provided the evidence that 1) key visuals can be used to teach ideas and the relationships between ideas, and to promote cognitive academic language proficiency; 2) key visuals provide information packages which both organize and simplify content; 3) key visuals make visible the cognitive structures which underlie the content; 4) key visuals hold KSs and content steady and reduce the short-term memory load, thus fully exploiting opportunities for second language growth. Tang, from the perspective of helping ESL students in learning, drew the similar positive conclusion on the use of graphics, i.e. using graphics to present KSs to students facilitated the learning of the students.

In a case study of a grade 5-6 ESL class (Early 1989a, 1990a; Early *et al.* 1989), Early *et al.* observed how the KF was utilized to teach a thematic unit on fish. The focus was on "how the teaching of language and the teaching of subject matter knowledge can be brought together in a way that both empowers students and fosters a positive attitude toward their own abilities and to language" (Early 1990a:568). The case study illustrated six main principles (see Early 1990a for details) underlying the implementation of the KF,

with the hope “that they will help classroom teachers to create environments where ESL and native-English speaking students alike can gain control over language in a way which encourages and enables them become life-long language users”. The thematic unit on fish aimed to develop language competencies for academic tasks by utilizing the KF. The findings indicate that when students are adequately supported in tasks to elicit certain knowledge and discourse structures, they are able to produce texts of which they can be proud.

In a paper based on the study of utilizing the KF to facilitate ESL beginning literacy in an elementary school ESL classroom, Early (1990b) provides an overview of a writing-reading procedure that can be used to teach beginning ESL students (K-12) subject-matter knowledge and expository paragraph structure. The teaching approach outlined in the study is organized around the framework of KSs and is used to generate different types of expository text. The eight basic steps in generating experience-based expository texts are described while at the same time pertinent examples collected from the actual teaching situation are provided. Early argues convincingly that the teaching approach organized around the KF is “suitable for use with beginning ESL students (K-12) who are learning English in the school context” and it is “particularly helpful in introducing pre-literate or illiterate students to written language” (Early 1990b:1990). Most importantly, the study strongly indicates that by utilizing the KF to design classroom activities and by having the children involved in such designed activities, both the children’s cognitive growth and their language development can be fostered at the same time.

To further investigate the relationship between KSs and academic discourse, Mohan (1989) discusses three studies based on the data from the project in Vancouver Schools. The first study, undertaken in a grade 4-6 ESL class, examines KSs as a bridge between the organization of content knowledge, graphic semiotics, and expository discourse. The second study, based on the data taken from a unit work in science with a grade 7 class of

ESL students and native speakers taught cooperatively by a science teacher and a language teacher, examines KSs as a bridge between the organization of content knowledge, information processing programs and academic discourse. The third study looks more closely at the question of KSs as a bridge between a computer database program and academic discourse. The findings of the studies show that 1) graphic representation of KSs acted as a bridge between the organization of content and academic discourse; 2) KSs integrated work across different modes of communication and understanding which varied textually and interpersonally; 3) a graphic and text sharing the same KSs convey essentially the same topical meaning but differ in textuality. As conclusions, Mohan argues:

A focus on KSs offers a way to link work on academic discourse, subject matter organization, graphic semiotics, and computers. Thus, teachers can work with real content while developing language awareness of academic discourse, graphics can provide a visual semiotic which foreground knowledge structure without metalinguistic complexity; information processing programs can guide the manipulation of knowledge structure operations; and learners can communicate about information while learning to shape text.
(Mohan 1989:113)

Thus, Mohan's (1989) studies further support the notion that KSs can be utilized to integrate the language and content so as to facilitate the students' language development and cognitive development concurrently.

Independent Studies

Of the two independent studies in relation with the KF being applied in the actual teaching situation, one is concerned with college level ESL students (Oszust 1989), while

the other is concerned with grade 6 ESL students (Henry 1989).

Oszust's (1989) study focused on the effects of graphics and two-way information gaps on the business decision-making language and skills of second language learners at the college level. Starting from Mohan's (1986) idea that graphics provide cognitive support as students grapple with cognitively demanding abstract tasks involving choice and evaluation, Oszust compared results on four task combinations of information gaps and graphics to assess their effects on both the language and business decision-making skills of second language learners, and found that cognitive skills are being exercised in the business discussions of second language learners and that these skills can be enhanced by graphics. As a result of this finding, she argues that "comprehensible input" (Krashen 1985) could be redefined for the purpose of language and content classes as a shared understanding of all aspects, both verbal and non-verbal, of a task situation, and that this shared perceptive understanding or perception represented by graphics could enhance cognitive performance. Perhaps, what is most important in the study is that it reinforces the assumption that language and cognitive skills are inseparable in authentic activities. It also provides support for the notion that to further the simultaneous development of language and cognitive skills, content-based language teaching, such as Mohan's approach for teaching language and content, is a viable alternative to other approaches.

Henry's (1989) research is based on a case study to examine the processes of vocabulary teaching and learning in a sixth grade ESL classroom. With the assumption that "language is better learned through content than *in vacuo* and that there are major divisions which can be made in language content which are reflected in the language used to express the content" (Henry 1989:3), the study investigates a language teaching/learning approach based on KSs which is perceived as the logical organization of the content. Though the focus of the study is limited to the KSs of classification and description and the language associated with these two KSs, the findings of the study provides the

evidence that a content-based approach organized around the KSs is more effective than "direct strategies (e.g., giving definitions)" in language teaching. "The overall structure of the teaching unit has a major effect on the success of learning concepts and the related vocabulary, ... (the) drawing on the knowledge framework to develop the structure appears to be effective. The design strategies based on the concept of the KSs appear particularly useful. It is important to employ the appropriate language and visual structures which are indicated by the framework. The framework can also be used as a perspective for evaluating the students' progress. An approach which is based on the knowledge framework appears to result in a coherent methodology which can be used for development, presentation and evaluation" (Henry 1989:180). Henry's work, thus, from the angle of vocabulary teaching, reveals the effect of the application of the KF in the actual teaching situation.

Summary

In summary, the findings from the studies undertaken in relation with the KF in the actual teaching situation have provided the evidence that the KF has been successfully applied in the actual teaching situation for ESL students. These studies, especially the ones based on the Vancouver School Board Language and Content Project, show that the KF is a feasible way of analyzing content or topics with the use of graphics and that classroom activities on interesting topics can lead to systematic use of features of language by the students, in the ways indicated by the KF analysis of the topic. From the application of the KF in actual teaching situations, what the students could gain is not only language development, but also continuous cognitive growth which is vitally bound to their academic success across the curriculum or their vocational success all throughout their lives.

2.3 Summary and Conclusions

From today's educational perspective, language teaching/learning should be perceived as language education. Thus, a language program should be designed and developed as a one with multiple objectives which at least aims at the development of language abilities, cognitive abilities, and the transfer of learning. Mohan's (1986) framework of KSs provides a basis for a teaching/learning approach to combine the three educational objectives in an educational program. There is evidence in empirical studies that the KF can be taken as the basis of curriculum design to organize various classroom activities or tasks systematically targeting the desired objectives mentioned above. The empirical studies on the application of the KF in the actual teaching situation provide evidence that the KF has been successfully utilized in classrooms in terms of developing both the students' language abilities and their cognitive abilities. It has been shown that the KF is a feasible way of analyzing content or topics and that interesting topics can lead to systematic use of features of language by the students, in the ways indicated by the knowledge framework analysis of the topic.

Though the principles underlying the KF "apply to the whole field of language education" (Mohan 1986:3), so far, there is no research in relation with the framework that has been undertaken in a foreign language education setting. In addition, some people doubt the feasibility of adopting the KF to young beginners' classes. Since a foreign language education program is no exception from any other language education program in terms of educational objectives, to enhance the educational value of foreign language education, a need exists for empirical studies to sort out the feasibility of utilizing the KF in a foreign language education setting.

Chapter 3

The Study

3.1 Design

This study was conducted to investigate the classroom language activities organized around Mohan's Framework of Knowledge Structures in a Chinese as a foreign language class of young beginners. The purpose was to examine the feasibility of adopting Mohan's framework in teaching a foreign language to young beginners, and by means of ethnographic techniques (Spradley 1980), collect available data so as "to obtain a holistic picture" (Wiersma 1986:16) of the whole process of organizing the classroom activities using the framework. The study was undertaken in a natural setting of a third and fourth grade classroom in an elementary school in B.C. (subsequently referred to as Melba Elementary).

The research was not conducted to study the causal relationships between the adoption of a method and the outcome of that method's adoption. Rather, it was attempting to make "an in-depth analytical description of an intact cultural scene ... such as ... a classroom" (Borg & Gall 1989:492-493), to provide descriptions of processes of classroom language activities "within their specific contexts" (Wiersma 1986:233). Thus, the study was "exploratory or discovery-oriented research" (McMillan & Schumacher 1989:383) undertaken to understand the on-going processes of classroom language activities in a foreign language class of young beginners. The selection of the site and participants was thus based on the "criteria implied in the foreshadowed problems" (McMillan &

Schumacher 1989:392) and the researcher's accessibility to the site.

3.1.1 Setting and Site

The setting for the study was Melba Elementary in B.C.. In the school, there were some ESL students who spoke Mandarin Chinese as their first language. However, the majority of the students in the school spoke English as their first language. In the community outside the school, there were not many Chinese speakers though the population of Chinese immigrants in that area is growing. During the period of the study, I went to that area quite often, not only on school days for collecting data, but also on weekends for various personal reasons. While walking in the streets or the shopping mall, I seldom encountered a Chinese. The opportunity to speak Chinese in the streets is rare by comparison with that in Vancouver. In other words, in this area, Chinese is quite a foreign language.

The site of the study is a Chinese as a foreign language class. This Chinese class was started for the first time in the school's history in October, 1989, with the support of the school principal and the Ministry of Education of B.C.. The classroom, instead of being specially assigned to this Chinese class, is an ordinary grade 3 to grade 4 classroom. The Chinese teacher and the students who were learning Chinese met twice a week on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. The class lasted one hour each time, from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.. Since the classroom was not the Chinese teacher's, the teacher could not freely arrange the decorations on the walls and boards. But, during the periods of the Chinese class, the teacher was allowed to use the boards or the walls freely and change the classroom seating.

3.1.2 Participants

Teacher. The teacher, referred as Ms. C, is a female Canadian-born Chinese whose

first language is English and who speaks fluent Cantonese. Ms. C has had good teacher training and is a very competent teacher in the classroom. She was one of the people involved in writing the resource book of classroom activities for this intermediate Chinese program. Since this was the first time that Chinese was being taught as a foreign language in Melba Elementary, even for the first time in all elementary schools in B.C., thus the first time for the resource book to be used in an actual classroom, Ms. C herself was automatically in a position to test the resource book—classroom activities organized around Mohan's framework. The class was conducted in both English and Chinese.

Students. The study involved twenty-three grade 3 and grade 4 students from the age of 8 to 10, who were attending regular classes at Melba Elementary. At the beginning of the year, Ms. C, the Mandarin Chinese teacher, wrote a letter to the students' parents to ask if they would like their children to learn Mandarin Chinese as a second language. All the responses from the parents were positive. Thus, the Chinese program in Melba Elementary was started for the first time in the school's history and these twenty-three children became the students of this Mandarin Chinese class.

Among these twenty-three children, twelve were girls and eleven were boys. Though there were two boys who had an East Indian background, all the students in this Chinese class were native speakers of English without any Chinese background either linguistically or culturally. After class, the children did not have much opportunity to speak Chinese and, most of the time, the Chinese class seemed to provide the only place for the children to use Chinese. Thus, for this particular group of children, Chinese was taught and learned as a foreign language. All the students were young (from age 8 to 10) beginners (starting to learn Chinese for the first time without any Chinese background). They were all ordinary children without being specially selected by any criteria except their parents' approval was necessary.

3.1.3 The Program, the Classroom Language Activities, and the Framework of Knowledge Structures

This was the first time that Chinese was being taught as a foreign language in an elementary school in B.C.. The teacher did not have a textbook specially written for this particular group of students. What was available was a proposed Mandarin Chinese Curriculum Guide of Intermediate 1-4 (a new label for grades 4-7) (Ministry of Education 1989). This curriculum guide details the goals, objectives, and learning outcomes for teaching Mandarin Chinese to students in intermediate 1-4. According to the guide, there are four goals that are to be striven for in this program:

1. attitudinal (domain of awareness, appreciation, feelings, etc.)
2. cultural (domain of values, customs, traditions, etc.)
3. developmental (domain of thinking skills and learning how-to-learn)
4. linguistic (domain of productive and receptive ability with language)

(Mandarin Chinese Intermediate 1-4 Curriculum Guide, proposed:7)

These four goals interact with and cut across the four components of communicative competence:

1. strategic competence—our attitudes and needs towards communication;
2. social competence—our ability to communicate in socially appropriate and sensitive ways;
3. discourse competence—our ability to link ideas and concepts and utilize our general knowledge in communication;

4. grammatical competence—our ability to utilize the linguistic structures of a language correctly.

(Mandarin Chinese Intermediate 1–4 Curriculum Guide, proposed:7)

Though the curriculum guide attempts to provide an activity-based focus within which the teacher could lead the students towards general communicative competence in Chinese as mentioned above, it does not provide specific activities. Since what is central to education is the concept of activities (Mohan 1986:Chapter 2), how to achieve the four goals of the program through classroom activities remained a question for the classroom teachers. For instance, under the title of “Developmental learning outcomes”, there is a list of thinking skills related to activities involving:

- a. description ...
- b. sequencing ...
- c. classification ...
- d. principles ...
- e. choice ...
- f. analysis ... evaluation ...

(Mandarin Chinese Intermediate 1–4 Curriculum Guide, proposed:14)

Thus, the question to ask is how to obtain these learning outcomes through classroom activities. Since Mohan’s Framework of Knowledge Structures had gained many positive responses from ESL classrooms in terms of content teaching and learning, developing the students’ linguistic abilities as well as various thinking skills at the same time, it was decided to apply Mohan’s framework in this Mandarin Chinese program.

Three elementary school teachers were involved in writing the classroom activities for the resource book, trying to organize the classroom activities around Mohan's framework on the basis of the Curriculum Guide. However, one of the requirements set up for those teachers was to use only the language items listed in the unit concerned and the units that had been taught.

The Curriculum Guide is organized according to a series of themes or topics:

- Personal Information
- Family
- School
- Shopping
- Transportation
- Leisure
- Environment

These themes were chosen on the recommendation of classroom teachers familiar with children's interests and themes found in the other area of the Intermediate curricula. Each theme is a teaching/learning unit and all themes are recycled at different levels with expansion for each higher level. Table 3.2 provides an idea of the themes covered in the whole program. The task of writing the resource book for classroom activities was to create a series of classroom activities organized around Mohan's framework for each unit (topic), i.e., the classroom activities for each unit (topic) should involve all the knowledge structures in Table 2.1.1. By being engaged in the activities organized around this framework for a particular unit, the students are considered more likely to achieve the objectives required by that unit.

Expansion Core Themes	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
personal information	introduction	general	descriptions	daily activities
family	immediate	extended	meal time	home
school	rooms and personnel	equipment, subjects	activities	activities
shopping	gift giving	corner store	postal service and banking	grocery
transportation				
leisure	outdoor sports	television	stamp collections	games
environment	seasons	rice and wheat	senses	fish

Table 3.2: Topics in the Mandarin Chinese Curriculum Guide, Proposed:1-4

For various reasons, I did not start the study from the very beginning of the program, but did join the program at the end of the first unit: personal information—introduction. In order to get a complete picture of a whole unit, the study focused on the next unit: Family—immediate.

In the Curriculum Guide, under each theme or topic, functions of required linguistic items are provided, accompanied by sample words and sample sentences. Appendix A shows how the Family Unit is presented in the Curriculum Guide (See Appendix A). The Family Unit in the resource book should provide a series of classroom language activities organized around Mohan's Framework covering all the sample words and sample sentences provided in Appendix A. Those words and sentences are the specific items to be included in the Immediate Family Unit.

3.1.4 The Methodology—Ethnographic Approach

In order to obtain a whole picture of the on-going classroom activities, an ethnographic approach was adopted; only by “continuous observation, trying to record virtually everything that occurs in the setting being studied” (Borg & Gall 1989:493), could a complete picture of the whole process of the organization of the classroom language activities be obtained. And, only detailed descriptions of the picture could provide insight into what happened in a particular context being studied and how it happened.

3.2 Conduct of the Study

Data on the classroom language activities in a Chinese as a foreign language class were gathered in a Chinese as a foreign language class of twenty-three grade 3 and grade 4 children “under normal instructional settings” (Brody 1984:5). The data collection strategies adopted included on-site classroom observation, the taking of field notes, the collection of students’ written work, and informal interviews with the teacher and the students. In order to “record phenomena as faithfully as possible” (McMillan & Shumacher 1989:393), both audio and video tape recordings were adopted during the classroom observation.

3.2.1 Getting into the Classroom

Before stepping into the classroom, I participated in several meetings involving writing classroom activities for the resource book with the three elementary school teachers among whom was Ms. C. This entailed about twenty hours in four days as an assistant. The draft of the family unit was produced during this period of time. This gave me an opportunity to obtain first hand information on how the draft was produced. Basically, what the three teachers were trying to do was to write activities involving the six knowledge structures by using all the sample words and sample sentences provided by

the Curriculum Guide. So, the investigation of how those activities worked or how the teacher and the children worked with the framework by engaging in those activities in the classroom remained.

When I got access to Ms. C's Chinese class in March, Ms. C was teaching the end of the first unit—Personal Information. Though the focus of the study was to be on the Family Unit, I did not wait until she had finished the first unit, the reasons being to get into the classroom to give the teacher and the students some time to become familiar with me and also to give myself sometime to get some general idea of the class regarding the size of the class, the physical arrangement of the classroom, the proficiency level of the students, etc. before I started my intended investigation.

3.2.2 Lessons Observed

Data were gathered between March 27, right after the spring vacation, and June 19, the last formal lesson before the end of the school year. During this period of time, I observed and tape recorded twenty lessons. In fact, there were twenty-three lessons carried out during this period. However, one lesson was devoted to the test on the first unit. One lesson, which I failed to attend because of a car problem, was devoted to the rehearsal of a play the children performed in Chinese. Another lesson was carried out by me, helping the children to rehearse the play at the request of Ms. C when she could not teach because of a meeting. Thus, the data collection on the classroom language activities of the Family Unit is reasonably complete and should be able to reflect the whole process of the classroom activities.

Among the twenty observed and recorded lessons, one involved the students' performance of a play in Chinese in front of their parents. The last lesson observed was on Chinese brush writing which had nothing to do with my research questions. The first two lessons observed involve reviewing lessons of the previous unit. So, all together, there are

sixteen lessons observed related to the language classroom activities in the Family Unit.

Each lesson lasted 60 minutes. However, it does not mean that entire lessons were directly related to my research questions. Sometimes, one third of a lesson was devoted to the rehearsal of the play. Sometimes the children got too excited by something and Ms. C had to spend some time disciplining them. A few times, the lesson was interrupted by school announcements.

Before I started the data collection, I intended to use both audio and video tape recorders to record everything happening in the class. However, for ethical reasons, parental permission from all the children's parents had to be obtained before I started video-taping. It took several weeks to obtain the responses from all the parents and also for some technical reasons, only for the last ten lessons, are there both audio and video tape recordings. Nevertheless, since several data collection strategies were adopted, those data on lessons without being video tape recorded can be complemented by those obtained in the field notes taken during the on-site classroom observations.

3.2.3 The Researcher Role

Before I stepped into the classroom to collect data, Ms.C and I discussed my role in the classroom. I would try to be as unobtrusive as possible so that the normal activities would not be interfered with (Wiersma 1986:235). We considered my role to be the Chinese class monitor since the B.C. Education Ministry had started an experimental monitor program for the Chinese program in Lower Mainland in which each Chinese class required a monitor who was a native speaker of Mandarin Chinese. In this way, my presence in the classroom would be more natural. However, there had already been a monitor for this class and administratively, it was problematic to reassign the role of monitor to me. Thus, I took the role of sometimes a teaching assistant and sometimes a cultural assistant. Technically, this is the role of an observer participant, a role which

would not have been established if it were not for the study (McMillan & Schumacher 1989:393).

To reduce the disturbance brought to the classroom due to my presence and to give the teacher and the students some time to get used to my being there in the room, I started by being only an observer (McMillan & Schumacher 1989:393). After a couple of lessons, as the students showed signs of acceptance of my participation, I gradually moved from the "observer" end towards the "participant" end on the Participant/Observer Continuum (Bogdan *et al.* 1982:127-135). My role, at the request of Ms. C, was at times as a teaching assistant, who could help the students with their pronunciation, tones and written assignments, and at times a linguistic and cultural informant when the introduction of some cultural background or explanation of some language points was necessary. At the end of the period of data collection, the relationship between the class and me had become quite natural in the sense that I was regarded as one of the class members. A girl had even given me one of her drawings as a gift and I was invited to the "end of term party". This good relationship helped me obtain the necessary data as naturally as possible because neither the teacher nor the students were nervous about my presence.

3.2.4 Video Camera, Audio Tape Recorder and Others

The audio tape recorder was put on the floor in the center of the classroom, with the hope that it could record interactions between the teacher and the students or among the students from all directions. With the video camera, in order to get the complete picture of the whole process of the classroom activities, the original idea was to set the camera on a tripod and leave it in a corner of the classroom. However, because of the size of the room and the operation of the camera, it could not include all the students and it was hard to get a clear image of the one who was speaking. So, whenever there

was interaction related to the activities concerned, I became the camera operator and focused on that particular interaction while I was at the same time keeping an eye on the surroundings. Whenever I played the role of camera operator, the field notes were written after the class.

Because the purpose of the study was to obtain a full picture of the classroom language activities organized around Mohan's framework, I employed various data collection strategies in addition to observation and participant observation. To find out types of activities that were to be carried out in the classroom, I examined the rough draft of the Family Unit for the resource book available at the moment. This examination helped me be more aware of on what I should concentrate my attention in the classroom, i.e., how the activities were to be carried out in the actual teaching situation.

Interviews with the teacher were informally conducted, before the lesson started, after the class or on the phone. The teacher provided information on the background of the students, on instructional materials used, and her teaching intentions. The students were interviewed during lessons, usually when they were engaged in the process of completing a project or some homework assignments. The information obtained this way was usually recorded as soon as possible after the interview.

Copies of part of the students' written work were also collected as part of the data. They included test papers, paragraphs written by the students on personal and family introduction, worksheets with graphics completed by the students, and drafts of the play the students wrote themselves.

3.2.5 Transcription

Since the focus of this study is on the classroom language activities, what is transcribed are the utterances of both the teacher and the students. The utterances in Chinese are transcribed into Hanyu Pinyin—a phonetic system. For the sake of convenience for the

readers of this paper, most of the transcriptions of Chinese utterances appearing in this paper are accompanied by English translation. The utterances in English are directly transcribed into English.

Chapter 4

Findings of the Study

This chapter reports on the findings of the study on the classroom language activities in the Family Unit organized around Mohan's framework in a Chinese as a foreign language class at Melba Elementary. First, how activities were originally designed and organized in the resource book will be introduced. Then how the teacher interpreted the original plan in the actual teaching situation and how the children were engaged in the activities will be described. The focus of this chapter is on the two specific questions raised earlier:

1. Is the KF a feasible way of analyzing content or topics in a foreign language classroom?
2. Do the classroom tasks on the chosen topic lead to the systematic use of features of language by foreign language students at the beginning level, in the ways indicated by the KF analysis of the topic?

By means of providing a detailed analytical descriptive narrative of the classroom interactions, a picture of the on-going process of the classroom activities will emerge.

4.1 The Original Design of Classroom Activities in the Resource Book

In the original design of classroom language activities in the resource book, the topic of Family is broken down into six KSs as shown in Table 2.1.1. For each pair of KSs (the one in the background information and the one in the practical situation), there are at least two activities designed (See Table 4.3). There are also some activities which are not

directly related to the KF. Among the twelve activities which are related to the KF, six ones are designed for classification and description, two for principles and sequence, and three for evaluation and choice. Table 4.3 provides a detailed description of the content of the twelve activities. From Table 4.3, we can see that A1, A2, SA2, A3, A4, A5, and A7 are designed for classification and description. SA4 and A9 are designed for principles and sequence in the sense that to make a paper cat and to role play a skit there are certain rules (such as not to use too much glue when making the cat, there must be some characters, setting, situation in a role play, etc.) and certain steps (what should be done or what should come first) to be followed. A6, A8, and A10 are designed for evaluation and choice (e.g., A8 is to decide who are tall or short in the class by comparing each other's height.).

Though the activities designed in the resource book, in terms of thinking processes, cover all the six knowledge structures, it does not mean that for each knowledge structure there is the Chinese language associated with that particular knowledge structure. Table 4.4 shows what is involved when the twelve activities in the resource book are broken down into the six knowledge structures. In the following, for the sake of convenience for the readers, the originally designed activities for different knowledge structures will be discussed separately column by column, in terms of tasks, thinking process involved, language aimed at, and key visuals or graphics: first, the activities for classification and description; second, the activities for principles and sequence; and last, the activities for evaluation and choice. However, this separate discussion does not mean that all the activities for different knowledge structures could really be separated. Sometimes, one activity might cover two columns in the framework, such as Activity 5. Thus, the following discussion on activities might sometimes have some overlapping.

Activity	KSs	Content of the Activity
A1	C/D	Identifying family members by sharing photos of family members.
A2	C/D	Labeling family members on a family tree.
SA2	C/D	Identifying family members by completing an identification worksheet.
A3	C/D	Identifying pets in family and add them to the tree.
A4	C/D	Describing pets by completing a pet identification worksheet.
SA4	P/S	Making a paper cat.
A5	C/D	Completing an age timeline and asking and answering about the age of family members.
A6	Choice	Individual survey of class' preference for the number of family members, which will be shown by a bar graph.
A7	C/D	Filling in a worksheet classifying the height of family members.
A8	E/C	Working in pairs to measure each other's height. Height will be recorded on a class bar graph. Students will determine, from the bar graph, who are tall or short.
A9	P/S	Role playing a short skit using the language and ideas from the story frame given.
A10	E/C	Making comments on the skits presented using an evaluation chart.

Note:

KSs: Knowledge structures involved.

A: Activity

SA: Supplementary activity.

C/D: Classification and description.

P/S: Principles and sequence.

E/C: Evaluation and Choice.

Table 4.3: Content of Activities Originally Designed in the Resource Book

CLASSIFICATION		PRINCIPLES		EVALUATION	
Thinking Process	Chinese	Thinking Process	Chinese	Thinking Process	Chinese
classifying	some in A1, A2, A3, A7.	developing rules; interpreting data and drawing conclusions.		judging; recommending	some in A8, A10.
observing describing measuring naming	some in A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A7, SA2.	sequencing: steps in a process; invitation sequence	a little in SA4, A9.	forming personal opinions; making decisions.	some in A6, A8, A10.
Thinking Process	Chinese	Thinking Process	Chinese	Thinking Process	Chinese
DESCRIPTION		SEQUENCE		CHOICE	

Table 4.4: Thinking Processes and Chinese Involved in the Originally Designed Activities

Tasks	Content of Tasks	Linguistic Objectives	
		Sentences	vocabulary
Task1	Making and presenting family tree. (A1,2,3,SA2)	<i>Zhe shi sb. or sth.</i> (This is sb. or sth.)	N.: names of family members: <i>baba</i> , <i>mama</i> , etc.
Task2	Describing a pet by telling its name, its color, its food and its habit. (A4)	<i>sth. shi bai de.</i> (color) <i>sth. chi sth.</i> (eat) <i>sth. xihuan V.</i> (likes)	Adj.: color: <i>hei</i> , <i>bai</i> N.: food: <i>maoshi</i> , <i>goushi</i> V.: habit: <i>shui</i> , <i>chi</i> , <i>tiao</i>
Task3	Describing family members by age (A5)	<i>sb. # sui.</i> (sb. is # years old.)	
Task4	Describing family members by height and classifying them by height. (A7)	<i>sb. gao/ai.</i> (sb. is tall/short.)	Adj.: <i>gao</i> , <i>ai</i>

Table 4.5: Tasks and Linguistic Objectives for Activities of Classification and Description

4.1.1 Activities Organized around Classification and Description

In the original design, there are seven activities designed for classification/description (See Table 4.3 and Table 4.4). What is involved are four tasks with certain linguistic objectives as shown in Table 4.5. Task 1 is to make a family tree in Chinese and orally present it to the whole class. From the KS point of view, it is in fact a task of describing family members by identifying or introducing them. Task 2 is to describe a pet by means of telling its name, its color, the food it eats, and its habit. Task 3 is to describe family members by age. Task 4 is to describe family members by height and classify family members by height.

In terms of thinking processes, what is involved in the four tasks are:

- Classifying: classifying family members into people and pets (A1 vs. A3); classifying family members by height (Task 4).

- Observing: observing photos of family members so as to identify them; observing how a family tree is made so as to make one (Task 1).
- Describing/measuring: describing people in the family by age and height (Tasks 3 & 4); describing pets in the family by name, color, food, and habit (Task 2).
- Identifying: identifying family members by labeling them in the family tree (Task 1).

In terms of language, what is involved are sentence structures and vocabulary items (See Table 4.5) for classification and description. For task 1, *zhe*¹ (this) is the pointer word which is used so often when people describe something in a describing action situation. *Shi* (is) is used in its sense of class membership, exactly what one might expect in the activity of classification. The sentence structures for Task 3 and Task 4 are what people use to describe people by age and height. Those for Task 2 are typical sentence structures used to describe something by color, its food, and habit. Names of family members—some basic vocabularies in the family unit are generic forms which are indispensable when family members are described. As for other words in the fourth column, those are the terms used to describe people by height and habit or to describe pets by color, food, and habit. By engaging in the four tasks in Table 4.5, the children are supposed to be able to use those language items while at the same time use the thinking processes associated with certain aspects of the knowledge structures of classification and description.

For each task in Table 4.5, there are what are called key visuals or graphics designed in order to ease the students' learning processes (See Table 4.6). In Task 1, a family tree made by the teacher is provided as an example for the children to follow to make their own

¹For the sake of convenience, tones for all the Hanyu Pinyin occurring in this thesis are omitted except when necessary for the discussion.

Tasks	Key Visuals
task 1	a family tree; a family member identification worksheet.
task 2	a pet identification chart; a pet identification worksheet.
task 3	an age timeline with key sentence structures.
task 4	a tall/short worksheet

Table 4.6: Key Visuals for Activities of Classification and Description

trees. In the tree is a classification graphic with each family member at its own position. A family identification worksheet is also provided for the children to complete and to use as a reference in their later tree presentation. This family identification worksheet provides the sentence structures that have to be used in the tree presentation.

In Task 2, a pet identification chart and a pet identification worksheet are designed. What both of them provide is a list of sentence structures and vocabulary items. In the chart, there is a list of vocabulary items under the titles of color, food, and habit. What is designed for the worksheet is:

Pet Identification

PET: *Wo you* _____. (I have ...)

NAME: *Ta de mingzi shi* _____. (Its name is ...)

COLOR: *Ta shi* _____ *de*. (It is ...)

FOOD: *Ta xihuan chi* _____. (It likes to eat ...)

HABIT: *Ta ai* _____. (It loves ...)

So the visuals designed for Task 2 are, rather than being KEY visuals, are more like something which provides a linguistic objective of the task, i.e., the sentence structures and vocabulary items used to describe a pet.

Pet	Name	Color	Food	Habit

Figure 4.1: Classification table for the task of describing a pet (an alternative design)

Since the purpose of using a key visual is to help the children feel more able to produce their own speech instead of reading out whatever the “key visual” provides, an alternative might be to add a classification table as shown in Figure 4.1 into the key visuals for Task 2. Thus, part of Task 2 for the children is to fill in the table in Figure 4.1 while or after learning the necessary vocabulary items and sentence structures in the originally designed chart and worksheet. By completing the table, the children could have many opportunities to practice the language items in the chart and worksheet. After completing the table, the children could use the completed table as an aid to help them organize their speech when orally describing a pet. What the table provides is some key information instead of a series of well-prepared sentences. Its function is to show the children one of the ways to organize their speech, i.e., one of the ways to describe a pet is to describe it by name, color, food, and habit. What all this means is that the originally designed chart and worksheet could be used as a set-up text to provide language examples, the empty table could be used to provide opportunities to help the children practice the language learned and the children could convert the completed table into speech (See Mohan 1986:87:Graphics and Communication).

The key visual for Task 3 is an age timeline (as shown in Figure 4.2) with key sentence structure:

sb. _____ sui. (sb. is ... old.)

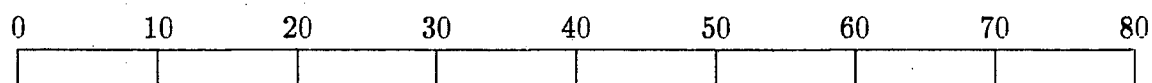


Figure 4.2: Age timeline in the original design

members	height	tall	short

Figure 4.3: Classification table for the activity of describing a person's height

The children are supposed to write down the names of their family members in the appropriate places on the timeline in Figure 4.2 according to their ages. What is unusual for this activity is that cognitively, what is involved behind the activity of completing the timeline is the knowledge structure of principle which consists of "conditional relations" (Mohan 1986:89), i.e., if somebody is older, the name should appear closer to the right end on the timeline; if somebody is younger, the name should be at the left end on the timeline. However, the language aimed at in the task is the language of description, i.e., to describe a person by age.

For Task 4, the key visual designed is similar to that designed for Task 2, i.e., a worksheet which provides a list of sentences featuring the sentence structure used to describe a person's height:

somebody *shi* _____ *gongfen*. (somebody is ... cm.)

without involving any graphic. What could have been designed is again a classification table as shown in Figure 4.3. The children could be asked to complete the table and a completed table is to be somewhat like that shown in Figure 4.4. The idea of how to use

member	height	tall	short
mother	168cm	+	-
father	183cm	+	-
brother	123cm	-	+
me	90cm	-	+
.	.	.	.
.	.	.	.
.	.	.	.

Figure 4.4: Completed classification table for the activity of describing a person's height
this table is the same as discussed earlier for the one in Task 2.

Generally speaking, for the key visuals originally designed in the resource book for the activities of classification and description, only the family tree in Task 1 and the age timeline in Task 3 are real graphics while the others are more like texts which provide vocabulary items or key sentence structures that are introduced for in the Family Unit.

As a summary, for the activities originally designed in the resource book, there are four tasks which involve the thinking skills and language items associated with the knowledge structures of both classification and description. Though there are key visuals for all the four tasks, two out of six are real graphics while the rest provide key words and key sentence structures.

4.1.2 Activities Organized around Principles and Sequence

In the original design, there are two activities designed for principles and sequence (See Table 4.3 and Table 4.4). What is involved are two tasks with certain linguistic objectives as shown in Table 4.7.

In terms of thinking processes, what is hoped to be involved are:

- Developing generalizations, rules in this case: rules of making a paper cat, such as

Tasks	Content of Tasks	Linguistic Objectives
Task 1	Making a paper cat. (SA4)	<i>diyi, dier</i> (in teacher's instructions: language of sequence.)
Task 2	Role playing a short skit using vocabulary and ideas from the story frame given.(A9)	<i>Qing zuo. Qing chi fan.</i> (invitation sequence)

Table 4.7: Tasks and Linguistic Objectives for Activities of Principles and Sequence

not to use too much glue; not to cut too much every time the paper is cut; etc.;
(Task 1)

- Interpreting data and drawing conclusions: interpreting the story frame given into a play and drawing conclusions regarding how the play should be played; (Task 2)
- Sequencing: Making the paper cat step by step by following the teacher's instructions; group discussing steps in the role playing process and sequencing the play process. (Task 1 and Task 2)

In terms of language, as shown in Table 4.7, no Chinese is expected to be used for the knowledge structure of principles and the segments of activities associated with principles are to be carried out in English. The reason is that the curriculum guide does not provide the language items associated with principles in the Family Unit and the language used for the activities is restricted by the guide. However, some Chinese is expected to be used for the activity associated with the knowledge structure of sequence. For Task 1, what is expected is that the teacher, while giving the instructions on making the paper cat mostly in English, use Chinese such as *diyi, dier* (first, second) etc. as the "sentence time relaters" (Mohan 1986:65). Since the children have learned cardinal numbers and cardinal numbers and ordinal numbers are similar in Chinese, they are supposed to be

Task	Key Visuals
task 1	visual instruction
task 2	story frame

Table 4.8: Key Visuals for Activities of Principles and Sequence

able to understand the meaning of *diyi*, *dier*. For Task 2 which is to role play a short skit, the language items associated with the knowledge structure of sequence expected from the children are:

Qingzuo. Qing chi fan. (Sit down, please. Have meal, please)

which is an invitation sequence. The cluster of sentences shows the time relationship between two events, i.e., the event of inviting someone to sit down and the event of inviting someone to eat.

Though in the activities designed for principles and sequence, there is no language involved in principles, it does not mean this is not a worthwhile design. This Family Unit is just the second unit in the 28 units of the whole program. As time passes, while more language items are added, the activities involving the language of principles will be included. Besides, the linguistic objective is just one of the objectives of the whole Chinese program. Though in this particular unit, the children are not to learn the Chinese language associated with the knowledge structure of principles, by being engaged in the activities of principles, their development of certain thinking skills related to the knowledge structure of principles is not to be neglected.

In terms of key visuals (Ref to Table 4.8), none of them is graphic. What is provided for Task 1 in Table 4.7 is a visual instruction on which the lines for cutting are drawn (Ref to Appendix B). For Task 2, what is designed are a story frame and a list of vocabulary which provide key ideas and key words to be used in the role play.

Task	Content of Tasks	Linguistic Objectives
Task 1	Conducting an individual survey of the class' preference for the number of family members, which will be shown by a bar graph. (A6)	<i>Wo xihuan you henduo xiongdi.</i> (personal opinion) <i>Shi ge ren xihuan you henduo xiongdi.</i> (decision)
Task 2	Determining who are tall or short in the class by measuring each other's height. (A8)	<i>A 78 gongfen. B 90 gongfen.</i> (judging) <i>B gao. A ai.</i> (opinion)
Task 3	Making comments on the skit presented. (A10)	<i>Nimen biaoyan de hen hao.</i> (evaluation) <i>Hen hao kan.</i> (recommending) <i>Hen you yisi.</i> (judging) <i>Wo xihuan nimen de biaoyan.</i> (opinion)

Table 4.9: Tasks and Linguistic Objectives in Activities of Evaluation and Choice

To sum up, for the activities originally designed for the knowledge structures of principles and sequence in the resource book, there are two tasks set up. In terms of thinking skills, the two tasks involve the knowledge structures of both principles and sequence. However, in terms of the Chinese language aimed at, there is only the language associated with the knowledge structure of sequence. As for the key visuals designed for the two tasks, none of them is a true graphic.

4.1.3 Activities Organized around Evaluation and Choice

In the original design, there are three activities designed for evaluation and choice (See Table 4.3 and Table 4.4). What are involved are three tasks with certain linguistic objectives as shown in Table 4.9.

The first task is to conduct an individual survey of the class' preference for the number of family members, which will be shown by a bar graph. In terms of thinking processes, what is involved are:

- Forming personal opinions: to think about how many brothers or dogs one would

like to have.

- Making decisions: to decide how many people in the class like to have many/few brothers or dogs.

These two thinking skills are associated with the knowledge structure of choice. In fact, this is an activity of choice without evaluation because in this activity, the children are asked to form their personal opinions and make decisions without judging, justifying or evaluating. Though, when one is engaged in an activity of making choices (including forming opinions, making decisions), certainly what is involved cognitively behind the action of making a choice is evaluation, the activity designed does not bring the knowledge structure of evaluation into the foreground. And, to help the children develop the ability of evaluating, evaluation has to be done consciously when a choice is made.

In terms of the Chinese language to be developed in this activity, *xihuan* (like) is an expression to describe emotions, which is often used to show personal opinion in a choosing action situation. As for *Shi ge ren xihuan something*. (Ten people like—), it is used in the sense of making a decision on the number of something. So, for this activity, it does not involve the language associated with the knowledge structure of evaluation.

The second task is to determine who are tall/short in the class by measuring each other's height. And the third task is to make comments on the skits presented. For both the tasks, what is involved in the thinking processes are:

- Judging: to judge a person's height by measuring (Task 2); to judge the quality of role playing (Task 3).
- Recommending: to recommend the play to others. (Task 3)
- Forming personal opinions: to give a personal opinion on somebody's height (Task 2); to express likes or dislikes of a role play (Task 3).

Judging and recommending belong to the knowledge structure of evaluation while forming personal opinions belongs to the knowledge structure of choice. So, Tasks 2 and 3, in terms of thinking processes, unlike Task 1 which only involves the knowledge of choice, involve the knowledge structures of both evaluation and choice. Thus, the choice is to be made on the basis of evaluation.

In terms of language aimed at, they also involve the language associated with the knowledge structures of both evaluation and choice. In Task 2, the Chinese language expected from the children is:

A shi 78 gongfen (A is 78 cm.)

B shi 90 gongfen (B is 90 cm.)

B gao (B is tall)

A ai (A is short)

The opinion “B is tall” and “A is short” is formed on the basis of the judgement of A’s and B’s height: “A is 78 cm while B is 90 cm”. When the cluster of sentences is broken down into separate sentences, it is the language of description. However, when they are put together, it is the language of judging and justifying.

It is the same for Task 3. The opinion “I like your performance” is made by means of evaluating the performance: “Your performance is good.” “It is interesting.” “You performed well.” That is why “I like your performance”.

In terms of key visuals, there is something for each of the tasks as shown in Table 4.10. For the first two tasks, bar graphs are designed for the students to complete. The completed bar graph is to show how many people like to have many of something or who are tall/short in the class. The two bar graphs are visually vivid. But they do not provide information on how to organize the language of evaluation and choice expected

Task	Key Visuals
task 1	a bar graph
task 2	a bar graph
task 3	evaluation chart

Table 4.10: Key Visuals for Tasks or Activities of Evaluation and Choice

from the students. As for the key visual for Task 3, instead of a graphic, it is a list of five sentences that people use to evaluate or make comments on a performance. So, in fact, it is a text which provides the language examples.

As a summary, for the activities originally organized for evaluation and choice, there are three tasks designed. Among the three tasks, one is an activity of choice without evaluation in terms of both thinking processes and language learned while the other two involve the knowledge structures of both evaluation and choice in terms of both thinking skills and language learned. As for the key visuals, two are real graphics which are vivid visually while one provides key sentence structures.

4.1.4 Summary

Generally speaking, the originally designed activities in the resource book, in terms of thinking processes, cover all the six knowledge structures, while in terms of Chinese language items, cover only five (There are no Chinese language items for principles expected in this unit). For a certain activity, the knowledge structure in thinking might be one while the language aimed at might belong to another one (e.g., A5 in Table 4.3). Some activities might just involve the knowledge structures of an action situation without involving a KS of background knowledge (e.g., A6 in Table 4.3). There are key visuals designed for all the activities, some of which are graphics and many of which are more like texts providing the expected language items.

4.2 Classroom Activities in the Actual Teaching Situation

In this section, how the teacher interpreted the original plan of classroom activities in the resource book into the actual teaching situation and how the children were engaged in classroom activities will be examined.

All together, among the lessons observed, there are sixteen lessons directly related to the Family Unit. Table 4.11 gives an idea of the content of the sixteen lessons and which lesson corresponds with which activity in the original design. From Table 4.11, one can see that in the actual teaching, there is no A4 (i.e., to describe pets by completing a pet identification worksheet) and A8 (i.e., to work in pairs to measure each other's height and determine who are tall from a class bar graph made by the students) in the original design (See Table 4.3). Among the sixteen lessons, six and half lessons were on classification and description: lessons 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and a part of lesson 13. Two lessons were involved with principles and sequence: lessons 5 and 15. Three lessons were related to evaluation and choice: lessons 13, 14, and 15. Six lessons were for reviewing, character writing, and assignment correction.

As in the original design, though the sixteen lessons, in terms of thinking processes, cover all the six knowledge structures, in terms of the target language, there is Chinese language involved in only five Knowledge Structures. Table 4.12 indicates what is involved in terms of both thinking processes and language used when the sixteen lessons are analyzed according to Mohan's (1986) Framework of Knowledge Structures.

From Table 4.12, one can see while there are some Chinese items for classification/description and evaluation/choice, and a few for sequence, there is none for principles.

In the following, again for the sake of the readers' convenience, the lessons for classification/description, principles/sequence, and evaluation/choice, and for reviewing will be

Lesson	Content of Lessons	KSs	Activities
L1	Discuss who are family members: people and pets. Introduce the concept of <i>gege</i> , <i>didi</i> , <i>jiejie</i> , <i>meimei</i> .	C/D	A1, A2, A3
L2	Teach how to name family members in Chinese with a family tree made by teacher. Introduce the concept of grandparents from both mother's side and father's side. Students making the tree.	C/D	A1, A2, A3
L3	Teach how to ask and answer about the tree in Chinese. Students completing the family member identification worksheet.	C/D	A1, A2, SA2, A3
L4	Presentation of the tree.	C/D	A1,A2,SA2,A3
L5	Making a paper cat.	S?	SA4
L6	Teach formal and informal forms for mother and father. Teach how to talk about age and complete the age timeline.	C/D	A5
L7	Learn how to ask about age. Complete tall/short worksheet.	C/D	A5 A7
L8	Two games to review: numbers, age, and personal information.		
L9	Review of giving personal information.		
L10	Tone correction orally and in written form for personal information.		
L11	Character writing with sentences reviewing.		
L12	Character writing with sentences reviewing.		
L13	Teach "likes" and "dislikes". Introduce some measure words.	Ch. C/D	A6
L14	Collectively complete the bar graph for the class' preference for the number of family members.	Ch.	A6
L15	Role playing a short skit. Teacher making summary of the role playing.	All	A9 A10
L16	Character writing with sentences reviewing.		

Note:

KSs: knowledge structures involved in the lessons.

Activities: activities in the original design in Table 4.3.

C/D: classification and description.

S: sequence.

Ch.: choice.

All: all the six knowledge structures in Mohan's framework.

Table 4.11: The Content of the Lessons Observed in Relation with the Activities in the Original Design

CLASSIFICATION		PRINCIPLES		EVALUATION	
Thinking Process	Chinese	Thinking Process	Chinese	Thinking Process	Chinese
defining categorizing classifying	some in A1, A2, SA2, A3.	developing rules; interpreting data and drawing conclusions.		judging; recommending	some in A9, A10.
observing describing naming	some in A1, A2, A3, A5, A7, A9, SA2.	sequencing: steps in a process; invitation sequence	a little in A9.	forming personal opinions; making decisions.	some in A6, A10.
Thinking Process	Chinese	Thinking Process	Chinese	Thinking Process	Chinese
DESCRIPTION		SEQUENCE		CHOICE	

Table 4.12: Thinking Processes and Chinese Involved in the Activities Actually Carried Out

described and examined separately. Since the study is on classroom language activities around Mohan's Framework, the following discussion will focus on classroom language activities, though in each lesson, there is always something that is not related to the classroom language activities of KSs, such as learning a song, calling attendance, homework checking and disciplining.

4.2.1 Classroom Activities of Classification and Description in the Actual Teaching Situation

What is discussed in this section is in relation with that in section 4.1.1.

As shown in Table 4.11, lessons 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and a part of 13 are involved with the KSs of classification and description. The first four lessons focused on one task, i.e., to make a family tree in Chinese. Lessons 6 and 7 focused on describing people by age while in lesson 13, some measure words for objects were introduced. In the following sections, lessons will be examined with the focus being on tasks (See Table 4.5).

Task of Making Family Trees

Lesson 1

In the first lesson, most of the time was spent on calling attendance, checking homework and learning a Chinese song. Ms. C started the activity for classification and description by asking the children to bring the photos or pictures of their family members next time they met. This assignment naturally led to a class discussion on who are considered family members. The class discussion was undertaken in English and lasted about 11 minutes. This is an activity that is not in the resource book. But it is a necessary step leading to all the activities in the Family Unit. The focus was on the cognitive competencies involving the KS of classification rather than the language associated with this KS. While the students were interacting with Ms. C in the discussion, one of the very

essential concepts of family—family members—was built up. The following interaction is found from the data which reveals how the concept of family members was developed.

Example 1.

- T: On Thursday, I would like to see if you can bring pictures of family members. OK, what are family members?
- S(s): Mum ... brother ...
- T: All right, give me one member.
- S: Brother?
- T: In Chinese we have a certain name for older brother and another name for younger brother. So you'll surely tell us whether this brother is older or younger, OK? xxx.
- S: Sister?
- T: Sister. It also has different names: older sister and younger sister.
(After the children gave mother, father and baby)
- S: Would you count grandma and grandpa if they live with us?
- T: Em, let's count them.
- S: Then would you count pets?
- T: Sure. Let's count pets.
... ..
- S: Frog.
- T: Frog? You've got a frog?
- S: No. I used to have.
- T: Well, let's try to limit to things that you have now.

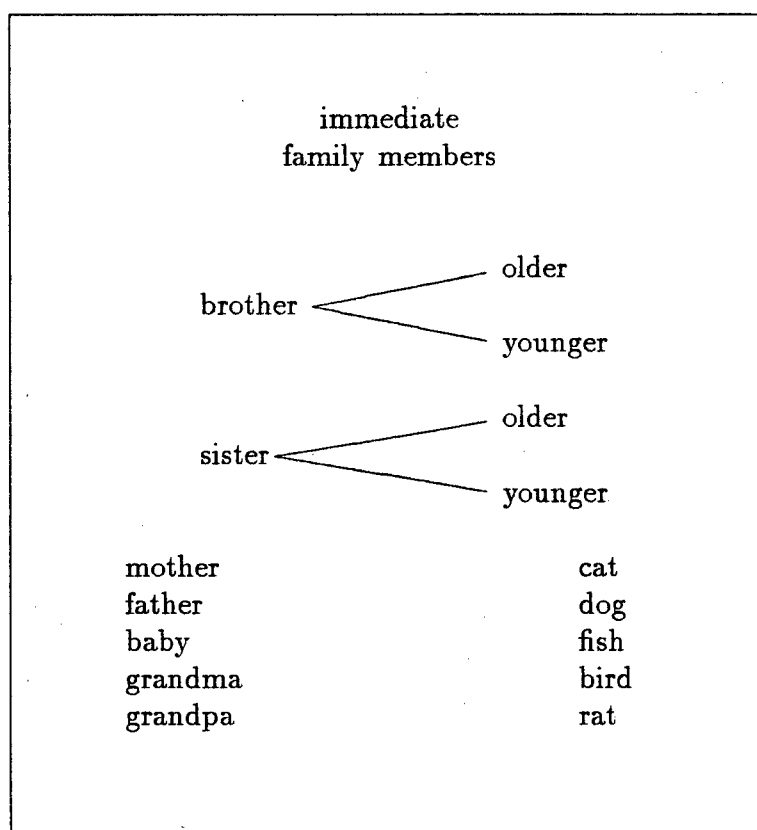


Figure 4.5: Key visual for lesson 1

During the interaction, Ms. C played the role of recorder writing down the information given by the children on the blackboard. At the end of the discussion, what was on the blackboard is shown in Figure 4.5.

During the 11 minutes of class discussion, by deciding what should count as family members, the term "family members" was defined as both people and pets presently living together. By introducing the idea that Chinese has different terms for younger and older brothers, younger and older sisters, the terms "brothers" and "sisters" were categorized into younger ones and older ones as featured by the visual on the blackboard

in Figure 4.5.

Lesson 2

The second lesson is made up of two parts (See Table 4.11): one part is to teach how to name family members in Chinese; the other part is to ask the children to make their own trees. When Ms. C was teaching how to name family members in Chinese, she used a tree made by herself as a visual aid. The tree is similar to the one in Figure 4.6. This family tree is a useful analysis from the content point of view for teaching the topic of Family Members. If the students are asked to engage in the activity of describing their family members by identifying or introducing them, they have to know first of all who family members are and how family members are classified. And this tree teaches exactly this content.

While the Chinese terms for family members were being taught with the use of the tree, the concept that in Chinese grandparents are classified according to which side they are from was introduced with a classification table as shown in Figure 4.7. Example 2 reveals how this was introduced:

Example 2

- T: (pointing to the table in Figure 4.7.)
Grandpa, I have to split it up because in Chinese,
your father side is different from your mother side.
They have different names. Your father's father is yeye.
- S: yeye.
- T: Your mother's father is laoye.
- S: laoye.
- T: Your grandmother, your father's mother is nainai.
- S: nainai.

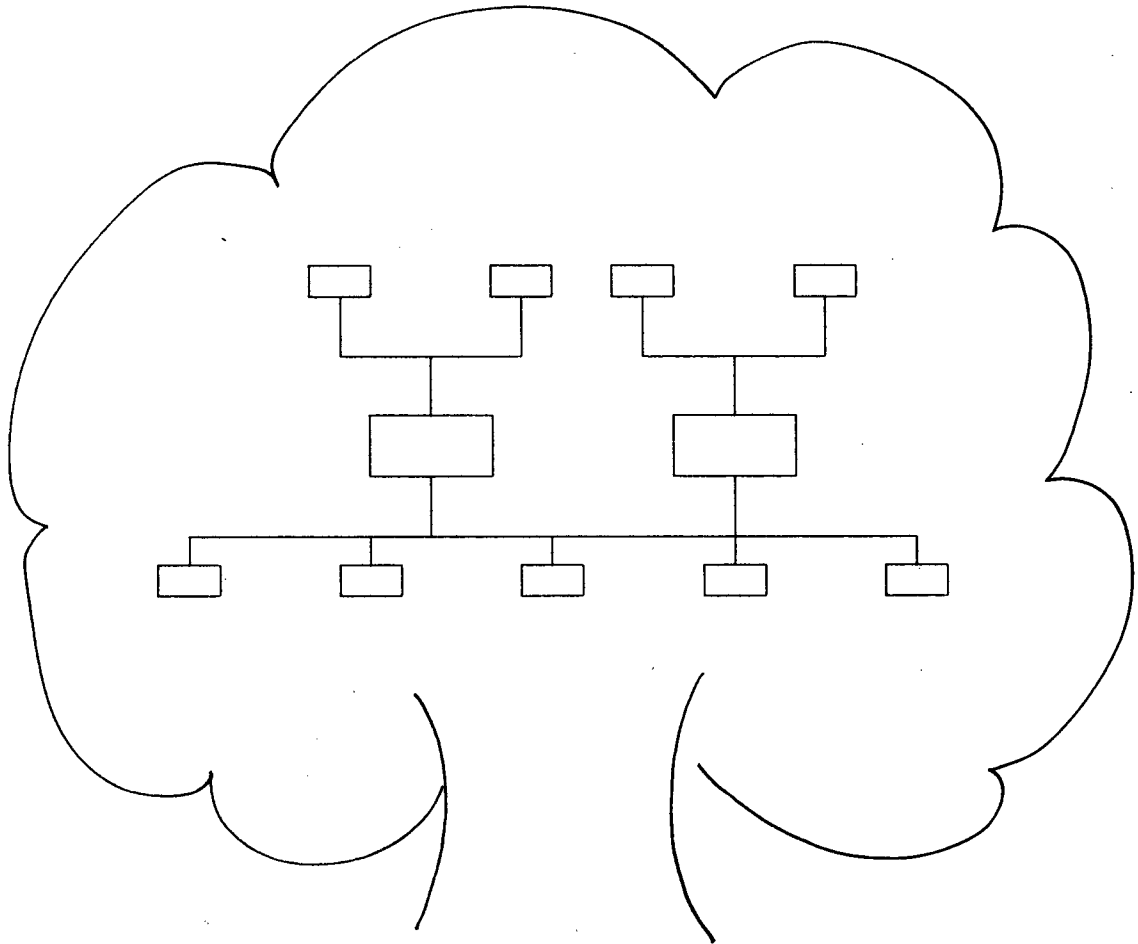


Figure 4.6: Family tree made by the teacher in lesson 2

	grandpa	grandma
mother side	<i>laoye</i>	<i>laolao</i>
father side	<i>yeye</i>	<i>nainai</i>

Figure 4.7: Key visual for lesson 2 (on board)

T: Your mother's mother is *laolao*.

S: *laolao*.

... ..

This part of the lesson lasted 10 minutes. During this time, there were three objectives to be achieved. The first one was the content objective which was to establish the conception and classification of family members. This content objective was realized by means of using the family tree and a classification chart (Figure 4.7). The family tree, on one hand, was a classification graphic which provided the general knowledge of who were family members and how family members were classified. On the other hand, with the pictures of family members from a specific family, it was also a description graphic which identified and introduced family members of a specific family. The two visuals (the tree and the chart) together, based on the KS of classification, summarized what the students thought should count as family members and revealed the way in which Chinese people classify their family members.

The second objective was the linguistic one which was to learn how to label family members in Chinese so that the children could make a family tree in Chinese. This linguistic objective was realized by means of connecting the sounds in Chinese (i.e., to say the words in Chinese) and the pictures of family members in particular positions of the tree (i.e., to point to the pictures in the tree while speaking). As in most of the language classrooms, many repetitions from both the teacher and the students were

involved. Those repetitions included pronunciation training and tone discrimination. Though, in terms of pronunciation and tone, it would still take a long time for the students to become perfect, at least, they had some idea of how to label family members in Chinese when they were asked to make their own trees. This learning outcome is shown in the following 30-minute activity involving making their own trees: most of the students gave the correct label to the family members in Hanyu Pinyin. What is noticeable is that, rather than arbitrarily selected by the teacher, the linguistic items involved are actually requested by the students based on the particular feature of the task itself. For instance, the vocabulary items for “grandparents” were not originally the linguistic items that the teacher was going to introduce. However, in the first lesson, the children decided that grandparents should be included in the family tree. Thus, it is the task of making a family tree that led the children to the need of using certain language items. The teacher was the person who helped the children use the target language to express what they wanted to in a correct way.

The other intention of the first part of lesson 2 was again the development of cognitive competencies involved in the KS of classification, such as distinguishing grandparents according to which side they are from and distinguishing *gege*, *jiejie*, *didi*, *meimei* according to being older or younger. Obviously, the process of distinguishing involves comparison and contrast. For instance, to decide to call a grandpa *yeye* or *laoye*, one has to differentiate (process of contrasting) the one on the mother’s side from the one on father’s side. To decide to call a brother *gege* or *didi*, one has to compare the brother’s age to one’s own. This objective was realized in English. As shown in example 2, especially the underlined parts, the teacher’s talk, though in English, involved the language of classification within the context of classifying grandparents in Chinese.

All that was done in this part of the lesson can be regarded as the stage of building background knowledge which leads to the stage of applying the background knowledge

during actual oral interaction.

The second part of lesson 2 was to have the students make their own trees individually or in pairs. This is a step of personalizing the knowledge of making a tree. In this activity, the children had to transfer the knowledge they had obtained from the teacher to the action situation of making their own trees. By observing the tree made by the teacher, the children had obtained the knowledge of how to form a diagram in the tree (See Figure 4.6). By discussing what family members were and learning how to label them in Chinese, the children had obtained the background information of how to label the family members included in the tree in Chinese. Subsequently the children were to consider what their trees should be like and, given these considerations, make their own family trees.

Lesson 3

Lesson 3 is divided into two parts. In the first part, Ms. C taught how to ask and answer about the tree. In the second part, the children were asked to complete a family identification worksheet (See Table 4.6).

Ms. C first put her family tree on the board. Then she started asking questions about the people on the tree. The students were asked to answer in complete sentences as shown in example 3 from the data:

Example 3.

- T: *Ta shi shei?* (pointing to the picture of the mother in the tree)
S: *mama ... mama ... ba ...*
T: You give me a sentence answer.
S: ... (2 seconds of silence, not knowing what to do)
T: *Ta shi—mama.*
S: *Ta shi mama.*

...

T: *Ta shi shei?* (pointing to the picture of the father)

S: *Ta shi baba.*

... ..

When pets were talked about, the sentence structure

Zhe shi shenmo? (What is this?)

was introduced, partially by means of translation as shown in example 4:

Example 4.

T: *Ta shi shei?* (pointing to the picture of horse)

S: *Ma.*

T: I should say *Ta shi shenmo?* Like "what", "What is it?"

... *Ta shi shenmo?* What is it? *Zhe shi shenmo?*

This is what? *Zhe shi shenmo?* (pointing to the cat)

S: *Mao.*

T: *Zhe shi shenmo?* (pointing to the dog)

S: *Gou.*

T: Give the sentence answer.

S: *Zhe shi gou.*

In this part of the lesson, again many repetitions from both the teacher and the students were involved. This part lasted about 11 minutes. The objective was to build linguistic background knowledge—to learn how to label family members in complete Chinese sentences. The focus was on the development of the language associated with the KSs of classification and description, though the language taught was very simple (See Table 4.13).

	Pron.	V.	N.
Chinese learned	<i>ta</i> <i>zhe</i>	<i>shi</i>	<i>mama</i> <i>baba</i> <i>gege</i> <i>didi</i> <i>jiejie</i> <i>meimei</i> <i>mao</i> <i>gou</i> <i>yu</i> <i>ma</i>
Functions	pointer words	verbs of class membership	generic forms

Table 4.13: Chinese Language Learned and Reviewed in Lesson 3

To answer the questions derived from the family tree on the board, the students had to use the language items listed in Table 4.4. As discussed in section 4.1.1., in the list, *zhe* and *ta* are used as the pointer words which are used when people describe something or somebody. *Shi* is used in its sense of class membership, what one might expect in the activity of classification. The words in the last column in Table 4.13 are all generic forms which are indispensable when they are described.

The second half of the lesson was given to the students to work on the family member identification worksheet. This part of the activity aimed at personalizing the knowledge the students had obtained. Cognitively, they had to distinguish *gege*, *jiejie* from *didi*, *meimei* by comparing their ages with their own on the basis of a concept established in the first lesson; or to distinguish *yeye*, *nainai* from *laoye*, *laolao* by considering which side they are from, on the basis of the concept established in the second lesson. Linguistically, they had to use the language items they had learned to introduce their own family members. Figure 4.8 provides two examples of typical completed worksheets.

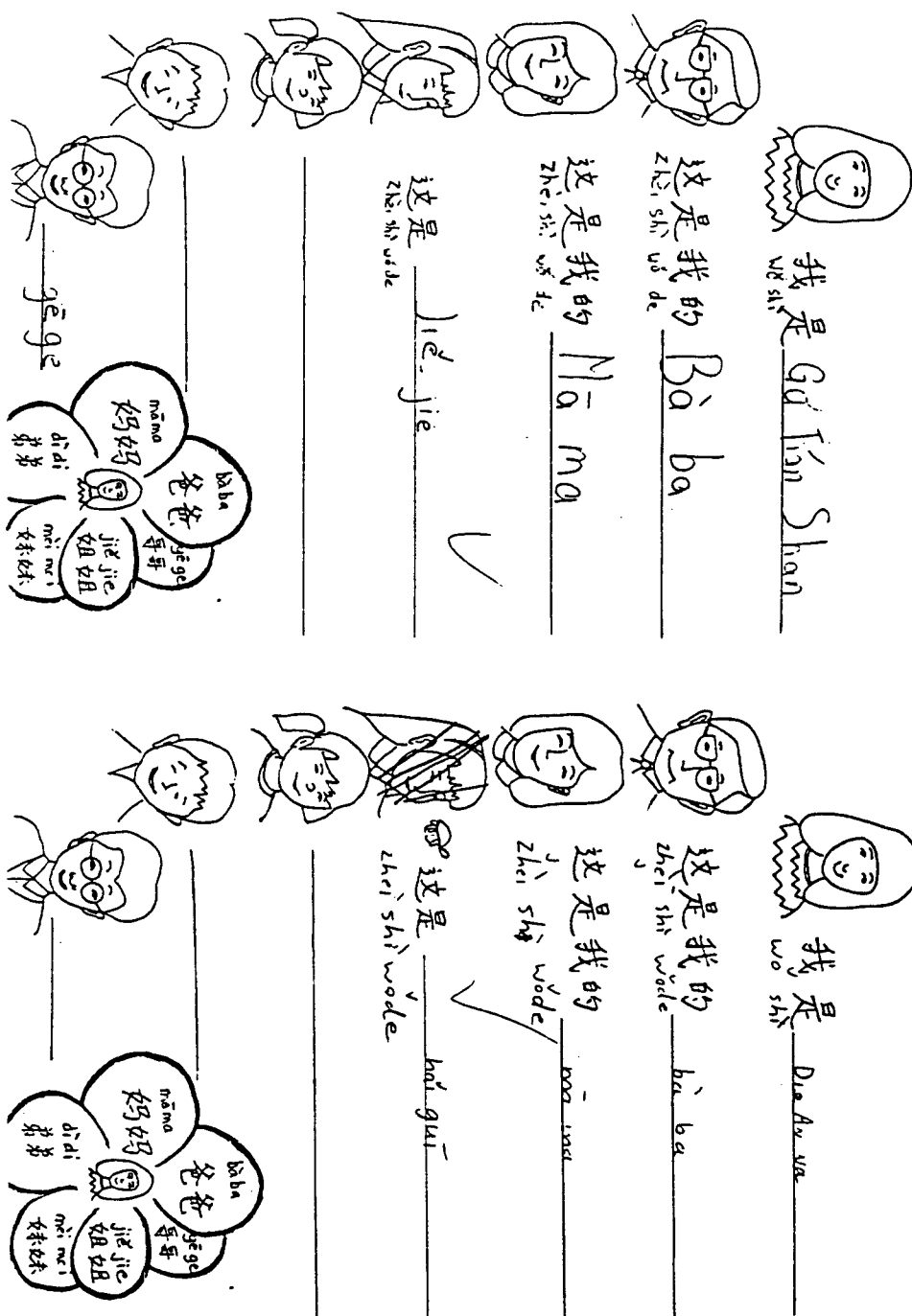


Figure 4.8: Two completed family member identification worksheets

Lesson 4: The Students' Product—Presentation of the Trees

The major activity for this lesson is the tree presentation. This is an activity of describing family members by introducing them. To make sure that the students could name the family members correctly in Chinese, Ms. C spent a couple of minutes asking the students to translate orally what she said in English. When feeling most of the children could handle the labels, she put the children in pairs and asked them to introduce their family members in Chinese to their partners using the identification worksheet (See Figure 4.8) as reference. While the children were practicing, Ms. C and I walked around to check the students' tone, pronunciation, and sentence structures. Then the children were asked to give presentations on their own trees.

Though the students were allowed to use the worksheet as reference, most of them did not use it. They simply looked at and pointed to the tree on the board while giving the presentation. The following two examples are typical of what the students said for this presentation:

Ex. 5.

Zhe shi wo yeye. (This is my grandpa.)

Zhe shi wo nainai. (This is my grandma.)

Zhe shi wo baba. (This is my father.)

Zhe shi wo mama. (This is my mother.)

Zhe shi wo laolao. (This is my grandma.)

Zhe shi wo. (This is me.)

Wo shi xxx. (I am xxx.)

Zhe shi wo de gou. (This is my dog.)

Ex. 6.

Wo shi xxx. (I am xxx.)

Zhe shi wo didi. (This is my younger brother.)

Zhe shi wo meimei. (This is my younger sister.)

Zhe shi wo baba. (This is my father.)

Zhe shi wo mama. (This is my mother.)

Zhe shi wo de yu. (This is my fish.)

Obviously, the objective of this activity focused on the use of the language of classification and description—to orally classify/describe family members in Chinese by labeling them. The activity of classifying/describing family members by identifying or introducing them naturally led to the use of the language of classification/description by the students. Except for a few minor tone problems, all the students gave their presentations successfully. At least, two factors had led to the success of the task. One is that each student had a visual aid—the tree on the board—when he/she was giving the presentation. The tree helped highlight the content for the children to talk about. The pictures or photos of the family members were on the tree and the children could see them right in front of their eyes. This helped remind the children of who the people were that they should describe. In addition, the tree clearly showed the child-parent relationship and male-female relationship, which helped distinguish family members from generation to generation and from mother's parents to father's parents respectively. In this "context-embedded" situation, "the language [was] supported by a wide range of meaningful paralinguistic and situational cues" (Cummins 1984:138), which helped reduce the level of difficulty of the language involved in the task. Another factor leading to the children's success in this task is that all of them had worksheets (See Figure 4.8) completed by themselves which they could refer to while giving their presentations. Whenever they forgot the sentence patterns they should use, they could always refer to their worksheets. During the presentations, two students did use their worksheets as a reference when at a loss. For most

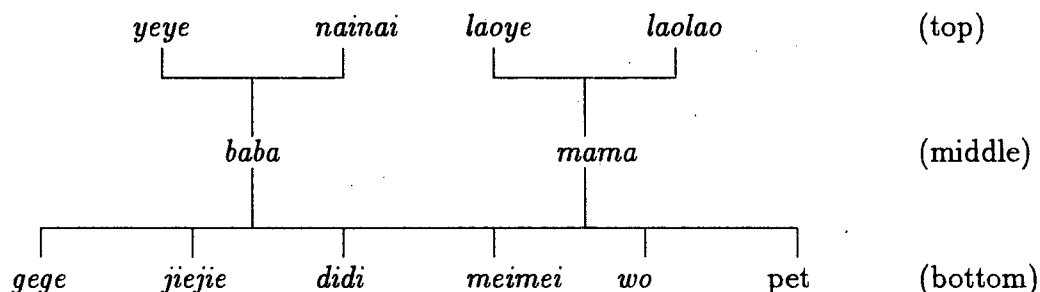


Figure 4.9: A sample diagram in a family tree made by a student

of the children, psychologically, they felt confident with the worksheet in hand.

Although the activity was carried out successfully in the sense that no student failed to complete it, a major problem existed in terms of using the tree as a source of background knowledge. According to Chinese culture, when a family is introduced or described, the very first person introduced should usually be among the older generation of the family. Thus, the KS involved in this particular activity is classification in the sense that the family members have to be classified according to which generation they belong to. The KS of classification did appear in the form of graphics in the trees made by the students. As shown by the diagram (See Figure 4.9) in the tree made by one of the children, there are three generations in the family. The oldest one appears at the top while the youngest one at the bottom. The appropriate order to have those members introduced should be from the top, i.e., top→middle→bottom. However, what is found in the data is a misordering:

For Example 5.: *yeye, nainai*: top
 baba, mama: middle
 laolao: top
 wo: bottom

For Example 6.: *didi, meimei*: bottom
 baba, mama: middle
 yu: bottom

As shown above, the order of the family members being introduced, instead of

top→middle→bottom,

is:

top→middle→top→bottom (for Example 5), or

bottom→middle→bottom (for Example 6).

While the graphic did show the KS involved in the task, the children did not make full use of the graphic in their presentation, which resulted in an inappropriate way to introduce (describe) their family members. One or more factors might have caused this. One sociolinguistic factor was that the students did not know that in China older people are always the first to be introduced. One pedagogical factor was that the teacher had not taught the students that the graphic in the tree could be used as an aid to help them organize their oral presentation. The tree was used only to provide the context of the content, but not to help the children apply the KS of classification in the oral presentation. So the question raised is how to make better use of graphics to help the children apply the KS associated with a certain activity so as to facilitate language development.

An added activity: a supplementary activity before the task of describing people by age

Though the major task for lessons 6 and 7 is to describe people by age, Ms. C added one more activity to the lesson before she started teaching about age: formal and informal ways to address parents. This is an activity not included in the resource book and not related to the task of describing people by age. But it is an activity involving the thinking process of classification. The following interaction between Ms. C and the students reveals the on-going process of this activity:

Example 7.

- T: In English, we have how many ways to say father?
- S: Father, dad, daddy, papa, pa.
- T: Which way is the formal way?
- S1: Dad.
- S2: Father.
- T: Dad? Father? Who claims it's father? Formal way.
(realizing the children did not quite understand the meaning of "formal")
Do you understand "formal"?
- S: (hesitating to give an answer)
- T: Formal, informal. If you go to a nice dinner party, you have to dress up, then it's formal. If you don't have to dress up, it's very casual, you know everyone there, maybe just family, then, that's informal. In talking, we have that, too. Which one is formal? Which one is informal? Is father formal or informal?
- S3: I think that father is formal and dad is informal.
- S4: I agree.

formal	informal	formal	informal
father	dad	<i>fuqin</i>	<i>baba</i>
	daddy	<i>muqin</i>	<i>mama</i>
	pa		
	papa		

Figure 4.10: Formal and informal ways to address parents

- T: I agree with him, too. ... In Chinese, we have formal and informal, too. Now which one is that you learned for father?
- S: *Baba*.
- T: *Baba*. OK, that's the informal way. And father is, I mean the formal way is *fuqin*.
- S: *Fuqin*.
- T: The mother is *muqin*.
- S: *Muqin*.

While Ms. C was interacting with the children, she kept on writing on the blackboard. At the end of this interaction, what were left on the board is two classification tables as shown in Figure 4.10.

Apparently, what was involved behind the interaction in Example 7 is the KS of classification, i.e., there are two ways to address one's parents, and one is the formal way while the other is the informal way. This interaction lasted 5 minutes. During this time, there were several things that the children were involved in by being engaged in the interaction. Cognitively, the concepts of "formal" and "informal" were established and the knowledge was obtained that the addressing of parents could be classified into two forms, "formal" and "informal". Culturally, or in terms of content, it was introduced that not only in English societies but also in Chinese society, there are two ways to address

parents. Linguistically, the Chinese expression of *fugin* and *muqin* were introduced and used and *baba* and *mama* were reviewed. All this was accomplished by starting with what the students had already known (i.e., there are many ways to address parents), going through what the students knew but without certainty (i.e., the concept of “formal” and “informal”), and ending with what the students did not know (i.e., Chinese formal and informal ways to address parents).

Task of describing people by age

This task was carried out in lessons 6 and 7. First, the students were given a timeline worksheet as shown in Appendix C. Then the teacher asked the children to correct a mistake in the worksheet:

Example 8.

- T: There’s a mistake in the handout. In English we always say “my father is forty years old.” In Chinese, we don’t need that word “is”. So, please cross out all the *shi* in the handout.

Most of the students followed the instruction quite well while some were not sure what to do. But since the children were sitting in groups, group members helped each other:

Example 9. One student to another:

- S: This is *shi* (pointing the character). Cross out *shi*. Just cross out *shi*.

On the worksheet, there are characters without Pinyin. However, *sui* (years old) is the only new word. It did not take long for the children to learn the meaning and the

Language	English	Chinese
Structure	N V Adj	N Adj
Example	I am ten years old.	Wo shisui.

Table 4.14: Differences in English & Chinese Sentence Structures for Telling about Age

sound of the word. After reading through all the characters in the worksheet, the children were asked to complete the sentences in Chinese characters on the sheet and write the family members in the appropriate place on the timeline (See Figure 4.2) according to their age. Then two ways to ask about people's ages were introduced:

Ni duoda for people older than 10. *Ni jisui* for people younger than 10.

In lesson 6, Ms. C initiated all the questions. An interesting finding from the data is that in spite of the great difference in the basic sentence structures for telling about age between English and Chinese (See Table 4.14), the children learned the Chinese structure quite fast. All through the exercise of teacher-asking and student-answering, only 1 out of 23 children made a mistake by using the word *shi* in the answer. Perhaps the task of crossing out the *shi* in the worksheet at the beginning of the lesson played a role. By crossing out all the *shi* in the seven sentences in the worksheet, the children began to understand that to tell how old somebody was in Chinese, *shi* which is "is" was not used.

Though the children had no problem in telling a person's age in Chinese, they did have difficulty when required to ask about people's ages appropriately in lesson 7 and the following review lessons. It is not that they did not know how to ask. Example 10 indicates that the children remembered the rule quite well.

Example 10.

T: There are two ways of saying how old is somebody. One is that

- when the person is how old?
- S: Over 10.
- T: What do you say if that person is over 10?
- S: *Wo de ... wo de baba duoda.*
- T: Good. ... Now what about the other one? Under 10.
- S: *Ni de ... jisui.*

However, when the children were being engaged in the task of asking about people's ages, they produced the following utterances:

Example 11.

- S: *xxx, ni duoda?* (to a student under the age of 10)
- S: *C laoshi, ni jisui?* (to the teacher)

It seems that the timeline worksheet did not help the children learn how to ask about age appropriately. An alternative might be to design another graphic as shown in Figure 4.11. Figure 4.11 is a classification graphic. It shows that when people's ages are asked about, the people are first classified into two groups according to their ages. Group A includes people under age 10, while group B includes people over age 10. While engaged in the task of talking about people's ages, the children could be first asked to classify people into either the A or B column according to their approximate ages and their names could be written in the appropriate places. Then, for people in column A, the form *ni jisui* should be used. For people in column B, the form *ni duoda* should be used. The question form could be gradually removed from the graphic as the children make progress. The idea of designing such a graphic is that since the language involved is

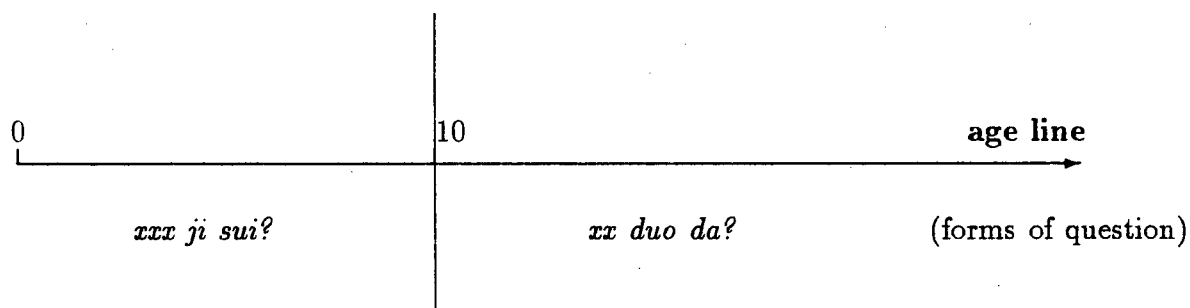


Figure 4.11: An alternative design for the age timeline

associated with the KS of description, a graphic involving the KS of classification should be more relevant to the language than the one (Figure 4.2) involving the KS of principles.

Introduction of measure words in lesson 13

Though the introduction of measure words involved the KS of classification, it was carried out as a supplementary part for the activities of evaluation and choice. Thus, this part will be discussed in the section of activities for evaluation and choice.

The tasks of describing a pet and describing family members by height (See Table 4.5)

As shown in Table 4.11, these two tasks did not appear in the actual teaching situation.

Summary

Among the activities designed for classification and description in the resource book, only Task 1 and Task 2 (See Table 4.5) were carried out in the actual teaching situation. In Task 1, Ms. C expanded the original design (to 4 lessons) in order to facilitate the children's engagement in fulfilling the task, while in Task 2, she basically followed the original design in the resource book. While the children were engaged in the activities, especially Task 1, a number of aspects were involved: content analysis, the Chinese language, cultural differences and similarities, and thinking skills related to the KSs of classification and description.

4.2.2 Classroom Activities of Principles and Sequence in the Actual Teaching Situation

What is discussed in this section is related to Section 4.1.2..

As shown in Table 4.11, lesson 5 involved the KSs of principles and sequence while lesson 15 involved the KSs of principles/sequence and evaluation/choice. Lesson 5 focused on the task of making a paper cat while lesson 15 focused on the task of role playing. In the following, the two lessons will be presented and discussed separately with the focus being on tasks.

Task of making a paper cat—lesson 5

As customary for all lessons, lesson 5 began with calling attendance and checking homework. Then a song "May There Always Be Sunshine" was taught in Chinese. It was in the last 30 minutes of the lesson that the children learned how to make a paper cat.

As discussed earlier in Section 4.1.2., originally when the activity was designed for the resource book, it was designed to include both principles and sequence. In terms

of language, only some Chinese language of sequence (See Table 4.7) is expected from the teacher for the sake of developing the students' listening ability. By instructing the students to make a paper cat step by step, the very basic language items associated with the KS of sequence, such as *diyì*, *dìer*, could be introduced. Though for this activity, at this particular level, the students were not required to reproduce the language of sequence, at least, they were provided some opportunities to gain some input of this type of language in terms of listening.

In the actual teaching situation, the original intention was not realized. First, all instruction for making a paper cat was in English, which resulted in the fact that no Chinese language of sequence was introduced while much English language of sequence was involved. Second, while the children were asked to follow the instructions to make a paper cat, they were not required to make generalizations on rules of making a paper animal, such as how to use the glue, how to cut paper, etc.. Thus, no KS of principles was involved in the activity. What the teacher did for the task of making a paper cat is to shrink the original design in terms of objectives. She turned a task with multi-objectives into only art work—making a paper cat.

Task of role playing a short skit—lesson 15

The activity of role playing a short skit was originally designed for the KSs of principles and sequence (See Table 4.3). However, in the actual teaching situation, what was involved in terms of thinking skills were not only principles/sequence, but also classification/description and evaluation/choice. In terms of Chinese language, what was involved were description, invitation sequence, and evaluation.

First, the story frame was provided on the board (See Figure 4.12) while some expressions related to meals were introduced at the same time, such as *chifan* (have meal), *chibao le* (I am full). Some rules in Chinese culture were emphasized, too, such as that in

Story Frame	
characters:	family members
setting:	house
time:	meal time
situation:	asking for / offering help

Figure 4.12: The story frame on the board as key visuals in lesson 15

China, usually it is the children who invite parents to eat and older people usually have the privilege to start eating first. The children were also told to be encouraging, helpful, and cooperative with each other. Then the children were divided into three multi-grade groups of seven with one recorder chosen for each group. Each group was supposed to write up the play. From the data, it is found three steps were involved in the process of writing the play:

1. decide where the action of having a meal should take place, i.e., in a dining room or sitting room. Usually, the decision was made by voting.
2. decide what roles should be created and which student should play which role.
3. decide what they want to say, the order of the speaking turns, and how to perform.

Step 2 involved much discussion and the discussion was carried out bilingually. The following interactions are typical of those found from the data in step 2:

Example 12.

S1: I am going to be the *jiejie*.

- S2: I'll be the *didi*.
 S3: He should be *baba*.
 S4: There should be two *jiejie* 'cause we have more girls.
 S3: Why don't we have *nainai*?

Most of the time when the children came across family members, they used Chinese. While the children were labeling and naming family members, certainly the KS of classification was involved.

Step 3 was also taken bilingually. The interaction among the children shows, cognitively, the KSs of sequence and choice were frequently involved:

Example 13.

- S1: We should say "*Ni hao*".
 S2: Write *ni hao* down.
 S1: xxx, when you say "*nainai, qin chi fan*", you give this (a plate) to her.
 S2: Then I should say "*xiexie*".
 S3: You should add "*Wo chi bao le*" after this.
 S2: Yah, *wo chi bao le*.

 S3: Then, I'll say "*zaijian*".
 I: The grandma leaves right after she finishes the meal?
 S4: Perhaps we could play the Chinese game for *nainai* "*jiandao, shitou, bu*."
 S1: Or the children could go up stairs and the parents talk for a while.
 S235: Yah, let's talk for a while.

Though the language associated with the KSs of sequence and choice (underlined part in Example 13) was in English, it does not mean the activity was useless because cognitive development is also one of the end objectives of the Chinese program and a person's cognitive development can only be realized by engaging in cognitively demanding activities. The activity of writing a play, by comparison with the activity of performing a play written by the teacher, is indeed more cognitively demanding.

Linguistically, this activity gave the children an opportunity to recall and organize the language items that had been introduced in the given situation. It also provided an opportunity for the children to review what they had forgotten (Example 14) and to learn what was new but felt necessary (Example 15):

Example 14.

- S1: We should ask *nainai* to sit down. How do you say "sit down"?
- S34: *Qing he cha.*
- I: Well, that's "have tea, please." How do you say "sit down, please?"
- S1234: *Qing—*
- S3,I: *zuo.*
- S1234: *Qing zuo.*

Example 15.

- S2: Yah, *wo chi bao le.* How do you say "this is a nice meal"?
- I: *Hen hao chi.*
- S2: *Hen hao chi.*

The final product of the activity was the performance of the play. The data show that the children had been involved in something both linguistically and culturally educational. The following are the products of two groups of children:

Example 16.

- mother to older sister: *xx, lai bang mama mang.* (xx, come and help mum.)
 older sister: *Mama, wo lai le.* (I am coming, mum.)
 older brother to younger one: *Lai kan dianshi.* (Come and watch TV.)
 older sister: *Lai chi fan.* (Come and eat.)
 children: *Mama, qing chi fan.* (Please eat, mum.)
 (after a while)
 children: *Wo chi bao le.*

Example 17.

- mother: *Nainai, lai chi fan.* (Grandma, come and have meal.)
 children at the door: *Qing jin, qing jin.* (Come in, please.)
 grandma: *Nimen hao.* (Hello, every one.)
 children: *Nin hao.* (Hello.)
 father to grandma: *Qing zuo.* (Sit down, please)
 younger brother: *Nainai, qing chi fan.* (Grandma, please eat.)
 grandma: *Xieie.* (Thank you.)
 (after a while)
 grandma: *Wo chi bao le. Hen hao chi. Zaijian.*
 (I am full. Very nice meal. See you again.)

In terms of language (See Table 4.15), the children had used and thus practiced how to use the Chinese expressions for

Function	greetings	offering	asking for help	describing	judging	farewell
Chinese Language	<i>Ni hao.</i> <i>Nimen hao.</i>	<i>Qing jin.</i> <i>Qing zuo.</i> <i>Qing chi fan.</i> <i>Lai kan dianshi.</i>	<i>Lai bang</i> <i>mama mang.</i>	<i>Wo chi</i> <i>bo le.</i>	<i>Hen hao</i> <i>chi.</i>	<i>Zaijian.</i>

Table 4.15: Linguistic Outcome in the Activity of Role Playing

- greetings and farewell (sequence);
- asking for and offering help (sequence);
- inviting (invitation sequence);
- describing the state of being full (description);
- judging the quality of a meal (evaluation)

in a given situation.

In terms of culture, the children had shown awareness that at a Chinese meal, the older people like *nainai* and *mama* have the privilege to eat first and the younger people should invite them to do so.

From writing to performing, it took only 35 minutes. The writing part was more demanding in terms of cognitive abilities. It involved the KSs of classification (classifying family members), interpreting data and drawing conclusions which belong to principles (interpreting the story frame into a play), sequence (sequencing the play), evaluation (judging a better way to perform) and choice (deciding what to say and how to perform). The performing part was more demanding in terms of language. The children had to use the target language to perform and the language had to be used appropriately. Considering the time given to the children (35 minutes), I was amazed by what the children had accomplished.

A point that needs to be mentioned for this task of role playing is that the story frame is a better analysis for teaching the content of role playing instead of the topic of family. It reveals the principles of role playing, i.e., there must be consideration of characters, setting, time, and situation. It is more related to the language activities of writing a play. From the original intention of this content unit, family principles should have been the background information of the play, i.e., what is behind the language of invitation sequence, greeting/fairwell sequence, and asking/offering help sequence—those language structures used in the play—are the family principles of:

- politeness;
- help each other;
- respect for the older people;
- older first.

These principles are the background information of a Chinese family relationship. The activities during a Chinese meal time as shown in the final product of the play are the specific manifestations of those principles in a practical situation. But, these principles were implicit in the teaching process. This, then, is a fault of the design and analysis of the teaching materials. As a result, the data obtained from this particular activity do not provide the evidence that the KF is a feasible way of analyzing content or topics. But it does show that classroom activities on a chosen topic can lead to the systematic use of features of language in the ways indicated by the KF analysis of the topic, i.e., the topic of family was broken down into six KSs including the KS of sequence, and the activity involving a Chinese meal led to the use of language of sequence by the students.

Summary

For the activities designed for principles and sequence in the resource book, both the tasks were carried out in the actual teaching situation. However, for the task of making a paper cat, it was reduced from a task with multi-objectives into only art work while the task of role playing was expanded from an activity of principles and sequence into an activity involving all the six knowledge structures.

4.2.3 Classroom Activities of Evaluation and Choice in the Actual Teaching Situation

What is discussed in this section is in relation with that in Section 4.1.3.

In the original design in the resource book, there are three tasks designed for the KSs of evaluation and choice (See Table 4.9). But as shown in Table 4.11, the task of determining who are tall/short in the class by measuring each other's height (Task 2 in Table 4.9) was not actually carried out. What did appear in the actual teaching situation are A6 and A10 (See Table 4.3). Besides, as discussed in the previous section, A9, which is designed for principles/sequence in the resource book, was expanded into an activity of all the six KSs in the actual teaching situation. Since A9 is already discussed in the previous section, this section will focus on A6 and A10.

A6: A task showing the class' preference for the number of family members

A6 is to conduct an individual survey of the class' preference for the number of family members, which will be shown on a bar graph. This task was carried out in two separate lessons: lesson 13 and lesson 14 (See Table 4.11). Lesson 13 focused on the individual survey while lesson 14 focused on the completion of the bar graph.

Lesson 13

The major activity for lesson 13 is to complete the worksheet as shown in Appendix 4.2. The sentence structure to be learned from this lesson is:

sb. *xihuan* you # measure word family members
(like) (have) #

The new vocabulary items are *xihuan* and a number of measure words.

The lesson was started by teaching the new word *xihuan* and reviewing the verb *you* (have) and *mei you* (not have). *Xihuan* was taught by means of translation, i.e., to ask the children to translate sentences "I like him", "They like boys", etc. after the meaning of *xihuan* was explained. Occasionally, Ms. C stopped to help the children with tone and pronunciation. *You / mei you* were reviewed by means of answering questions from the teacher:

Example 18.

- T: *Ni you ji ge gege?* (How many older brothers do you have?)
S: *Wo you yi ge gege.* (I have one older brother.)

Example 19.

- T: *Ni you ji ge jiejie?* (How many older sisters do you have?)
S: *Wo—* (I—)
T: Do you have any?
S: No.
T: *Wo mei you jiejie.* (I don't have sisters.)
S: *Wo mei you jiejie.*

<i>ge</i>	people
<i>tiao</i>	<i>yu</i>
<i>zhi</i>	<i>gou, mao</i>
<i>pi</i>	<i>ma</i>

Figure 4.13: Measure words for people and different animals

It was during the exercise of asking and answering that more measure words were introduced. A list of measure words co-occurring with people and different animals was provided on the blackboard in the form of a semi-classification table as shown in Figure 4.13. In the right column of Figure 4.13 are four measure words while in the right column are objects (in this case people and pets) that the measure words co-occur with. During the exercise of answering the teacher's questions, whenever the children had objects other than people, they could use the table on the blackboard as reference.

All the above exercises took 11 minutes. Apparently, those exercises were conducted as linguistic preparation for the activity of completing the worksheet in Appendix 4.2. Feeling that the students had known how to use *xihuan*, *you*, and the measure words, Ms. C spent 10 more minutes on teaching the following sentence structures:

Wo xihuan you—

Wo bu xihuan you—

Again, this was undertaken by translation, i.e., to ask the children to translate Chinese into English. It was not until the end of the translation exercise that the children were given the worksheet as shown in Appendix 4.2 and asked to complete it in pairs. While completing the worksheet, the children told each other what number they had put in.

It took 11 minutes for the children to complete the worksheet. Then each child was asked to give one sentence orally with the completed worksheet as reference to show his preference for the number of family members.

As planned in the original design (See Section 4.1.3.), for the activity of completing the worksheet, there are two major developmental objectives. Cognitively, by completing the worksheet, the children were involved with the KS of choice, i.e., to make decisions on what family members they like and how many they would like to have. Linguistically, the children used the Chinese expressions of “likes” and “dislikes” which are associated with the KS of choice—to form personal opinions. Since the cognitive demand for this activity is low in that it only involved decision making on one thing, the linguistic development became the major task for the teacher. Sometimes, just for one sentence, there were many things to be dealt with. The following interaction between the teacher and one student gives an example to show how difficult the task was for both the teacher and the student.

Example 20.

When a girl was asked to give a sentence with the worksheet she had just completed as reference:

S: Wǒ jǐ—

T: xǐhuan

S: xǐhuan yǒu sī shì gē māo, mā.

T: If you have *zhī* (T mistook *shì* for *zhī* because of the incorrect tone of the child), you don't use *gē*, because both are measure words.

So *nǐ xǐhuan yǒu shí or sì?*

S: *Shì.*

T: *Shí zhī?*

S: No, no. Wǒ—

T: xǐhuan

S: xǐhuan yǒu sī shì gē

T: *māo?*

S: *ma, mǎ.*

T: *Mǎ.* Oh, well, did you notice the measure word there?

(pointing to the board)

S: Oh.

T: Can you say with that measure word now?

S: *Wǒ—xi—*

T: *xihuan*

S: *xihuan yǒu sìshí pi, pī mǎ.*

T: Good.

From Example 20, we can see that not only the use of the new expression *xihuan* was involved (Every time when the child started again, it was the teacher who had to give the model first for the word *xihuan*.), but also the problems of pronunciation, tone, and the measure words. The sentence the child tried to say covers only six words (eight characters). However, there are four difficulties involved. This might explain why for the activities in this class of foreign language beginners, the linguistic demand is often higher than the cognitive demand.

Lesson 14

This is a lesson to complete A6 (See Table 4.3). In the previous lesson, the children had completed an individual survey (Appendix D) to express the number of brothers, sisters and pets they would like to have. The job in lesson 14 is to total and illustrate the class' preference on a bar graph (See Appendix D for the bar graph). To complete the bar graph, several steps were involved.

First, the children had to decide what is *henduo* (many). After explaining the meaning of *henduo* and asking the children to say the words several times, Ms. C started a class

discussion to decide the number for *henduo*. Some children gave the number *san* (3) while some others gave the number of *ershi* (20) or *yibai* (100). Finally, the whole class reached the agreement that *wu* (5) or more counted as *henduo*.

The second step for the activity was to total the number of students who *xihuan henduo* something or *bu xihuan henduo* something. The objects to be liked or disliked provided by the bar graph were:

- *xiongdi* (brothers)
- *jiemei* (sisters)
- *gou* (dog)
- *mao* (cat)
- *ma* (horse)
- *yu* (fish)

Each one went with two sentence structures:

- # *ge ren xihuan henduo* ---
- # *ge ren bu xihuan henduo* ---

All together there were twelve times of totaling. The following process gives the idea how each totaling was undertaken.

Example 21.

T: *Ji ge ren xihuan henduo xiongdi?*

S1: (standing in the front and counting the raised hands. Then) *lui* (6).

At first, Ms. C tried to have the child doing the counting ask *Ji ge ren xihuan henduo xiongdi*. Finding it was hard for the child, she gave this up and asked the question herself. By the end of the totaling, she had used the same sentence structure more than 12 times, each time with a different object at the end of the sentence. So, though the children did not have many opportunities to say the sentence, they had many opportunities to listen to it.

The third step was to illustrate the result on the bar graph. This was done by the child who did the counting.

The activity of totaling took a long time, about 30 minutes. The reason is that at the beginning some children could not decide if they liked many brothers or not. Though they had decided that the number of five or more was considered as many, they forgot this when the totaling was conducted. It was after a while that they remembered this decision. So the result of the totaling was changed several times.

The children did well in bar graphing. The bar clearly showed the class' preference for the number of brothers, sisters or pets. However, in terms of speaking, the children still had a long way to go. When Ms. C tried to ask four children to answer the question *Nimen xihuan you henduo xiongdi ma?*, none of the children could give a fluent answer. As in lesson 13, it seems that the language demand was a bit too high for the children at this level. Realizing the difficulty the children were facing, Ms. C stopped questioning the students and started making a summary in Chinese on the class' preference for number of family members while pointing to the completed bar graph:

Example 22.

- T: *Nimen xihuan you henduo yu.* (You like to have many fish.)
Nimen bu xihuan you henduo jiemei. (You don't like to have many sisters.)

Generally speaking, in lesson 14, Ms. C did most of the talking in terms of Chinese while the children did most of the listening. As a first step to develop speaking ability, listening is essential. But to really develop speaking ability, much speaking practice is indispensable. Nevertheless, as evidenced by what happened in both lesson 13 and lesson 14, the language demand of A6 was a bit too high for the children to engage in the speaking activity.

In fact, there is an imbalance between the cognitive demand and language demand for the activity being carried out in the two lessons. In terms of cognition, as originally designed in the resource book, A6 is an activity of choice without evaluation (See Section 4.1.3.). Thus the thinking process in A6 is relatively simple, which results in low cognitive demand: the children had already known how to make decisions in English on likes and dislikes (lesson 13) and on the number of people who like or dislike something (lesson 14). In terms of Chinese language, the demand is very high. Everything was new to the students: the word, the structure, the pronunciation, the tone, and the measure word. Though the visual aids as shown in Appendix 4.2 and Appendix 4.3 were designed with the hope of reducing the language barrier, the data (e.g., Example 20) show that the task, in terms of language, was still very difficult for the children. Thus, the questions raised for the A6 are:

1. Is there a way to enhance the cognitive demand of the activity from the one involving the KS of only choice into the one involving the KSs of both evaluation and choice?
2. Is there a way to further reduce the language demand of the activity for the students at this proficiency level while the cognitive demand is raised?

A10: Making comments on the skits presented in lesson 15

A10 is the third task designed for the activities around the KSs of evaluation and choice (See Table 4.9). It is to be carried out after the task of role playing a short skit (See lesson 15 in section 4.2.2.). As discussed in section 4.1.3., A10 involves the KSs of both evaluation and choice: judging, recommending, and forming personal opinions. However, in the actual teaching situation, after role playing, there were only five minutes left before the lesson ended. So, all of A10 was reduced to a brief summary of the students' role playing:

Example 23.

T: What do you think of your performance?

S: Bad.

T: I don't think it's bad. You've done a lot. You had (those sentences used by the children in the performance). ... I think it's good.

The originally designed key visual—the evaluation chart with five sentences for evaluating—was not used at all. Since it was the teacher instead of the students who made the comments on the play, the children were actually not engaged in the activity of making comments, which resulted in no involvement of any thinking process related to the KSs of evaluation and choice. And also because the comments made on the play by Ms. C were in English (e.g., the underlined part in Example 23), the original linguistic objective (See Table 4.9) was not achieved in this lesson, in terms of listening and speaking development.

Though A10 was not carried out in its entirety right after the role playing, it was informally carried out after the children performed a play written by the teacher. What

Ms. C did was to put the evaluation chart on the blackboard and read out all the five sentences with explanation. Again, the time for this activity was short, only five minutes. The intention was giving the students language input while there was little cognitive demand.

Summary

For the activities designed for evaluation and choice in the resource book, only Task 1 and Task 3 (See Table 4.9) were carried out in the actual teaching situation. For Task 1, which is an activity of choice without evaluation, the teacher followed the original design in the resource book. For Task 3, because of time limitation, she condensed the original design of an activity of evaluation and choice into a brief summary made by herself, or into a pure language activity without much cognitive involvement. Thus, among the activities designed for the KSs of evaluation and choice in the resource book, only the activity of choice (A6) was carried out as intended. However, the evaluation box in Table 4.12 was not left empty in the actual teaching. A9, which is designed for the KSs of principles and sequence in the resource book, was expanded into an activity involving all the six KSs in Mohan's framework.

4.2.4 Reviewing Lessons

As shown in Table 4.11, among the 16 lessons observed, there are 6 lessons on review: lessons 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 16. The intention of all the reviewing lessons was on the development of the Chinese language learned in the Family Unit and the previous unit—Personal Information. The focus was on the accuracy of tones, pronunciation, sentence structures and the character writing.

As in most foreign language classrooms, many repetitions, translations, questions and answers were involved in those lessons. Usually, the teaching of character writing was

combined with the reviewing of sentence structures. For instance, after the characters of male and female were taught, the following interaction occurred:

Example 24.

T: *Ni shi nu ren ma?* (Are you a woman?)

Boy1: *Wo bu shi nu ren.* (I am not a woman.)

Girl1: *Ni shi nan ren ma?* (Are you a man?)

Girl2: *Wo bu shi nan ren.* (I am not a man.)

The sentence structures reviewed were:

Ni shi——ma?

Wo shi/bu shi ——.

Among the four language aspects (tone, pronunciation, sentence structures and character writing) focused on the review lessons, tones seemed to be the most difficult aspect for the children. One of the assignments for the children in those review lessons was to write a paragraph of personal information in Hanyu Pinyin. The children provided personal information using correct sentence structures. Appendix E gives some examples of the children's written products. When they were asked to read out what they had written, they usually did not have any problems with pronunciation. However, they did have difficulties producing correct tones. Example 25 reveals how hard it was for the children to produce the tone correctly.

Example 25.

I: How do you say that? (pointing to the sentence "I am 9 years old")

S: *Wō jiǔ suǐ.*

I: *Wǒ Jiǔ suì.*

S: *Wō Jiǔ suì.*

I: *Jiǔ*

S: *Jiǔ suì.*

I: Very good.

(later)

I: Can you say it from the very beginning?

S: *Nimen hǎo.*

Wǒ jiù suí.

I: *Wǒ Jiǔ suì.*

S: *Wǒ jiù suí.*

I: *Wǒ jiǔ suì.*

S: *Wǒ Jiù suí.*

I: *jiǔ.*

S: *jiǔ suí.*

I: *jiǔ.*

S: *jiǔ.*

I: *jiǔ suì.*

S: *jiǔ suì.*

I: Again.

S: *Wǒ jiǔ suì.*

I: Good.

The student in Example 25 is a girl who always did well in all the tasks. However, tone still remained a problem for her. Because of the time limitation and the size of the class, it was impossible for Ms. C to do what I did with the girl as shown in the example. Quite often, the wrong tone was not corrected. (However, I should point out I do not mean that every wrong tone should be corrected. As time passes and the children learn more and more, I believe they will gradually produce the tones correctly.)

Generally speaking, though the language items reviewed in the review lessons are those learned in the activities organized around the knowledge framework, most of them were not reviewed within the framework. The reviewing of those learned in the Family Unit was more sentence-structure oriented as shown in Example 24. Thus, the question remaining is whether there is a way to combine the reviewing with the framework of KSs so as to make the reviewing more multidimensional.

4.3 Summary of the Findings

In this chapter, how activities were originally designed and organized in the resource book is introduced, how the teacher interpreted the original plan in the actual teaching situation, and how the children were engaged in the activities are examined. As revealed by Table 4.4 and Table 4.12, the activities in both the original design in the resource book and in the actual teaching situation cover all the six KSs in terms of thinking processes and five in terms of Chinese language. Nevertheless, the activities carried out in the actual teaching situation are not exactly the same as those previously designed, either in terms of numbers and in terms of scale. What is found from the data is that some of the originally designed tasks were expanded while some were condensed or skipped in the actual teaching situation. While the children were engaged in the expanded tasks, there was more involvement in terms of both thinking skills and Chinese language, such

as the task of making and presenting a family tree and the task of role playing a short skit. While the children were engaged in the condensed tasks, there was less involvement, also in terms of both thinking skills and Chinese language, such as the task of making a paper cat and the task of making comments on the role playing.

Though the lessons were conducted on the basis of activities designed around the framework of KSs, many language teaching techniques similar to those found in other foreign language classrooms, such as pattern drills, translation, question and answer, etc., were involved. Those techniques were used to help facilitate the use of the target language by the students.

Examination of the lessons in the Family Unit reveals how the classroom language activities are organized and conducted around Mohan's framework in this particular Chinese as a foreign language class. It shows the feasibility of applying the KF in a foreign language teaching/learning situation to integrate language and content systematically. At the same time, it raises some questions concerning curriculum and instruction for further consideration, such as the design and the use of graphics, the balance between cognitive demand and language demand in certain tasks, and the combination of language reviewing and the knowledge framework.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Suggestions, and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions of the Study

As stated in Chapter 1, the study was directed by three general questions and sought to answer two specific questions in order to investigate the feasibility of applying the KF in a foreign language teaching/learning situation. In the following, the three general questions will be discussed separately, with the answers to the two specific questions at the end as the conclusion of the study.

5.1.1 Can Chinese as a Foreign Language be Taught to Younger Beginners Using Mohan's Knowledge Framework?

The picture which emerged from Chapter 4 gives a positive answer to this question: Chinese as a foreign language can be taught to young beginners using Mohan's framework of KSs.

As evidenced by the findings of the study, the framework could be applied to a foreign language teaching situation to play the role of an organizational framework of classroom activities. The starting point of doing so is to decide the topics. Once we get a topic, we have content to talk about. If the topic is family members, many things like the labeling of family members, the responsibilities of family members, and the likes or dislikes of the family members will appear in our mind. So, a topic is an abstract reflection of content. If we regard language as inseparable from content, we have to admit that a

topic is essential in language teaching and learning. In the Chinese program under the study, the proposed curriculum guide (1989) provides a series of such topics.

But, we do not want to stop at topics. A topic is just a starting point to design a series of activities. Since topics or content can be broken down into six types of knowledge and the six knowledge types are organized to make up the framework of KSs (Mohan 1986), the framework could be used to organize a series of activities based on a topic. Many studies in ESL classrooms have given support to this argument (e.g., Early 1990). The findings of the present study on the Family Unit show that the knowledge framework could also be used to organize classroom activities for young foreign language beginners.

Though not every originally designed activity in the resource book was carried out in the actual teaching situation and not every one that was carried out was perfect, from those that were conducted there is clear indication of the feasibility of using the framework to teach a foreign language to young beginners.

5.1.2 How Are Classroom Activities Organized around KF in a Chinese as a Foreign Language Class for Young Beginners?

As examined in Chapter 4, the framework of KSs is used as an organizational framework of classroom activities. For the program under the study, in the original plan, there are activities designed for three different action situations for the topic of Family Members, such as

- describing family members (describing situation);
- role playing what is happening at meal time (sequencing situation);
- making a decision on the preferred number of family members (choosing situation).

To be engaged in activities in the above situations, one has usually to be involved with the KSs of classification, principles, and evaluation which provide the relevant background information of the activities. As Mohan points out, "language learning in action situations is ... more than learning to speak appropriately. It includes talking about and learning about reasons for acting" (Mohan 1986:55). In other words, to learn a language in activities, two aspects are involved. One is to learn to use the target language to act, such as to describe, to sequence, and to make choices. The KSs involved in this action aspect are description, sequence and choice. The other aspect is to develop a theoretical understanding of the actions to be taken. The KSs involved in this theoretical aspect are classification, principles, and evaluation. The findings of the present studies further supports such a combination of the practical and theoretical aspects of language learning activities.

Let us take the activity of labeling family members as an example. To learn how to label a grandmother in Chinese in a describing situation, the students are not only learning to label a grandmother as *laolao* or *nainai*, they are also learning about the reasons for this labeling: grandmothers are classified as *laolao* on the mother's side and *nainai* on the father's side. Without learning about this reason for the two different labels for grandmothers, one cannot be supposed to be able to learn to label grandmothers in Chinese appropriately.

Thus, for this Chinese program, it is by combining the "language learning in action situations" with the "learning about reasons for acting" that the classroom activities are organized around the framework of KSs. Also, since any topic can be broken down into six KSs and each KS has its distinct linguistic features (Mohan 1986), the very simple and basic language items associated with different KSs provided by the curriculum guide for the Family Unit are integrated into activities for each knowledge type. In this way, language and content are linked by the KF through activities. Though at this particular

level, the Chinese language appearing in each activity is not much, or even zero for a certain KS, we believe, as students gradually make progress, the possibility to use more and more Chinese in classroom activities for each KS will become greater and greater.

5.1.3 In This Particular Class, How Do the Teacher and the Students Work with the KF and What Can the Students Gain by Engaging in the Activities Organized around the KF?

Though the classroom activities for this Chinese program are organized around the knowledge framework, in the actual teaching situation, the teacher did not teach the KSs explicitly. What the teacher did was to lead the children through the thinking processes related to a certain KS. She used a classification graphic like a family tree to represent the KS of classification while teaching how to label family members. She clearly understood that the students were young beginners and at this level no task should be made too complicated for the children to handle with. The focus was more on the students' development of thinking skills and the Chinese language associated with the KSs rather than the form of the existence of the framework of KSs. Thus, while the students might make progress in terms of thinking skills and the Chinese language by engaging in the activities organized around the knowledge framework, it is not necessary for the children to realize explicitly what KS is involved in a certain activity.

Another point that should be stated is that to organize the classroom activities around KSs does not mean the abandonment of many other widely-used teaching techniques. As described in Chapter 4, many commonly used techniques were adopted in the actual teaching situation, pattern drilling, question and answer, repetition from both the teacher and students, etc.. After all, this was a language class. The framework of KSs is used to organize activities, not to take the place of teaching techniques. Just as in a sentence structure oriented curriculum, the teacher can draw attention to sentence structures.

While the adoption of the framework of KSs may enhance the opportunity to realize more objectives in a language program, many of the traditional language teaching techniques remain available to help the students' language development.

As for what the students can gain from engaging in the activities organized around the framework of KSs, the findings of the study, especially the findings on the activities that were expanded, have shown that what they are involved in is more than Chinese—the target language itself. By being engaged in an activity of a certain type of KS, it is likely for the children to be engaged in the thinking process related to that KS. And only by engaging in the thinking process related to a certain KS, can a person's thinking skills associated with that type of KS be developed. As revealed in Chapter 4, the language activities organized around the knowledge framework did provide the children with many such opportunities to engage in thinking processes related to various KSs. And we believe that the chance of better development of various cognitive competencies is greater for the children who have more opportunities to engage in activities related with various KSs.

In the Chinese program in this study, what the children have gained is not only a chance for better cognitive development. A language class is after all in essence a language class. Linguistic development is one of the most important objectives of the program. During the sixteen lessons of classroom teaching/learning, most of the children have engaged in the authentic use of some Chinese language (stated in the curriculum guide) in appropriate situations, such as identifying or introducing family members in a describing situation, inviting a family member to have a meal in a sequencing situation, etc.. All the activities were around the topic of Family, and the activities of different KSs in different situations led to the students' use of language associated with different KSs on the topic. Thus, language learning and content learning were tightly integrated. What is significant in the findings of the study is that the Chinese language used in the expanded activities involving the KSs of both background information and action situation (e.g.,

presenting family trees and role playing) is more than those used in the condensed ones (e.g., making comments on the play) or the one involving the KSs of only action situations (e.g., the class' preference of family members). This finding indicates the importance of combining the KSs of background information with the KSs of action situation when organizing classroom language activities around the knowledge framework.

Cultural objectives are also to be attained in the program under the study. Since the approach of organizing classroom activities around the knowledge framework is topic oriented, the cultural differences and similarities were introduced around a certain topic. For instance, for the topic of Family, the Chinese cultural rule of "older first" was introduced, though not explicitly taught as family principles, in the task of role playing—an activity designed for the KSs of principles and sequence. The success of the children's performance shows the smoothness and the naturalness of teaching and learning about culture this way. Here, learning did occur by doing. And doing is supported by "reasons for acting" (Mohan 1986:55).

5.1.4 Conclusions

Though it is a fact that not every activity was perfectly designed and carried out because of some flaws in the design and analysis of the teaching materials, the data obtained from a number of activities show that the KF is a feasible way of analyzing content or topics in foreign language classrooms (e.g., the family tree) and that interesting or relevant topics can lead to systematic use of features of language by foreign language students (either in terms of listening or in terms of speaking) at the beginning level, in the ways indicated by the KF analysis of the topic (e.g., describing family members by identifying or introducing them, sequencing a Chinese meal, choosing preferred family members). By engaging in the classroom language activities organized around the framework of KSs, what the children could benefit from is more than the opportunity for language

development. Content learning, cultural awareness, and a better chance for cognitive development are other benefits that the children could gain in such a language program. If we believe that “through content teaching, second language learning will be enhanced” (Swain 1988), if we believe that “language and culture are not separable ” (Brooks 1960:86), if we believe that the development of various thinking skills related to the six KSs is important because the knowledge framework “applies across the curriculum” (Mohan 1986:46), it is not hard for us to see the advantage of such a language program as examined.

5.2 Suggestions on Improvement

The examination of classroom language activities in a Chinese class at Melba Elementary has shown the feasibility of using Mohan’s knowledge framework to teach Chinese as a foreign language to young beginners. However, as discussed in Chapter 4, the activities examined were not flawless though some of them were quite successful. Some imperfections originated from the original design while some existed in the actual teaching situation. In this section, some of the suggestions on the improvement of the activities will be discussed.

5.2.1 The Possibility of Designing Activities to Cover All the Six KSs in Terms of Both Thinking Skills and the Target Language

As shown by the findings, in both the original design and the actual teaching situation, it is only in terms of thinking processes that the activities designed and carried out covered all the six KSs. In terms of Chinese language, the KS of principles was not included. The reason is that the curriculum guide provided no language items associated with the KS of principles for the Family Unit. Of course, as the teaching continues in the future, it

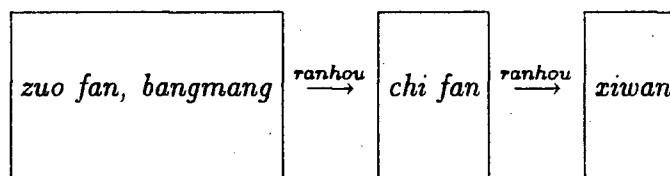


Figure 5.14: The sequence graphic for the suggested activity

is likely that the language associated with all the six KSs will gradually be covered. For instance, three units after the Family Unit is the Transportation Unit (See Table 3.2) which covers quite a number of language items associated with the KS of principles, such as *Shi hongden, bu neng zou* (Don't walk at the red signal), *Zou lu yao zhuyi che* (Watch out for moving vehicles when walking). But the question to raise here is if there is any way to introduce the target language associated with ALL the six KSs earlier.

I believe there is such a possibility if only the design of classroom activities is not restricted by the language items provided by a certain guide. One alternative is to design an activity of talking about responsibilities of family members at meal time, such as who makes meal, who helps, who washes dishes. Thus, utterances as following might be expected from the students, perhaps at first in English:

Language of sequence:

Mama zuo fan. (Mother makes meals.)

Wo he jiejie bangmang. (My sister and I help.)

Ranhou women chi fan. (Then we eat.)

Ranhou baba xiwan. (Then, father washes the dishes.)

This cluster of sentences shows the time relation between events, which involves exactly the KS of sequence. A graphic as in Figure 5.14 can represent this relation clearly. In this activity, the question could be asked why people do this at meal time. Does every one have to do something? What are the reasons for people's "actions" at meal time? In



Figure 5.15: A family principle graphic for the suggested activity

another word, what are the principles behind this series of events. One of the conclusions expected might be:

A family rule: *Women yinggai huziang bangmang*. (We should help each other.)

This family principle could graphically be represented as shown in Figure 5.15. In this way, the activity of talking about responsibilities of family members at meal time might possibly involve the KSs of both principles and sequence. While engaging in the activities, the children from different families could change the family members for different events. The graphics in Figure 5.14 and Figure 5.15 could be used to help the children organize the language product. To make sure that the children are talking about what family members do at meal time instead of reading from the graphics, the words inside the boxes could be replaced with pictures.

Of course, the prerequisite of designing such a kind of activity is that the language items elicited from the activities should not be restricted by a certain guide. In the above example, the five underlined words are those not listed in the curriculum guide provided. But, they are simple. The idea is that the language items that will be used in a certain activity should be selected according to the chosen topic and the students' receptivity. "Rather than working from syllabus items to tasks," the curriculum guide can be "conceived as being of most value as checklists" which specify "sets of grammatical,

phonological, lexical, functional and notional items to be covered. Rather than identifying a particular item, ... and creating a text and a task to teach these items, one might ... create an interesting/relevant text and task at the appropriate level of difficulty, and then identify which language items on the syllabus checklist can be introduced or taught through the text/task" (Nunan 1989:19). Thus, language items selected are based on the tasks designed. Tasks designed are based on the topics chosen. Since any topic can be broken down into the six KSs, any topic can involve the language associated with the six KSs. Thus, if only a language program is really topic or content-oriented, it is possible to design activities covering ALL the KSs cognitively AND linguistically as early as possible.

5.2.2 Keeping a Balance between the Cognitive and Language Demands of an Activity

As discussed in Section 4.2.3, the activity of showing the class' preference for the number of family members is an activity involving the KS of choice without evaluation. While the cognitive demand is low, the language demand is very high. So the question is whether it is possible to enhance the cognitive demand and lower the language demand in order to keep a balance between the two. Again, it seems possible.

First, let us see how to possibly enhance the cognitive demand. One alternative might be to change the original activity of choice into a one of both evaluation and choice. Instead of asking the students to show the class' preference for the number of family members, we might ask them to start with an activity of showing what family members they like or dislike and giving reasons, i.e., the children have to justify their decisions. The part of deciding what members they like/dislike involves the KS of choice while the part of giving reasons involves the KS of evaluation. Such an activity involving two KSs possibly requires higher cognitive demand than the one involving only one KS.

The significance of doing so is at least two dimensional. Pragmatically, the problem of low cognitive demand of the activity might be solved. Pedagogically, the children might possibly have one more opportunity to learn that only by judging, justifying, and evaluating can a rational decision be made.

To enhance the cognitive demand of a certain activity does not necessarily mean to raise the language demand at the same time. The language to be learned in an activity of relatively higher cognitive demand does not have to be complicated. Let us take for example the activity of showing what family members you like/dislike by giving reasons.

Rational decisions are made on the basis of evaluation judgment. Pedagogically, five steps can be included in a course of evaluation judgement (See Smith 1970):

1. Identifying what will be valued: brother? sister? pets?
2. Identifying value terms, i.e., the words used to indicate value: *hao* (good), *bu hao* (not good). For beginners, it might be better to introduce the most basic vocabulary.
3. Explicating the value terms: what does *hao* mean when you say *sb. hao*? The answer expected might be
hao = bangmang. (nice = helpful)
bu hao = bu bangmang. (not nice = not helpful)
4. Describing properties (behavior in this case) of the value object (family members in this case): helpful or not helpful.
5. Making the judgement, i.e., to judge who is nice.

In order to help the children organize their ideas occurring in the discussion during the above five steps, a graphic as shown in Figure 5.16 could be provided. At the end of the

family members	behavior	evaluation—judging

⇒ choice:

Figure 5.16: An evaluation graphic

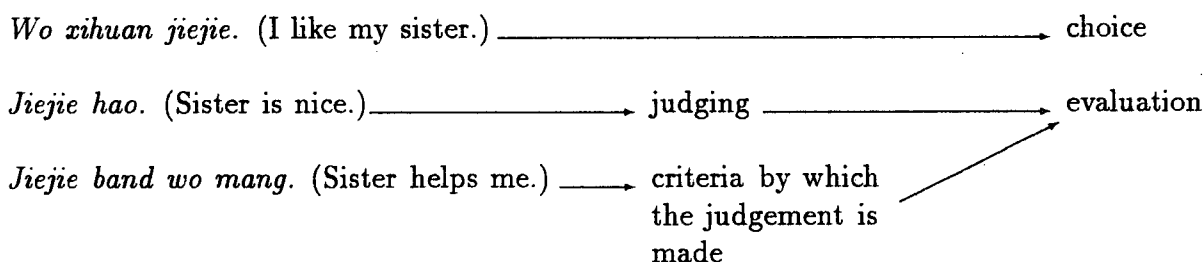
family members	behavior	evaluation—judging
<i>gege</i>	<i>bu bangmang</i>	<i>bu hao</i>
<i>jiejie</i>	<i>bangmang</i>	<i>hao</i>

⇒ choice: *Wo bu xihuan gege.*
Wo xihuan jiejie

Figure 5.17: A completed evaluation graphic

five steps, all the blanks can be filled in and a choice can be made. The result could be something similar to Figure 5.17.

The graphic then could be used to help the children produce a cluster of sentences regarding their preference for family members in a logical, organized way. The language converted from Figure 5.17 might be:



Thus, the decision *wo xihuan jiejie* is made on the basis of reasoning: *Jiejie hao.* *Jiejie bang wo mang.* Here each individual sentence is simpler than the one in the original activity: *Wo xihuan you # ge jiejie..* But when the three single sentences are put together, they express much more complex meaning. And the process of organizing the sentences could be made easier by the use of a graphic like the one in Figure 5.17.

In a foreign language teaching/learning setting, it is not uncommon for the students to be engaged in an activity lacking a balance between cognitive and language demand. However, by raising the cognitive demand and lowering the language demand of classroom activities, a balance might be kept. The cognitive demand could be raised by means of designing activities involving both the KSs in action situation and the KSs in background information. The language demand could be lowered by means of designing and using relevant graphics.

5.2.3 The Design of Relevant Graphics and a Better Use of Graphics

According to Mohan, each type of knowledge can be represented graphically by “key visuals” (Mohan 1986). Many studies in ESL settings have shown the significance of using graphics in language teaching (e.g., Early 1990). But as discussed in Chapter 4, in the original design of key visuals for the activities under the present study, there is a lack of real graphics. More than half of the key visuals designed are lists of words or sentences of Chinese. Besides, the graphic of the age time line designed for the activity of talking about age is not directly related to the language aimed at in terms of KSs in the sense that the KS represented by the age time line is principles while the KS associated with the language aimed at is description. Fortunately, the discussion in Section 4.2.1 (the age activity), Section 5.2.1 and Section 5.2.2. has shown the possibility of designing more graphics representing relevant KSs associated with thinking processes and Chinese language in a certain activity.

But, only to have relevant graphics is not enough. It is also very important to make efficient use of them. In the discussion on Lesson 4 in Chapter 4.2.1, the question is raised of how to make better use of graphics to help the students apply the KS associated with a certain activity so as to facilitate their language development. As discussed in that section, the graphic in the family tree (Figure 4.9) represents very well the KS of

classification involved in the task of describing family members by labeling them. One alternative to help the children introduce their family members in the appropriate order might be to teach the children about the function of graphics first: one of the functions of graphics is to help a person organize his speech well. And the graphic in the family tree shows that family members are classified into three levels:

top level: grandparents
middle level: parents
bottom level: children and pets

And then the children could be told that the appropriate order to introduce or describe family members in Chinese is to start with the older people at the top. Of course, the children could also come to the conclusion on this order by carefully observing the teacher's demonstration.

The idea behind the above suggestion is that without being taught consciously, the children could hardly recognize that graphics could be used for organizing oral text. Thus, to make a more efficient use of graphics, the children need to be taught about the possible functions of graphics (Tang 1989) so as to organize their speech in the target language more appropriately in the target culture.

So far, three suggestions on curriculum design and classroom instruction have been proposed. However, none has been investigated in an actual foreign language classroom. The effectiveness of applying those suggestions can only be confirmed in the actual teaching situation.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Research

The study on classroom language activities in a Chinese as foreign language class of young beginners has indicated the feasibility and effects of using Mohan's knowledge

framework in teaching a foreign language to young beginners. It also pictures how classroom language activities were organized and conducted in the classroom around Mohan's framework and how the students were engaged in those activities. It shows that the KF is a feasible way of analyzing content or topics in foreign language classrooms and that activities on interesting topics can lead to the systematic use of the features of the language by beginning foreign language students, in the ways indicated by the knowledge framework analysis of the topic. However, the study is exploratory or discovery-oriented research undertaken in an uncontrolled natural classroom situation. Since some of the original designed activities were skipped or condensed in the intact actual teaching situation because of various reasons (among which is the time restriction), the provided picture of the on-going process of classroom activities around Mohan's framework is not complete. To obtain a more complete picture of the on-going process of classroom activities of ALL the six KSs, a more carefully designed and controlled study is necessary.

In addition, the study focused on only one teaching/learning unit within a limited period of time of two months. Thus, the study could not provide findings of generalizability to all the units. Besides, since the study was conducted in only one class of 23 students taught by only one teacher, the particular teaching style of the teacher and the particular characteristics of the students might also influence the generalizability of the findings. Thus, to obtain a more general picture of the on-going process of classroom activities around Mohan's framework, a study on a larger scale, in terms of the length of time, the number of teaching/learning units, and the number of participants, is required.

As mentioned earlier, one of the reasons to adopt the Knowledge Framework in this Chinese program is to have the students be engaged in language activities involving various thinking processes so as to develop their language abilities as well as various thinking skills at the same time. The study examined language use rather than language

achievement. That is, though the study has demonstrated that by being engaged in classroom language activity of a certain KS, the students can have opportunities for authentic use of some Chinese language elicited by appropriate situations and can be involved with many thinking processes related to that KS, it does not provide any evidence showing that the students' language abilities and thinking skills related to that KS are actually developed because this linguistic and cognitive development is a gradual process which takes time. What is more is that according to Mohan, the six knowledge structures are "common to all activities", and therefore "the framework provides for transfer of learning from one activity to another. ... For the language teacher, this means that it can help with transfer of language learning" (Mohan 1986:46). Again, because of the scale and the nature of the present study, we had no opportunity to see how the "transfer of language learning" takes place of the students engaged in the classroom activities around the framework. Thus, to find out the relationship between being engaged in the activities in the framework and the actual development of various language abilities and thinking skills, and how the students' "transfer of language learning" happens by being engaged in the activities in the framework, a longitudinal study which takes a much longer time is required.

Generally speaking, the present study has provided a rough, but an initial picture of classroom language activities around Mohan's knowledge framework in a foreign language class of young beginners. Though more impressionistic than objective, the study has provided some implications for curriculum design and classroom instruction for further consideration and can be regarded as a starting point to investigate classroom language activities around the framework in foreign language teaching/learning situations on a larger scale and at a deeper level. Since a foreign language program is considered as a program not purely for language development, but also for content learning and cognitive development, the results possibly coming from the recommended research will surely be

of significance.

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Appendix A

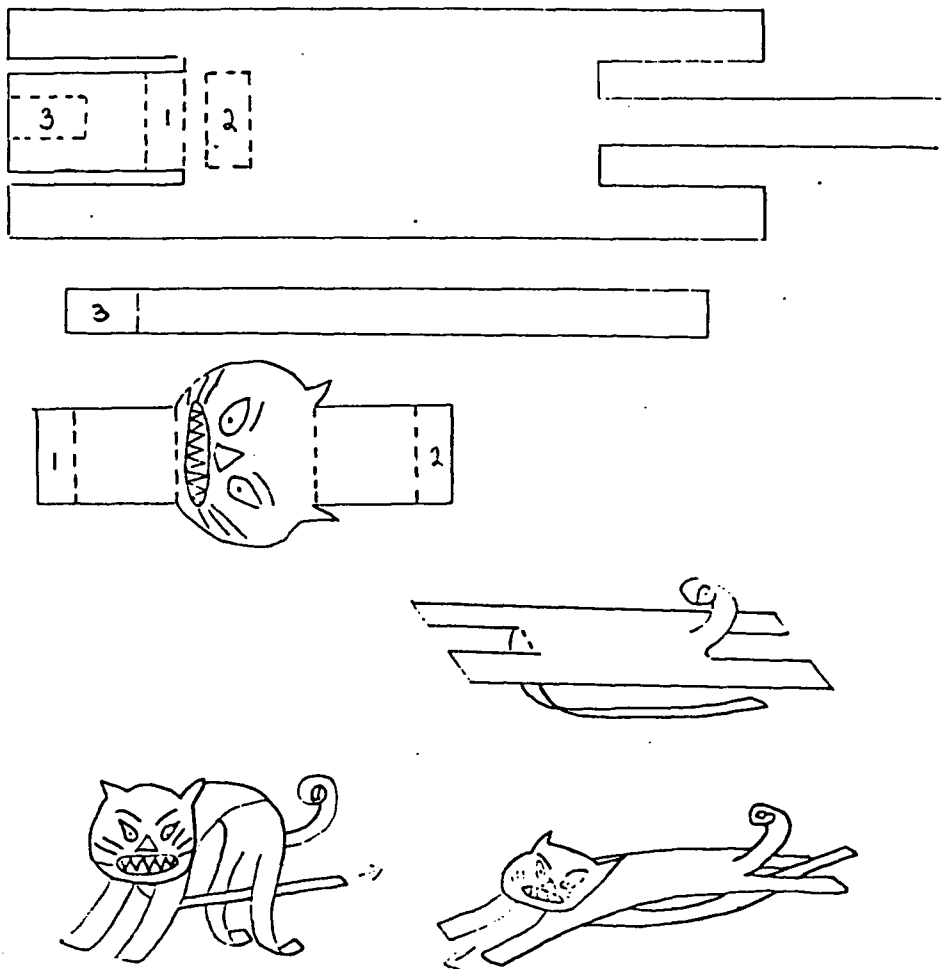
Linguistic Learning Outcomes of Family Unit-Intermediate 1 (Ministry of Education 1989:20-21)

Family – Immediate

1.15 naming (immediate family members)	家, 爸, 妈, 哥, 弟 jiā, bà, mā, gē, dì, 姐, 妹, 个 jiě, mèi, gè	我家里有 <u>五</u> 个人。 这是我 <u>爸</u> 爸。 我有两个 <u>弟</u> 弟。 你有没有 <u>姐</u> 姐?
1.16 naming (pets)	猫, 狗, 只, 马 māo, gǒu, zhī, mǎ	我有一只 <u>猫</u> 。
1.17 asking about age (living things)	多大, 几岁 duó dà, jǐ suì	你 <u>爸</u> 爸多大? 你 <u>哥</u> 哥几岁? 他 <u>十</u> 五岁。
1.18 expressing likes and dislikes	喜欢, 不喜欢, xǐhuān, bù xǐhuān, 兄弟, 姐妹 xiōngdì, jiěmèi 太, 很多 tài, hěn duō	我喜欢很多兄弟。 我不喜欢太多姐妹。 你喜欢很多弟弟吗?
1.19 describing family members (physically)	高, 矮 gāo, ǎi	爸爸高。 妈妈矮。
1.20 asking for help	请, 帮, 忙 qǐng, bāng, máng	姐姐, 请帮我忙。
1.21 offering	坐, 吃饭 zuò, chīfàn	请吃饭。 请坐。
1.22 making introductions	这, zhè	这是我的 <u>哥</u> 哥。

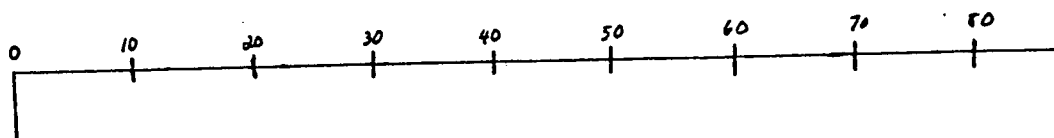
Appendix B

Key Visual for Making a Paper Cat

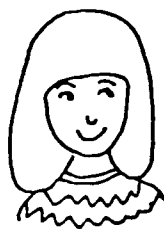


Appendix C

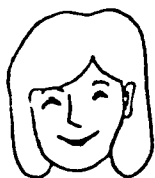
Age Timeline Worksheet



爸爸是 岁。



我是 岁。



妈妈是 岁。



妹妹是 岁。



姐姐是 岁。



弟弟是 岁。



哥哥是 岁。

Appendix D

Key Visuals for the Class' Preference for Family Members

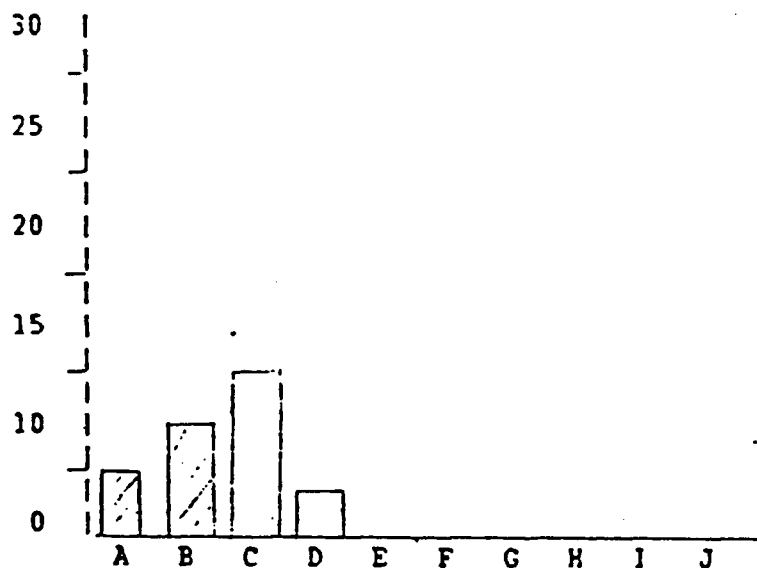
Key visual for individual survey

Name: _____

Date: _____

	Wǒ yǒu 1 gè	Wǒ xǐhuan yǒu 1 gè	Wǒ bù xǐhuan yǒu 1 gè
哥哥 gēge			
弟弟 dìdi			
姐姐 jiějie			
妹妹 mèimei			
狗 gǒu			
猫 māo			
鱼 yú			
马 mǎ			

Bar graph for class' preference



KEY TO BAR GRAPH

- A - # gè rén xǐhuan hěn duō xiōngdì
 B - # gè rén bù xǐhuan hěn duō xiōngdì
 C - # gè rén xǐhuan hěn duō jiēmèi
 D - # gè rén bù xǐhuan hěn duō jiēmèi
 E - # gè rén xǐhuan hěn duō gǒu
 F - # gè rén bù xǐhuan hěn duō gǒu
 G - # gè rén xǐhuan hěn duō māo
 H - # gè rén bù xǐhuan hěn duō māo
 I - # gè rén xǐhuan hěn duō yú
 J - # gè rén bù xǐhuan hěn duō yú
 K - # " " xǐhuan hěn duō mǔ
 L - # " " bù xǐhuan hěn duō mǔ

Appendix E

Students' Written Product on Giving Personal Information

Example 1

	1. Wǒ jiào Gāo Bì Ān.
	2. Wǒ shì zhōngwén xuéshēng.
	3. Chén Lǎoshī shì wǒde zhōngwén Lǎoshī.
	4. Wǒ shì suì.
	5. Wǒde shēngrì sì yuè shí yī hào.
	6. Wǒ zhù zài Jiānádà.
	7. Wǒ shì Jiānádà rén.
	8. Wǒ yǒu yī zhī niǎo.
	9. Wǒ yǒu yī ge gēge.
	10. Wǒ yǒu yī ge māma.
	11. Wǒ yǒu yī ge bàba.
	12. zài jiàn.
	1. I am Breganne Scott.
	2. I am a Chinese student.
	3. Mrs. Chan is my Chinese teacher.
	4. I am 10 years old.
	5. My birthday is April 11.
	6. I live in Canada.
	7. I am Canadian.
	8. I have 1 older brother.
	9. I have 1 mom.
	10. I have 1 dad.
	11. Goodbye.

Example 2

Nimen hao.
 Wo shi An Rong.
 Wo shi xuesheng.
 Wo shi Zhongwen xuesheng.
 Wo de shengri shi 12 yue shi yi hao.
 Wo you yi ge baba.
 Wo you yi ge mama.
 Wo you yi ge gege.
 Wo you liang ge mao.
 Zaijian.

Hello.
 My name is Aaron.
 I am a student.
 I am a Chinese student.
 My Birthday is December 11.
 I have one dad.
 I have one mom.
 I have one older brother.
 I have two cats.
 Goodbye.

Example 3

Nihao.

Wǒ shì lèi Ái pài.
 Wǒ zhù zài Jīnádà.
 Wǒ shì Jīnádà rén.
 Wǒ shì sù.
 Wǒ de shēng rì sì yuè shí hào.
 Wǒ shì yī bǎi sì shí gōng fēn.
 Wǒ de dìdì yī bǎi sì shí gōng fēn.
 Wǒ de dìdì jǐ sù.
 Wǒ de māma yī bǎi liǔ shí gōng fēn.
 Wǒ de māma sān shí qī sù.
 Wǒ de bàba yī bǎi bā shí gōng fēn.
 Wǒ de bàba sān shí bǔ sù.

Zàijiàn.

Hello.

My name is April Lacheur.
 I live in Canada.
 I am a Canadian.
 I am 10 years old.
 my birthday is April 10th.
 I am 140cm tall.
 my little brother is 140cm tall.
 my little brother is 9 years old.
 my mom is 160cm tall.
 my mom is 37 years old.
 my dad is 180cm tall.
 my dad is 29cm tall.
 good-bye.