Chapter 9

Teaching in a multi-cultural classroom

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1 Introduction

The importance of intercultural competency is well acknowledged today in many countries as globalization and immigration have extensively impacted many societies and communities during the past few decades. In the foreign language (FL) domain, cultural education has been increasingly recognised as an essential component for language fluency apart from linguistic knowledge. This has contributed to a shift in emphasis in FL education from the instrumental communicative competency approach to the intercultural communicative competency (ICC) approach.

In spite of the recognition of ICC by FL teachers and researchers, the application of teaching ICC in FL classrooms and the development of systematic teaching methodologies remains a frontier requiring further exploration. Although there now is a body of literature on this subject, more empirical research and teaching experiments are needed to develop the appropriate methodology and didactics that can be applied in teaching FL to students of another culture. This paper attempts to study a subdimension of ICC education in FL settings, *i.e.,* the influence of a multicultural and multinational classroom on the teaching of ICC in a Chinese beginner course. It is hoped that these findings can provide an additional perspective in ICC studies by showing how contextual elements such as the diversified composition of students in the multicultural classroom can affect the acquisition of the second language (L2) and the second culture (C2). In particular, I will examine how ICC can be promoted within a classroom composed of multi-ethnic and multinational students and how their intercultural competence beyond C2 can be enhanced by helping them increase their cultural awareness of classmates from other backgrounds.

2 Theoretical framework

Byram (1988) developed one of the first comprehensive models of ICC. He first advocated that FL education "can be and should be related to *intercultural education*", and brought attention to the relationship between language and culture (Byram, 2014, p. 210). However, it was not until 1997, when he first used the term ICC in a book on this topic (1997, p. 3). ICC emphasises incorporation of the two important dimensions of FL education: linguistic competence and intercultural competence. Using a metaphor to contrast a sojourner with a tourist; he described ICC in the following way:

> Where the tourist remains essentially unchanged, the sojourner has the opportunity to learn and be educated, acquiring the capacity to critique and improve their own and others' conditions. [1997, p. 2.]

Accordingly, the goal for FL teaching is to develop sojourners instead of tourists. He also believed that "successful 'communication' is not judged solely in terms of the efficiency of information exchange. It is focused on establishing and maintaining relationships" (1997, p. 4). In short, ICC highlighted not only the ability to communicate but also on relationship-building between cultures using the target language. Byram's (1997) model included three factors: *knowledge* of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country; *skills* of comparison, interpreting and relating; of discovery and interaction; and *attitudes* that include curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own.

Although intercultural competence has gained attention in FL education, the concept and term have yet to gain consensus acceptance. Besides Byram's model, there are two other influential models that have shaped the definition of ICC within the FL domain, though the term intercultural competence (IC) is used instead. The first one is Deardorff's (2006) pyramid model, which defines IC as "the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 247). Deardorff considers attitudes to be the most basic and fundamental factor of intercultural competence, which is described as "openness, respect, and curiosity and discovery", from which learners develop knowledge and comprehension as well as skills, before producing outcomes for "behaving and communicating appropriately and effectively in intercultural situations" (p. 255). The second one is Borghetti's (2011) model, which proposes a three-phase process for teaching intercultural competence. She defines IC as "an integral whole of cognitive, affective and behavioural factors that influence the understanding of and interaction with diversity in a broad sense, and which can be developed through education and/or experience" (p. 143).

Despite lacking a consensus on definition and a unified term, all the three models encompass and affirm the affective aspects of intercultural education, which are critical observance, understanding, acceptance, skills, and awareness, in addition to acquiring fundamental knowledge.

3 Literature review

The increased acceptance of the cultural and intercultural dimensions in FL has led to changes in educational policies and learning material development. Efforts have been made both at the organisational and the individual levels to incorporate cultural or intercultural components in teaching. In particular, recent research has studied the application of pragmatics to cultivate ICC. McConachy (2013) tried to apply pragmatics-based teaching to raise intercultural awareness in a Japanese EFL short course. Their data showed how students constructed their understanding and interpretation of language use in a textbook dialogue, and then explored their own assumptions. The paper suggested that teachers could use questions and other scaffolding strategies to support intercultural learning. Cohen and Sykes (2013) also looked at how to develop learners' strategies in Spanish classes to make informed choices in intercultural situations, using online resources. The research was done on two Websites studies, including a Spanish pragmatics Website and a synthetic immersive environment Website. They found differences in strategies used in the two different digital environments and highlighted the role of strategies in making informed choice about pragmatics.

Other researchers have studied the application of conversation or text analysis in ICC teaching. Wang and Rendle-Short (2013) used conversation analysis to promote intercultural language learning in a Chinese class. Students were provided with techniques and opportunities to reflectively examine their own culture and its intersection with other cultures. They compared the experimental group that received intercultural teaching and the control group that did not receive it, and found that learners could be encouraged to examine their own language usage and think about the hidden cultural assumptions, thus "making the 'invisible' visible" (p. 113).

Yu (2013) examined the interrelationship of integrative motivation, competence in L2 communication, social cultural adaptation, academic adaptation, and persistence of international students at an Australian university. He found that integrative motivation has a significant effect on L2 communicative competence, which, in turn, predicts the academic adaptation. Furthermore, academic adaptation is the major predictor of the sociocultural adaptation and persistence of international students.

Moloney (2013) studied 20 native speaking teachers of Chinese in Australia on their engagement with the intercultural language pedagogy. The teachers were given a one-day course and pre- and post-course surveys, before being interviewed. It was found that the intervention positively affected the teachers' understanding and practices. They called for more teaching training to provide "a cultural bridge" between pedagogies (p. 213).

Luk (2012) discovered that teaching intercultural competence has been less explored in Asia. He conducted an interview study with 12 secondary school English teachers in Hong Kong and found that although all teachers had positive attitudes towards teaching culture and its motivating power, they also revealed reservations and uncertainty about the particular cultural resources to draw from, the connection between

cultural components and their assessment by exams, and the role of teachers in this type of endeavour.

4 This study

The review of the recent literature suggests that ICC-related studies have focused on experiments that test different approaches to teaching ICC in language classroom situations. Many were based on the 2-dimensional assumption that intercultural exchanges are limited to the interaction between the target language and the heritage / mother tongue of the learners. There has been a lack of recognition and attention to the diversified national and cultural backgrounds of learners that are brought together in the multicultural classroom as a result of globalization and exchange programmes in universities and attempts to promote ICC teaching in this type of setting. The reality of this situation is that learners in a FL classroom are no longer in monolingual or monocultural setting. As Kramsch (2014, p. 249) noted:

> It is no longer sufficient to teach the L2 of some national monolingual native speaker attached to a homogeneous national C2 culture. The target has now become the multilingual multicultural speaker who knows how to "operate between languages" [. . .] and navigate between various cultures.

In other words, the diversified backgrounds of learners in a FL class have increased the complexity of intercultural exchanges within the classroom. IC is no longer limited to interactions between the homogeneous Language 1 (L1) Culture 1 (C1) and an equally homogeneous L2C2, but between L1Cl and the target L2C2, as well as between the heterogeneous L1C1s themselves. The exchange process can be multiplied by more than just the two ways, even when only two languages (the target language and a common language, such as English) are employed in the classroom. This multiplier effect on intercultural exchanges is shown in Figure 1 below.

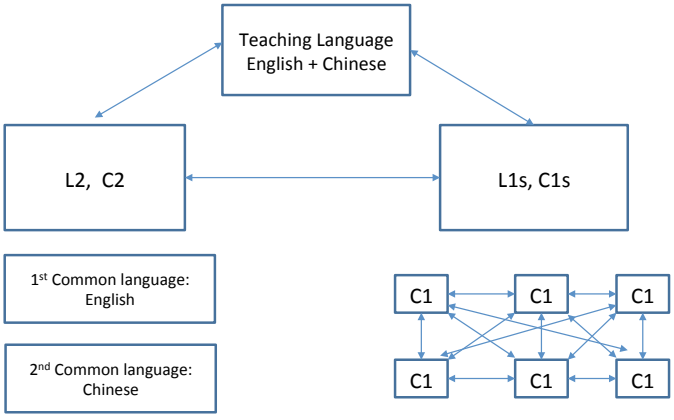


Figure 1: The multiplied intercultural exchanges

Chinese modules in the Centre for Language Studies (CLS) of the National University of Singapore (NUS) have enrolled increasing numbers of international students since the largest overseas programme at the NUS, the Student Exchange Programme (SEP), was established in 1995. The number of partner universities has increased from 1 in 1996/97 to 174 by 2004/05. The number of incoming SEP students has increased from 741 in 2004/05 to 1849 in 2013/14 which represents a 2.5-fold increase within 9 years.

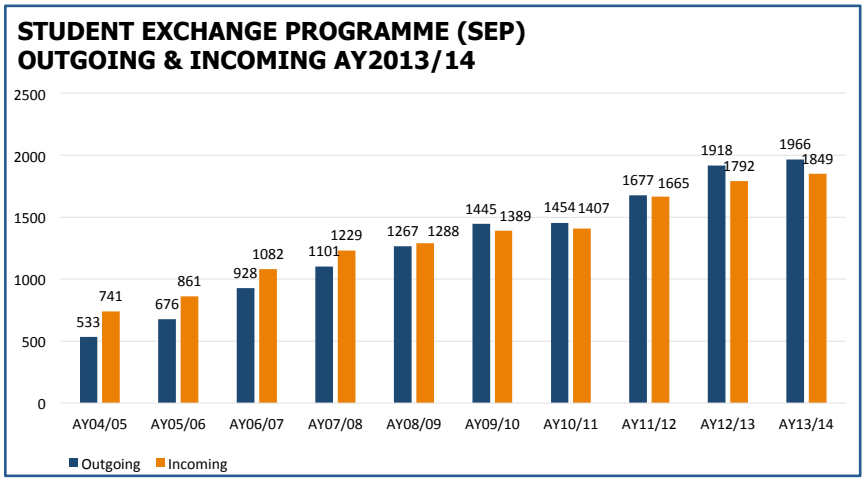


Figure 2: The increase in numbers of SEP students over 10 years

In the academic year 2012/13, there were approximately 1800 NUS undergraduates participating in the exchange, and in return, approximately the same number of international students was hosted on campus at the NUS. Since the Chinese module is one of the major attractions for international students, their numbers also have increased steadily over the past few years. In fact, during the second semester of 2014, nearly 60% of the students enrolled in the beginner Chinese course were non-Singaporeans.

In view of the increased multi-ethnic diversity and the increased total number of foreign students in the classroom, the methodology for the beginner Chinese course has been modified to accommodate these new developments. Although culture has always been part of our teaching, a broader exchange of cultural knowledge and values is now possible due to the increased numbers of nationalities and ethnicities represented among the learners in the class. The issue of intercultural learning has been widely examined previously; however, despite extensive literature on the subject, there is still insufficient research on how an international learning population actually affects the discourse within a Chinese language class. This research intends to investigate this topic in greater detail in the hope that Chinese learning can be made more effective by taking advantage of this multicultural and multinational learning environment as well as to explore ways to better promote and expand ICC among students in the class.

4.1 Research questions

Specifically, this study aims to answer the following questions.

(a) How do international learners or exchange students affect the learning environment in a Chinese classroom?

(b) What are the similarities and differences between local and international students with regard to their learning behaviours and strategies?

(c) What challenges or benefits do international students have in learning Chinese in a foreign country?

(d) How can the multicultural and multinational learning environment be used to the benefit of both local and international Chinese language learners?

(e) How do we promote cultural and linguistic proficiencies of Chinese language in a multicultural and multinational classroom?

4.2 Study design

The study was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2014/15, which took place from January to April 2014. 48 students who were enrolled in the module LAC1201 (Chinese I) participated in this study. Cultural information of China and other Chinese speaking societies had previously been a critical part of the beginner Chinese course. The existing textbook included a cultural unit for each lesson. Additionally, information about Chinese culture was presented in podcast units that were used as supplementary materials. The lesson plan was usually designed in a way that promoted peer and group learning and facilitated the exchange of ideas and knowledge among learners. Intercultural exchanges were conducted in relation to, but not strictly limited to, the textbook content. The methods applied most frequently to promote intercultural activities included text analysis, group discussions, and group projects.

Text analysis and group discussions were used to raise the awareness of hidden cultural connotations that were part of language communication. Both implicit and explicit cultural notes were emphasised within the classes that participated in the study. One example of this approach is shown in Fig. 3, for learning that the Chinese words for 'you' (你 *nǐ* or 您 *nín*) and 'grandma' (maternal grandmother: 外婆 *wàipó vs* paternal grandmother: 奶奶 *nǎinai*) depended on who is being addressed by the speaker. In this case, the teacher conducted in-class exercises to bring to the learners' attentions that specific forms of greeting often depended on the specific social context and persons involved in exchanging greetings. Thus, in addition to studying the text and learning the meaning of the greetings, the students also exchanged greetings with each other in various imaginary roles to observe how the form of greeting differed when juniors spoke to seniors, children talked with parents, or students addressed teachers and principals. The teacher then encouraged discussions among learners on why certain greetings were employed to help them understand better the reasons for speaking, or even acting, differently in certain situations. Finally, the teacher invited

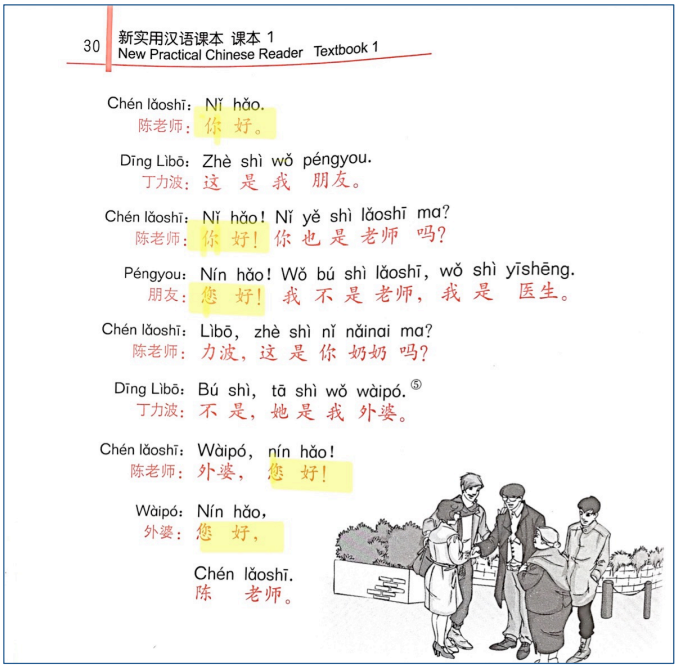


Figure 3: Sample of textbook material for text analysis

learners from different ethnic and national backgrounds to share and compare how forms of greetings might be similar to or different from Chinese depending on the social contexts and persons involved in their own native language and culture (*e.g.* the use of "*tu*" *vs* "*vous*" in French). Such a discussion not only facilitated a better understanding of the Chinese forms of greeting and the situations when they might be employed but also promoted a greater appreciation of how greetings can differ in certain situations in multiple languages and cultures.

Apart from the implicit cultural notes, explicit notes such as artefacts and customs were employed in classroom instruction to increase their understanding of the Chinese culture. Topics such as Beijing Opera, usage of chopsticks as utensils, first names, festivals and customs were introduced to students. Afterwards, the students would then be asked to compare them with their own cultures and share their observations with the rest of the class. For example, one group activity was to compare and contrast the New Year customs and celebrations among different countries and ethnic groups. Students were asked ahead of time to prepare for a class discussion on this topic by using the Web resources provided by the teacher. The students not only had to read up about Chinese New Year customs but also were asked to fill in a chart that listed the country, date of New Year, celebration and customs of countries of the other students in the class. With this advance preparation, students were then able to participate in class discussions on Chinese New Year as well as report their findings and observations of other cultures to the rest of the class.

Prepare before class:

1. Chinese New Year in Singapore:
   http://www.visitsingapore.com/festivals-events- singapore/cultural-festivals/chinese-new-year/
2. Chinese New Year legend:
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jV6XfFxSNOs
3. Print out the attached form and fill in the country, new year date, and celebration and customs.
4. A short introduction of your country's new year celebration custom or legend.
5. Discuss the similarities and differences of your new year celebration in class.

Figure 4: Example of pre-class assignment before group discussion

4.3 Data collection

The research applied a triangulation of three different sources of data. Firstly, class observations of the subjects' learning behaviour in general were conducted and their responses on the cultural topics were documented. Through class observations and informal conversations between the teacher and some students after class, the teacher took note of points raised that were most relevant to classroom participation and question-asking behaviours. These two aspects seemed to be most noticeable by both the teacher and students. These points were also crosschecked in the section B of the questionnaire (see Appendix) which involved learning behaviours and strategies.

Secondly, the performance of students was compared to determine whether there was a pattern of strength and weakness of learners from specific geographical or educational background. The performance included the results from the written, listening and oral examinations. They were listed in a chart and compared in categories according to learners' ethnic and nationality background in an attempt to examine if there was any correlation between cultural background and acquisition of certain language competency.

Thirdly, a questionnaire designed by the investigator (see Appendix) was administered in April 2014 to gather students' personal data, self-reported learning habits and strategies, as well as their perceptions of the learning materials and experiences in classes using both qualitative and quantitative formats. The questionnaire was designed in order to collect data that was related to the research questions for this study (see section 4.1 above).

5 Findings and discussions

As mentioned above, this paper attempted to compare three sources of data, including class observations, students' performance in assessments and questionnaire results. However, there was no obvious correlation to be established between specific cultural background and examination performances. Nor could the class observation pertaining to learning strategy and behaviours be established as a reliable prediction

of behaviours associated with a certain ethnic or cultural group. However, the class observation of the learning strategy and behaviour was supported by students' observation according to the questionnaire. As a result, we will present findings based solely on the questionnaire.

5.1 Students' background

The Chinese modules at the CLS were offered as electives to both students from home faculty (Arts and Social Sciences) and cross-faculty students. The students who took this module ranged from first-year to post-graduate students and from different faculties. In the respective semester under study, there were 48 Chinese I (*i.e.* level 1) students that participated in the study, aged between 19 to 26 years old. The majority (61.3%) were between 20 to 21 years old. As indicated in the tables below, only 31 out of the 48 students returned the questionnaire. More than half of the respondents were international / exchange students. Their nationalities included Indians, Indonesians, South Koreans, Dutch, Filipino, Swedish, American, and Vietnamese. 51.6% of the international students indicated this was their first time studying overseas.

The ethnic backgrounds of respondents were even more diverse than nationalities with 6 Malays, 5 Koreans, 5 Chinese, 5 Indians, 4 Vietnamese, 3 Caucasians, 1 Filipino and 1 Pakistani student. There was 1 student who did not indicate her nationality, ethnicity, or first language. Details can be found in Table 2.

The table shows that with regard to self-learning, more Vietnamese learners preferred group work whereas Caucasians and Malays preferred to work in pairs. Korean students liked to study either in groups or as individuals. Chinese preferred working in pairs or alone. When it came to the class activity, the majority of Chinese, Indian, and Malay learners chose group work, whereas Caucasians preferred to work in pairs or alone during classes. Vietnamese also preferred to work in a pair. Notably 80.0% of students in the Korean group preferred listening to teacher during class activities, and 60.0% chose group learning. There was only one Filipino student, and she liked to work as an individual or in a pair during class, but she preferred to learn with a partner for self-studying. There was also only 1 Pakistani student who liked to listen to the teacher, learn in a group, with a partner, or by himself in classes, but chose to learn with a partner or alone in doing self-studying. Overall, more students preferred to work in groups and pairs during classes, and study alone for their self-studying.

5.2 Preferred learning practices and strategies

Self-learning and class activities

This study attempted to examine whether there are distinctive patterns of learning practices and strategies practised by different ethnic groups. Therefore, the questionnaire issued asked about learners' self-reported preferences with regard to self-learning and class activities. The result was recorded and shown in Table 3 below.

Table 1: Students' background information

Gender	Male (58.1%) Female (41.9%)
Year of study	45.1% First year Bachelor's Degree; 22.6% Fourth year (Honours); 16.1% Second year Bachelor's Degree; 9.7% Third year Bachelor's Degree; 3.2% First year Master's Degree; 3.2% Second year Master's Degree
Faculty	32.2% Arts and social sciences; 29.0% Engineering; 19.4% Science; 9.7% Computing; 3.2% Nursing; 3.2% Business; 3.2% University scholar programme
Nationality and ethnicity of students (48 students)	58.0% Non-Singaporean 42.0% Singaporean
Nationality and ethnicity of respondents (31 students)	51.6% Non-Singaporean 48.4% Singaporean

Table 2: Students' nationality and ethnicity

	Nationality of students	**Breakdown by respondents' ethnicity**	**Their first language**
1	Dutch	Dutch (2)	Dutch (2)
2	Indian	Hindi (1) Gujarati (1) Punjabi (1) Tamil (2)	Hindi (1) Gujarati (1) English (3)
3	Indonesian	Chinese (5)	English (2) Indonesian (3)
4	Korean	Korean (5)	Korean (5)
5	Filipino	Filipino (1)	Filipino (1)
6	Singaporean	Malay (6) Pakistani (1)	English (6) Malay (1)
7	Swedish	Swedish (1)	Swedish (1)
8	Vietnamese	Vietnamese (4)	Vietnamese (4)
		No. of respondents = 31 (64.6%)	No. of students with English as a first language = 11 (35%)

The most important skill to learn a language well

When queried about the most important skill they felt was needed to learn a language well, 32.3% of students believed that the ability to systemise vocabulary and grammar, and figure out the internal rules that govern that language were most important. The other skills that were felt to be important were communication (29.0%), memorisation (22.6%), comprehension (22.6%), people / social skill (16.1%), imitation (12.9%), and

Table 3: Students' preferred learning practices in self-learning and class activities

Ethnicity	**Group learning**		**With a partner**		**Alone**		**Listen to the teacher**
	Self-learning	**Class activity**	**Self-learning**	**Class activity**	**Self -learning**	**Class activity**	**Class activity**
Chinese (5)	1 (20.0%)	3 (60.0%)	2 (40.0%)	1 (20.0%)	2 (40.0%)	1 (20.0%)	
Caucasian (3)			2 Dutch 1 Swedish (100.0%)	1 Dutch 1 Swedish (66.7%)	1 Dutch (33.3%)	2 Dutch (66.7%)	
Filipino (1)			1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)		1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)
Indian (5)	2 (40.0%)	5 (100.0%)	1 (20.0%)	1 (20.0%)	4 (80.0%)		
Korean (5)	3 (60.0%)	3 (60.0%)	1 (20.0%)		3 (60.0%)		4 (80.0%)
Malay (6)	2 (33.3%)	5 (83.3%)	4 (66.7%)	3 (50.0%)	3 (50.0%)		2 (33.3%)
Pakistani (1)		1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)
Vietnamese (4)	3 (75.0%)	1 (25.0%)		2 (50.0%)	1 (25.0%)		1 (25.0%)
Did not indicate ethnicity (1)	1 (100.0%)		1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)		1 (100.0%)
Total	**12 (38.7%)**	**18 (58.1%)**	**14 (45.2%)**	**12 (38.7%)**	**16 (51.6%)**	**5 (16.1%)**	**10 (32.3%)**

finally time management (3.2%) and others (3.2%). Indian and Vietnamese students thought memorisation was the most important; however, only the Vietnamese had a majority of students who thought memorisation was the most important. Indian learners gave memorisation, comprehension, communication, and people / social skills equal votes. The majority of Caucasian and Chinese believed that the ability to systemise and know the rules operating within the language was the most important. Malay learners valued comprehension and communication as the most important. Koreans emphasised the importance of imitation and communication. The sole Filipino student believed that comprehension was the most important whereas the only single Pakistani student believed the same for communication. Please note that the numbers do not add up to 100% because multiple answers could be picked for this question.

Table 4: The most important skill to learn a language well

Ethnicity	Memorisation	Comprehension	Ability to systemise and figure out the internal rules	Imitation	Time management	Communication	People / social skill	Others
Chinese (5)			4 (80.0%)				1 (20.0%)	
Caucasian (3)		1 Dutch (33.3%)	1 Dutch 1 Swedish (66.7%)					
Filipino (1)		1 (100.0%)						
Indian (5)	2 (40.0%)	2 (40.0%)	1 (20.0%)	1 (20.0%)		2 (40.0%)	2 (40.0%)	1 (20.0%)
Korean (5)	1 (20.0%)		1 (20.0%)	2 (40.0%)		2 (40.0%)	1 (20.0%)	
Malay (6)	2 (33.3%)	3 (50.0%)	1 (16.7%)		1 (16.7%)	3 (50.0%)	1 (16.7%)	
Pakistani (1)						1 (100.0%)		
Vietnamese (4)	2 (50.0%)		1 (25.0%)			1 (25.0%)		
Did not indicate ethnicity (1)				1 (100.0%)				
Total	**7 (22.6%)**	**7 (22.6%)**	**10 (32.3%)**	**4 (12.9%)**	**1 (3.2%)**	**9 (29.0%)**	**5 (16.1%)**	**1 (3.2%)**

What works best to improve Chinese

The majority of learners (51.6%) thought that increased interaction with native Chinese speakers and intensive exposure to a Chinese-speaking environment worked best to improve Chinese language proficiency. This was followed by practising more with peer learners (35.5%), and investing in longer hours for study (12.9%).

Interestingly, 2 (1 Dutch and 1 Swedish) out of 3 Caucasian learners chose interacting more with native Chinese speakers, and 1 Dutch learner chose exposure to the Chinese-speaking environment as the most important. Understandably, 40.0% of Chinese learners chose practising more with peer learners, and 40.0% chose exposure to a Chinese-speaking environment. 80.0% of Koreans chose interacting more with Chinese speakers whereas 83.3% of Malays chose exposure to Chinese speaking environment.

A majority of Vietnamese believed that exposure to a Chinese-speaking environment was the most beneficial followed by interact more with native Chinese speakers. Only 1 Indian, 1 Korean, and 2 Malay students believed that investing longer hours for studying was beneficial. Interestingly, one student believed that the role of these learning aids depended on the domain of Chinese studied as the best learning method:

> It depends on domain of which Chinese language is tested. If it's writing, then yes, investing more hours will help. If it is oral exams, then practising with peers and native speakers will enhance this skill. Learning how to communicate effectively should require more exposure to the Chinese speaking [*sic*]. [Chinese student.]

In the table below, the numbers do not add up to 100% because multiple answers could be picked for this question.

Table 5: Strategy that works best to improve Chinese

Ethnicity	**Invest longer hours**	**Practice more with peer learners**	**Interact more with native Chinese speakers**	**Exposure to Chinese speaking environment**	**Others**
Caucasian (3)			1 Dutch 1 Swedish (66.7%)	1 Dutch (33.3%)	
Chinese (5)		2 (40.0%)		2 (40.0%)	1 (20.0%)
Filipino (1)			1 (100.0%)		
Indian (5)	1 (20.0%)	2 (40.0%)	3 (60.0%)	3 (60.0%)	
Pakistani (1)		1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)	
Korean (5)	1 (20.0%)	2 (40.0%)	4 (80.0%)	1 (20.0%)	
Malay (6)	2 (33.3%)	4 (66.7%)	3 (50.0%)	5 (83.3%)	
Vietnamese (4)		1 (25.0%)	2 (50.0%)	3 (75.0%)	
Did not indicate ethnicity (1)		1 (100.0%)			
Total	4 (12.9%)	11 (35.5%)	**16 (51.6%)**	**16 (51.6%)**	

5.3 Definition of successful Chinese learning

Regarding their definition of a successful Chinese learner, 93.5% students believed that being able to communicate with a Chinese speaker was paramount. 45.2% thought that being able to understand Chinese culture and social protocols was important. Only 16.1% thought talking and behaving like a native Chinese was essential. 2 Indian, 1 Pakistani, and 1 Korean student also believed that obtaining an A+ was the best indicator of a successful learner besides the ability to communicate. It seemed to suggest that few students wished to identify with the target culture, although they were keen to learn the target language. On the other hand, understanding Chinese culture was considered important by many students. It also showed that Indian, Pakistani, and Korean student may have valued grades more than students in other groups.

5.4 Reasons for learning Chinese

The majority of students (61.3%) chose to take Chinese because it was helpful to their job prospects, but an equal percentage (61.3%) also chose to study the language because it was interesting. 35.5% expressed that their major reason for learning Chinese was due to its popularity as a language. One ethnic Chinese chose to study the module because it was his mother tongue even though he was not very proficient at the time. One Korean student mentioned that it was his parents' idea. One Malay student and one Indian student reflected that it was related to local Singapore reality:

> Many mistake me for a Chinese and speak to me in Chinese. It will be very helpful for me to be able to speak the language. [Malay student.]

> Since the majority of Singaporeans are Chinese, I think learning Chinese will be useful for my daily activities. [Indian student.]

In other words, in addition to learning Chinese because of Chinese heritage (which only applies to a subset of ethnically Chinese students), most students' primary motivation for learning Chinese was instrumental, regardless of their cultural or national background. The only group that did not choose any instrumental or practical reason was Caucasian, as all three reported that they studied Chinese because it was interesting.

5.5 Asking questions

It is a common perception that Asian students are quieter, express fewer opinions, and ask fewer questions in classes than their Western student counterparts. In order to verify whether this assumption was true, the questionnaire surveyed the students' comfort level to ask questions as well as how or when they would ask questions in the classroom setting. The results showed that most students felt comfortable asking questions whenever they felt a need to ask questions regardless of their ethnic background. Majority of Caucasian and Vietnamese students considered whether they were asking good questions before raising their hands. Filipino, Indian, and Pakistani students also reported that they preferred asking questions privately immediately af-

Table 6: The response to the question: "Do you ask questions?"

Ethnicity	Yes, whenever	Yes, only good questions	Yes, at the assigned time	Yes, alone after class	No, afraid to be embarrassed
Chinese (5)	4 (80.0%)	1 (20.0%)	1 (20.0%)	1 (20.0%)	
Caucasian (3)	1 Dutch (33.3%)	1 Dutch 1 Swedish (66.7%)			
Filipino (1)	1 (100.0%)			1 (100.0%)	
Indian (5)	2 (40.0%)	1 (20.0%)	1 (20.0%)	2 (40.0%)	1 (20.0%)
Korean (5)	3 (60.0%)	2 (40.0%)	2 (40.0%)		
Malay (6)	3 (50.0%)	2 (33.3%)		2 (33.3%)	
Pakistani (1)	1 (100.0%)			1 (100.0%)	
Vietnamese (4)	1 (25.0%)	2 (50.0%)	1 (25.0%)	1 (25.0%)	
Did not indicate ethnicity (1)	1 (100.0%)			1 (100.0%)	
Total	**17 (54.8%)**	**10 (32.3%)**	**5 (16.1%)**	**8 (29.0%)**	**1 (3.2%)**

ter the class concluded. One Indian student felt self-conscious when asking questions and was concerned about public embarrassment should his question be perceived as "silly" by others.

Additionally, students provided explanations for their responses to the open question: "Do you ask questions in class?" Two Dutch students gave similar reasons why they would ask questions whenever they had any:

> I think a class has to be interactive throughout, so students should mention their difficulties / remarks whenever. [Dutch student.]

> You are in a class to learn so if something relevant isn't clear it would be stupid to let it go. [Dutch student.]

Others who chose to ask questions whenever, considered practical reasons:

> To check my understanding, help me to remember better. [Chinese student.]
>
> They are usually yes/no questions. Therefore, it is most convenient to just ask in class. [Chinese student.]
>
> I think it is better to clear my doubt immediately than to keep it to the end of the lesson. This is because I may forget the question. [Indian student.]
>
> Because I like to clear my doubt ASAP. [Malay student.]
>
> Clarify doubts. [Malay student.]
>
> To clarify any doubt I have. [Vietnamese student.]

There was disparity even in the same ethnic group, as shown in the two comments below:

> I am a bit shy and scared that my questions might be a waste of time in class. [Chinese student.]
>
> I want to know what I don't know. Teacher make [*sic*] a class that I feel accepted. [Chinese student.]

A student who did not indicate his nationality or ethnicity shared the same point:

> It depends on how comfortable I am with the teacher. [Ethnicity unknown.]

Students who did not ask questions in class said that they were concerned about the quality of their questions. For example:

> I want to ask good questions, but I can't think of any. [Indian student.]
>
> When the class is too big, it may be quite intimidating to ask questions especially if you're unsure if the question is valid. [Malay student.]

Some students were considerate for others before they raised hands:

> I ask questions that I think will benefit the whole class in class and I clear my own doubts by asking personally. [Pakistani student.]

> I raise my hand whenever I have a question, because it will help me to understand the contents which are being provided at that time, but by the situation in class, sometimes it is better to approach the teacher after the class. [Korean student.]

> It is more productive [to ask teacher alone than] to ask face to face, as I will have more chances to clarify with follow-up questions. [Filipino student.]

The responses from this section suggest that apart from these learners' individual preferences and personalities impacting their practice of asking questions during class, the teacher also played an important role in making the multicultural classroom a question-friendly environment so that they felt comfortable enough to ask questions in class. The responses also showed that students who asked questions in class "whenever" they had any were both Westerners and Asians; however, only Asian students reported concern about "face" issues and the collective good when asking questions. Nevertheless, there were significant individual differences among Asian students in this area.

5.6 Using English as the teaching language

English is the teaching language for the beginner Chinese course. The textbook also is written in English in order to facilitate students' understanding of sentence structures and important information. 94.0% of the students welcomed this practice. The majority also felt that using English helped them to understand better the lesson covered in class.

> Because it allows easier understanding of the material that will be covered. Less cognitive resources are required to understand the language. [Chinese student.]

> It makes it easier to understand and we are able to switch between the 2 languages to learn Chinese better. [Malay student.]

The three students who thought negatively about using English to learn Chinese gave the following reasons:

> Because it limits us to use only the words we are taught in the textbook. (Chinese student.]

> Sometimes it is hard to understand precisely. [Korean student.]

> My mother tongue—Vietnamese, has close relationship and more similarity to Chinese than English. So it's easier for me to remember new words. [Vietnamese student.]

One Dutch student pointed out that he was concerned about losing his sense of his Dutch identity if the class used Chinese exclusively:

> I regard both (English and Chinese) languages as the most important for my future career. I do not expect to 'mingle' Dutch and Chinese. [Dutch student.]

Some acknowledged that since English is the universal language, it would be useful in communicating with students from different countries. However, they also expressed their desire to progress in learning Chinese by using more Chinese in future:

> English is [*sic*] universal language in which students are able to interact with others. [Chinese student.]

> English is a universal language and thus everyone can understand what the lecturer says in this kind of multinational environment. However, if I learned in my home country, the mother tongue language will be better apparently. [Korean student.]

> It's easier to comprehend. However, if I move beyond the introductory level, I would like to use my Chinese comprehending skills so it's better not to use English at higher levels. [Indian student.]

5.7 Challenges and difficulties in learning Chinese

35.5% of learners in Chinese I reported that their first language was English, and this likely explained why different components required to learn Chinese were difficult for them. However, as shown in Table 7, the same challenges were commonly shared by learners with other mother tongues. It was found that both the writing system and pronunciation were viewed as the most challenging by the majority (58.1%) of learners. All Caucasian and Korean students agreed that tones were the most difficult, and 50.0% Indian and Malay students had a similar view. Even for Chinese heritage learners, 80.0% of them made the same comment. None of the Filipino and Vietnamese learners found tones to be challenging. A potential explanation of these findings is that the Filipino student was exposed to Chinese dialects while growing up, so the tones involved in learning Chinese may have sounded familiar. For the Vietnamese learners, it could be that since the Vietnamese language also is a tonal language, it might be easier for these students to distinguish among the different tones required for Chinese pronunciation. When it came to Chinese characters, only 20.0% of the Korean and 40.0% of the Chinese groups thought it was difficult. Their reasons may be due to their previous exposure to, and hence familiarity with, the writing system.

Table 7: Challenges and difficulties in learning Chinese

Ethnicity	Sentence structure / Grammar	Chinese characters	Tones and pronunciation
Caucasian (3)	1 (33.3%)	2 (66.7%)	3 (100.0%)
Chinese (5)	1 (20.0%)	2 (40.0%)	4 (80.0%)
Filipino (2)	1 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)	
Indian (4)		3 (75.0%)	2 (50.0%)
Korean (5)	1 (20.0%)	1 (20.0%)	5 (100.0%)
Malay (6)	4 (66.7%)	4 (66.7%)	3 (50.0%)
Pakistani (1)			1 (100.0%)
Vietnamese (4)		4 (100.0%)	
Did not indicate ethnicity (1)		1 (100.0%)	
Total	8 (25.8%)	**18 (58.1%)**	**18 (58.1%)**

5.8 Challenges living and learning in Singapore?

51.6% of Chinese I leaners reported that this was their first time studying overseas. When asked what challenges they encountered while living and learning in Singapore, some considered finding cultural differences was a main feature of their experience here. For example:

> People are different here; they are helpful but far less efficient than I'm used to. Being on time is not a common thing here, while it is in the Netherlands. And sometimes this feels more like secondary school (instead of university) because of the way of teaching and all the homework. [Dutch student.]
>
> For learning Chinese I think Singapore is a good environment to learn it, as there are Chinese speakers all around. What makes it difficult as a learning environment for Chinese is that most of the time people speak in English. [Filipino student.]
>
> People are supposed to be able to speak English but even with that we can't communicate sometimes? [Indian student.]
>
> It is hard to understand the words because it [the speed of speaking] is too fast, so making friends is not easy. [Korean student.]

It was interesting to observe that although Singapore was known for its modernity and efficiency, it was perceived to be relatively less efficient in the Dutch student's

view. It also was interesting to see that a language barrier existed among students and the local population even when they used the same language, English. The reason could be due to the unique local variant of English, Singlish that is frequently used by Singaporeans in less formal situations.

5.9 Learning with peers of different ethnicity and nationality background

The majority of learners reflected positively on learning with peers of different ethnicities and nationalities. 51.6% of them believed that it provided a more diversified learning environment beyond just learning Chinese, and 51.6% thought it helped them to know more about other cultures and that this type of understanding was important in globalized societies. Interestingly, 22.6% also thought it helped them to understand Chinese culture better due to their interactions with Chinese classmates. However, it is noteworthy that the qualitative feedback presented some different voices:

> It doesn't matter. [Malay student.]

> They might teach [the] wrong stuff. [Malay student.]

When asked about their most impressive cultural exchange experience in Chinese class, learners cited the Chinese New Year group discussion and their group project:

> Experiencing work ethic of group members in project. [Dutch student.]

> Watching how the Koreans produce K-pop style videos make me realise the important influence of media on our lives. [Korean student.]

> The discussions about New Year's celebrations in different countries and Chinese New Year. [Indian student.]

> Comparing culture of New Year's Day and group project with different nationalities. [Korean student.]

> When we made video for the group project. We shared difficulties for each person to learn Chinese. From that, we not only improved Chinese but also know something interesting about other languages. [Vietnamese student.]

Some reported their observations of cultural differences in both customs and behaviour:

> I learnt a lot about Malay culture from my Malay friends. For example, for women they are not allowed to cut their hair due to religious belief. [Chinese student.]

> Just the way people act: being insecure or not, asking questions and daring to speak up or trying to be silent. Attitude towards teacher and other students differs also between the different cultures. [Dutch student.]
>
> I could feel the difference of our thoughts in the story of video project. (Korean student.]
>
> Work ethics and cultural practices (the differences). [Malay student.]
>
> When we were doing a film project with one Dutch friend. Throughout the process, he was sharing a lot of interesting things about his life in Netherlands and we were very surprised how different it is. [Vietnamese student.]

With respect to learning attitudes and behaviours in particular, learners discovered the similarities and differences between themselves and peers from other cultures. The similarities included:

> All hard working, thought their focus is more on quantity (study hours) than quality. [Dutch student.]
>
> The people I hang out with are really hard working. They really want to grow. That is great because it motivates me to do better myself. [Chinese student.]
>
> Similarity—very keen on learning new language. [Chinese student.]
>
> Others are very hard working; I need to learn from them! [Indian student.]

Some observed differences in attitudes and pace. For example:

> Different expectation / standards of conducts / attitude towards learning. [Chinese student.]
>
> Yes, some people are really fast learners in languages. I noticed how they could pick up the tones easily. Meanwhile, I feel that my pace is slower and I have a hard time remembering; thus, I usually try to develop a study system that allows me to easily remember things. [Filipino student.]
>
> Some are slower learners, especially exchange students, since they have no experience in listening to Chinese before [Indian student.]
>
> Some are task-oriented while others tend to delay time doing other things. [Malay student.]

Some associated the difference in attitudes among their classmates with their cultural and national origin:

> Some students, especially those who are on exchange from Western parts of the world, are very open and ask a lot of questions. Some others are relatively quiet but very hard working. [Indian student.]
>
> Those from other countries tend to interact more and ask more questions. People from my country prefer to keep quiet or ask questions personally; we are more reserved. [Ethnicity unknown.]
>
> The students from Western countries suffer from memorising Chinese characters, but compared to them, the Eastern originated students do not suffer that much. And students from more relaxed class environments chat a lot in the class. [Korean student.]

One Singaporean Malay and one Vietnamese student felt that there was a difference in the degree of competitiveness in different cultures; and interestingly, they thought students from other cultures were more competitive:

> Yeah. The Vietnamese kids are very competitive and hard working. [Malay student.]
>
> I believe it is the same as the only difference is how individuals perceive the importance of grades in their study. I've seen overseas students working very hard because the grade here is important for them. But generally, it is more competitive in Singapore. [Vietnamese student.]

5.10 Five-point Likert scale

Students responded positively to learning in a multicultural classroom. The main reason given for this assessment was because they found that learning Chinese was interesting. They also agreed that learning in this environment helped them to know more about other cultures and people. Most importantly, this positive experience motivated them to do it again in future.

6 Summary

This study aimed to answer five research questions relating to learning Chinese in a multicultural and multinational classroom setting (see section 4.1). In general, the findings have provided some informative answers.

Firstly, how do international learners or exchange students affect the learning environment in a Chinese classroom? The students' reports showed that a multinational and multicultural learning environment provided a platform for cultural and intercultural exchanges. The exchanges were encouraged through the design of class activities such as class discussions on New Year customs and celebrations in China and the countries

Table 8: The five-point Likert scale questions *(1-strongly disagree; 2-disagree; 3-neither disagree nor agree; 4-agree; 5-strongly agree)*

Questions	Mean	Std. Deviation
28. I find learning with peers of different origin countries or ethnicity groups positively affect my Chinese learning.	4.03	.795
29. I find learning with peers of different origin countries or ethnicity groups negatively affect my Chinese learning.	1.84	.860
30. I find learning Chinese in a diversified group interesting.	**4.45**	.624
31. I find learning with people of different origin countries and ethnicity helps me to strengthen my own cultural identity.	4.03	.795
32. Learning in this beginner Chinese course helps me to know more about other cultures and people.	**4.19**	.833
33. I am more open to learning in a multicultural and multinational classroom in future.	**4.42**	.672

of fellow students and assignments such as the major group projects at the end of the semester. By intentionally taking advantage of the international and ethnic diversity within the class, learners were encouraged to work with their peers from different cultural and national backgrounds and novel types of exchanges and experiences were created that would not have been possible with students learning a language in the traditional FL classroom where students came from a homogeneous common cultural background. The study also confirmed that learners were capable of observing similarities and differences between themselves and others, and were able to construct unique realities and experiences within the class, based upon their own evolving perceptions of their own cultural heritage and those of their classmates. These important developments in their own cultural awareness was reflected in their views and responses in the questionnaire.

Secondly, what are the similarities and differences between local and international students with regard to their learning behaviours and strategies? Students reported they observed that all peers were hard-working and keen to learn the language, although they employed different learning styles and strategies that could potentially be culturally-based. The observed differences that they reported included: attitudes toward grades, pace of learning, question asking, and learning preferences and strategies. Additionally, students also recalled some unique cultural experiences beyond learning the Chinese language and culture such as K-pop style videos, international festivals, and Dutch living styles, as well as individual differences among students from different ethnicities and nationalities.

Thirdly, what challenges or benefits do international students have in learning Chinese in a foreign country? As reflected by the responses from international students, learning the Chinese language was difficult, especially with regard to writing, and understanding and pronouncing tones. International students also found that certain

aspects of living in Singapore were unexpected and different from their homeland as noted in the Dutch students' observation of less overall efficiency and decreased emphasis on punctuality in Singapore than with his country. Some students also found it hard to blend in to Singaporean society, and had difficulty in communicating with local Singaporeans, even in English. Nonetheless, many students stated that a major benefit of studying Chinese in Singapore was its Chinese-speaking environment.

Fourthly, how can the multicultural and multinational learning environment be used to the benefit of both local and international Chinese language learners? It was found that the majority of students thought learning Chinese in a class with multicultural and multinational peers was interesting and stimulating. Therefore, this type of learning environment could be used not only to motivate learners to study Chinese, but also to help them experience multicultural exposures and gain ICC.

Fifthly, how do we promote the cultural and linguistic proficiencies of Chinese language in a multicultural and multinational classroom? The multicultural classroom provided a unique place for intercultural exchanges to occur while learning in class. Students from diverse ethnicities and nationalities interacted through class activities, assignments, and personal contacts. As mentioned above, students were capable of observing the similarities and differences between themselves and other students from different backgrounds. The responses in the questionnaire indicated that they gained a certain degree of critical awareness of the realities that occur when different members of our globalized society learn, work, and socialise with each other. From this enhanced understanding, they were able to construct their own experiences and values both within and outside the immediate classroom setting. In other words, the multicultural classroom was helpful in cultivating ICC. Another important aspect of this classroom learning experience was that these types of cultural exchanges were not limited to those that occurred between L1C1 and L2C2, but also among various other mother tongues and cultures from the students' peers from different cultural backgrounds. Although it was a beginner course, my study showed that it was possible to introduce culture, visible or invisible, to beginner learners, through the application of both English and the target language in the multicultural classroom setting.

7 Conclusion

This study has shared the experience of promoting ICC in a multicultural classroom. Firstly, it has demonstrated that it is possible to promote ICC in a beginner Chinese course using both English and Chinese. It is also evident that teachers do not have to be the sole providers of culture-associated information or experiences in the multicultural classroom since students themselves can also participate in these roles. Through the teacher's intentional efforts in creating a space for cultural exchange, learners themselves were able to provide sufficient cultural information and knowledge necessary to generate a rich and varied intercultural experience. Secondly, this exchange can occur in more than the two ways in the traditional foreign language classroom since it takes place in a more diversified learning environment composed of students from different national and cultural backgrounds. Thirdly, it was found that intercultural learning can be integrated into linguistic teaching or be done separately

within a multicultural classroom through class activities that promote discussions among students of their own cultures or require them to work together in group projects. Finally, students found multicultural classroom learning to be interesting, and it can thus serve as a motivational means to encourage students to learn from each other and raise the cultural awareness of themselves and others.

The main limitation of this study was the difficulty in determining whether specific attitudes and behaviours of the students were due to their particular cultural background or the unique personalities of students (or both), while avoiding stereotyping or overgeneralisations about students from specific nationalities and ethnicities. Nevertheless, categorising learners according to their cultural backgrounds helped uncover certain patterns of learning that may be representative of students from specific cultures. Understanding such patterns would be of value when teaching students from these cultures in either the traditional or multicultural classrooms. However, it should be noted that any generalisations drawn from the study can only be described as a tendency for group behaviour since there can be individual exceptions within every culture. Indeed, individual differences occurred within the same ethnic or national groups as well as when different groups were compared. These caveats notwithstanding, the study shows the high potential for learning Chinese and promoting ICC within the multicultural classroom. By creatively taking advantage of such a learning environment through designing and implementing lesson plans that also emphasise the multiple cultures within the class, the teacher can enable students to have a more interesting and personally rewarding learning experience.

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Appendix

Questionnaire: These items in Parts 1 and 2 relate to the Chinese I module (LAC1201) that you are taking in AY2013/2014 Semester Two.

Part 1 – Section A

The items below are general questions related to your person. Please tick as appropriate or write an answer, where applicable.

1. How old are you?
2. Please state your gender?
   - Female
   - Male
3. What is your year of study?
4. Which faculty are you from?
5. Do you live on campus?
   - Yes *(specify name of hostel)*
   - No
6. Are you an exchange / international student?
   - Yes, I am from *(name of country)*
   - No → go to Q8
7. Is this your first time studying in a foreign country?
   - Yes
   - No, I have studied in other country before. It is / They are:
8. What is your ethnicity? *(Example: Chinese, Malay, Caucasian. . .)*
9. What is your first language?

Part 1 – Section B

The items below are general questions related to your learning behaviours and strategy. Please tick as appropriate or write an answer, where applicable.

10. What is your favourite form of learning? *(You can tick more than once)*
    - Studying with a group (3 persons and more)
    - Studying with a partner (2 persons)

- Studying alone
- Others *(please specify)*:

11. What is your favourite form of class activities? *(You can tick more than once)*

- Group work
- Pair work
- Individual work
- Listening to the teacher
- Others *(please specify)*:

12. Do you ask questions in classes? *(You can tick more than once.)*

- Yes, I raise my hand whenever I have a question
- Yes, but I only ask good questions (that are well thought out)
- Yes, I consolidate my questions and ask at the assigned question time during class
- Yes, I approach the teacher alone after the class
- No, I write to my teacher after the class
- No, because I can search for the answer by myself
- No, because it is embarrassing if I ask silly questions
- No, because teachers don't like questions

Please elaborate on the reasons that you choose to do the above:

13. What do you think is the *most important* skill to learn a language well? *(Tick* one *answer)*

- Memorisation
- Comprehension
- Ability to systemise and figure out the internal rules of the language
- Imitation
- Time management
- Communication
- People / Social skill
- Others *(please specify)*:

14. Please rank the 4 language skills, from being the most important (1) and to the least important (4).
( ) Listening ( ) Speaking ( ) Reading ( ) Writing
Please explain your choice:

15. What defines a successful Chinese learner? *(You can tick more than once)*

- Obtaining A+ in tests and exams
- Being able to communicate with Chinese speakers
- Being able to understand Chinese culture and social protocols
- Being able to talk and behave like a native Chinese
- Others (please specify):

16. What do you think works *best* for a person to improve Chinese? *(Tick* one *answer)*

- Investing in longer hours of studying
- Practising more with peer learners
- Interacting more with native Chinese speakers
- Being exposed more to the Chinese-speaking environment
- Others *(please specify)*:

17. What is the main reason for you to learn Chinese? *(You can tick more than once)*

    - It is a popular language
    - It is helpful to my job search / career
    - It is my mother tongue
    - It is interesting
    - My parents want me to learn it
    - Others *(please specify)*:

Part 2 – Section A

The items below pertain to the Chinese teaching material we used, its practicality and the overall learning environment. Please tick as appropriate or write an answer, where applicable.

18. Before taking our Chinese module, have you learned language in an environment where the language of instruction is not your mother tongue or first language?

    - Yes, I learned at (name of country / institution)

    The language(s) I learned was / were:

    The language(s) of instruction was / were:

    - No

19. Do you like learning Chinese using English?

    - Yes, because...
    - No, because...

20. A multicultural classroom is broadly defined as "a classroom that blends students from various cultures to form a diverse learning environment", but narrowly defined as "a class consisting of learners from different origin countries and ethnicity". Do you think our class is a multicultural learning environment?

    - Yes, because...
    - No, because...

21. Do you like our textbook *New Practical Chinese Reader*, which is based on Northern Chinese language?

    - Yes, because...
    - No, because...

22. If you have a choice, what combination of language teachers will you choose? *(You can tick more than once)*

    - The lecturer and the tutor are not the same person
    - I like to have teachers who come from different part of Chinese speaking world (Singapore, China, Taiwan, Malaysia...)
    - I like to have teachers of different genders
    - I like to have teachers of different generations
    - Others:

23. What format or style of a class is preferable to you? *(You can tick more than once)*

    - The teacher leads, the students follow
    - The teacher conducts the class most of the time, the students participate to run the class occasionally

- The teacher plans everything and prepares all materials, the students just receive
- The teacher collects feedback from students and conducts the course accordingly

24. Do you prefer to learn in the traditional classrooms or in an online course?

    - Online course
    - Traditional classroom
    - Partially online, partially in the classroom
    - Others:

    Please explain your choice:

25. What are the challenges and difficulties in learning Chinese?

    - The sentence structures / grammars
    - The Chinese characters
    - The tones and pronunciation
    - The foreign learning environment—if you choose this, please go to Q26, otherwise to Q27
    - Others *(please specify)*:

26. If you are an exchange student, have you encountered any challenges living and learning in Singapore? Please describe them.

27. Do you find learning with peers of different ethnicity and nationality background (including of Chinese heritage) beneficial?

    - Yes, because it helps me to understand Chinese culture through the interaction with Chinese classmates
    - Yes, because it provides a diversified learning environment beyond Chinese
    - Yes, because it helps me to know more about others and it is important in the globalized world
    - Yes, other reason:
    - No, because:

Part 2 – Section B

For the items below, please tick as appropriate.

28. Learning with peers of different origin / countries / ethnicity positively affects my Chinese learning.

    - Strongly disagree
    - Disagree
    - Neither disagree nor agree
    - Agree
    - Strongly agree

29. Learning with peers of different origin / countries / ethnicity negatively affects my Chinese learning.

    - Strongly disagree
    - Disagree
    - Neither disagree nor agree
    - Agree
    - Strongly agree

30. Learning Chinese in a diversified group is interesting.

    - Strongly disagree
    - Disagree
    - Neither disagree nor agree
    - Agree
    - Strongly agree

31. Learning with people of different origin / countries / ethnicity helps me to strengthen my own cultural identity.

    - Strongly disagree
    - Disagree
    - Neither disagree nor agree
    - Agree
    - Strongly agree

32. Learning in this beginner Chinese course helps me to know more about other cultures and people.

    - Strongly disagree
    - Disagree
    - Neither disagree nor agree
    - Agree
    - Strongly agree

33. I am more open to learning in a multicultural and multinational classroom in future.

    - Strongly disagree
    - Disagree
    - Neither disagree nor agree
    - Agree
    - Strongly agree

Part 2 – Section C

For the items below, please write an answer as appropriate.

34. Describe a most impressive cultural exchange experience that happened in the Chinese class this semester.

35. Have you observed any similarities and differences in learning attitudes and behaviours between you and your peers? Please compare and contrast them.

36. Do you have any other suggestions for our Chinese class?

Thank you for filling out the questionnaire!