

# Critical Translanguaging Capability as an Intercultural Pedagogy for Localizing Chinese Language Education

Kunpeng Zhao

Correspondence: Kunpeng Zhao, School of Humanities, Zhejiang University of Science and Technology, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China.

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## Abstract

The native teachers of Chinese are often perceived as lacking in critical thinking and creativity when it comes to employing culturally appropriate and relatable learning content in their lesson delivery to foreign Chinese language learners. However, there is little research pertaining to the methods that native teachers of Chinese can use to critically and creatively transform their instructional materials, strategies, and beliefs towards localizing the Chinese language curriculum to better suit students coming from diverse educational and cultural backgrounds. In an attempt to address this issue, a case study methodology, combined with photo-elicitation interviews, was adopted for data collection. It investigated a bilingual Chinese teacher-researcher who critically and flexibly utilized his cultural and linguistic repertoires in enacting translanguaging pedagogy practices in the Australian education context. This study reveals that the native Chinese teacher-researcher, was able to use his critical thinking and creative abilities backed by his indigenous Chinese linguistic and cultural concepts and metaphors to source and select appropriate localized content that facilitates student learning. Such translanguaging practices demonstrated that the native Chinese teacher-researcher's critical thinking capability helped shape up intercultural pedagogy giving rise to a localized Chinese language curriculum in the Australian education context.

**Keywords:** critical thinking, translanguaging pedagogy, indigenous Chinese concepts and metaphors, intercultural capability, localizing Chinese language education

## 1. Introduction

In popular Chinese culture, people tend to coin novel words to describe common social phenomena occurring in modern society. For instance, ‘套路-tào lù’ (routine) is a term popularized in Chinese people's daily lives, making it widely used in different fields and contexts. ‘套路’ (tào lù) refers to a well-planned method of dealing with a certain situation. People who use this method are already proficient in it and form conditioned responses. As a result, they are habituated to adopt this familiarized and stereotyped method to deal with any type of complex situation. Hence, it gradually developed into a one-size-fit-all strategy due to the psychological dependence regardless of the circumstances. Employing such a fixed or inflexible way to handle various incidents and situations is called ‘套路’ (tào lù).

Similarly, when it comes to language teaching and learning, it is contended that native speaker teachers of Chinese in Australia are educated through the traditional pedagogy, under the influence of Confucian thinking and teaching pattern. As a result, they tend to encounter intercultural pedagogical barriers when teaching local students with a diversity of Western educational backgrounds (Moloney & Xu, 2015; Moloney & Xu, 2018). To echo this argument, as the Chinese popular proverb - 教书育人 (jiāo shū yù rén) suggests, teaching and educating students what textbooks literally intend to convey is the main feature attributed to the traditional Chinese education schema, resulting in such highly standardised examinations and uniform requirements for teachers' professional development (Leng, 2005). Therefore, teachers in China have already established their own ‘套路’ (tào lù), which is namely examination-focused teaching methods to cater for the national syllabuses and curricular requirements for the Chinese local students. To be specific, they are more experienced in developing students' skills on how to pass various tests or examinations with high marks, stimulating those native teachers to form their unique ‘套路-tào lù’ (fixed examination-focused pedagogy) with the unique goal of helping Chinese students secure admission in their desired universities, while undermining their communicative capabilities to a certain extent.

Moreover, the native Chinese teachers are always labelled as being unable to think critically on choosing appropriate

learning materials and teaching methods in terms of making Chinese learnable, especially when teaching it in an overseas education environment, for instance in Australia (Orton, 2008; Moloney & Xu, 2018). Meanwhile, it is noted that 90% of Chinese language teachers in Australia are native Chinese teachers (Orton, 2008). It is further pointed out that they are just able to deliver Chinese lessons to those emergent learners based on the existing textbooks and teacher-centred pedagogy, as adopting a cramming and character drilling teaching style with little attention to communicative tactics, relatable teaching resources and intercultural pedagogical choices (Orton, 2008; Moloney & Xu, 2018). In so doing, these Chinese lessons are always made boring, unrelated to the learners' daily lives and interests, as well as beyond their real learning abilities (Singh & Han, 2014). This is accompanied by the high dropout rate for the Chinese language programs, increasing from 94% in 2008 to 95% in 2016 among these local pupils in Australia (Orton, 2008; Orton, 2016). The growing attrition rate in Chinese study in Australian schools is mainly linked to pedagogical limitation. When the examination-oriented doctrine meets the student-centred pedagogy, they come into conflict with the inherent value and approach to develop suitable curriculum and pedagogy for Chinese language in Australian education context (Orton, 2008; Singh & Han, 2014).

## 2. Literature Review

Such '套路-tào lù' (fixed examination-focused pedagogy) founded and rooted in the traditional education environment in China appears to be impracticable in Australia, especially when it's being applied to the local young Chinese learners in school, due to the intercultural difficulties encountered. Hence, for native teachers of Chinese, they are anticipated to transition from the traditionally established education schema in China, the so-called '套路-tào lù' (examination-oriented teaching style) to the aptly communicative approach inherent in Western culture (Hu, 2002). Such a redirection asks Chinese teachers in Australia to construe novel pedagogy through engaging with their shaped cultural and linguistic lenses, employing an intercultural method and incorporating critical thinking into Chinese language education (Moloney, 2013). Likewise, the existing Australian Curriculum emphasises the values of intercultural pedagogy for language teaching and learning that reinforces Australian state language syllabuses, such as K-10 Chinese syllabus (ACARA, 2013).

Given the above mentioned, positioning Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) in the world has invited many problems among native speaker teachers, pertaining to pedagogy and curriculum knowledge (Orton, 2011; Zhao & Huang, 2010), leading to less qualified CFL teachers in the system. This very essential factor is also relevant to the disconnection between the intended pedagogy and the particularity of overseas learning environments (Duff & Lester, 2008; Wang, Moloney & Li, 2013). To be specific, research in relation to internationalising curriculum knowledge has been conducted through adopting the phenomenological method. One of the major findings is concerned with CFL teachers' greater attention paid to the linguistic knowledge in terms of curriculum content preparation and construction than pedagogy (Wang, Moloney & Li, 2013; Mohammad & Hu, 2015). Admittedly, linguistic knowledge is the core component for standardised curriculum content that CFL teachers need to master for helping learners identify potential learning challenges (Orton, 2011). Over-emphasising linguistic knowledge leads to the impractical content in the curriculum due to its lack of practical instances and skills in real teaching situations, as indicated by a group of CFL teachers (Mohammad & Hu, 2015). Most training programs for CFL teachers are claimed to be focused on the fixed model through employing the same instructional materials, being ignorant of the curriculum formation and teaching pedagogies (Shi, 2008). That inevitably adds some difficulties to satisfy the actual needs and interests of global emergent CFL learners. Arguably, native teacher-researchers of Chinese who are educated with the conventional education schema tend to maintain and trigger their indigenous cultural and linguistic knowledge, generating their own tactics to CFL overseas (Moloney & Xu, 2012). Dialectically, such a phenomenon brings about different results. For example, one situation tends to be contrary to the local education system and beliefs on curriculum and pedagogy, however, another situation is likely to be totally adaptable to local education environment (Moloney & Xu, 2015). Ideally, the teaching belief that can critically transition between these two extremes would contribute to identifying the potential cultural resistance to intercultural pedagogy (Moloney & Xu, 2015; Hu, 2002).

On the other hand, it is debated that there exist few instructional materials for CFL that can connect traditional Chinese education schema with Western function-oriented and student-centred pedagogy, hindering the pedagogical alteration to cultivate overseas Chinese learners' communicative competency, as well as resulting in conflicting teaching beliefs and values, such as those prevalent in Australia (Orton, 2011; McDonald, 2011). Similarly, it is criticised that failing to accommodate pedagogy to overseas education milieus becomes the major challenge in implementing effective Chinese teaching and learning for native speaker teachers due to their lack of necessary intercultural capabilities and components to engage in Western (Australian) school curriculum construction, and then to relate CFL to global contexts (Wang, Moloney & Li, 2013). Also, a study found it difficult for native speaker teachers to incorporate cultural lens into Chinese curriculum construction in Australian primary and secondary schools, as they lack intercultural pedagogic expertise and appropriate instruction materials (Moloney, 2013). The literature reviewed has demonstrated the

prevailing assumptions and problems that exist within current CFL worldwide, including Australia, and the need to address them in order to improve the learnability of Chinese language.

With the above perspective in mind, this paper examines and presents a native Chinese teacher-researcher's critical thinking abilities and reflections on his teaching practices in an Australian primary school, and the interviews with local classroom teachers, focusing on the generation of intercultural pedagogy to construct suitably localized Chinese curriculum in an Australian education context. Additionally, it also provides an insight into the use of the translanguaging lens backed by indigenous Chinese cultural and linguistic concepts and metaphors that guided the native teacher-researcher to identify, select and utilise handy educational resources as potentially effective and learnable content sources, helpful in the co-construction of the Chinese language curriculum with the local school students in a critical and creative manner.

### **3. Theoretic-Pedagogical Framework**

#### *3.1 Translanguaging as a Pedagogy*

Canagarajah (2011) argues that translanguaging is “the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system” (p.401). Baker (2011) indicates that translanguaging is “the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages” (p.288). For García and Li (2014), translanguaging means “both the complex language practices of plurilingual individuals and communities, as well as the pedagogical approaches that use those complex practices” (p.20). Translanguaging is also described as the “multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds” (García, 2009, p.45). García and Sylvan (2011) say that translanguaging is the fact that “students use diverse language practices for purposes of learning, and teachers use inclusive language practices for purposes of teaching” (p.397). In this regard, translanguaging “offers learners the possibility of accessing academic content with the semiotic resources they bring, while acquiring new ones” (García & Li, 2014, p.66). Thus, “the act of translanguaging then is transformative in nature” (Li, 2011, p.1223). That is to say, translanguaging “has the potential to transform practices in bilingual education” (García & Li, 2014, p.68).

Meanwhile, according to Li (2011), creativity and criticality are two important concepts for enacting such transformation in terms of translanguaging practices in bilingual education. Here, creativity refers to “the ability to choose between following and flouting the rules and norms of behaviour, including the use of language” (García & Li, 2014, p.67). Criticality refers to “the ability to use available evidence appropriately, systematically, and insightfully to inform considered views of cultural, social, political, and linguistic phenomena, to question and problematize received wisdom, and to express views adequately through reasoned responses to situations” (García & Li, 2014, p.67). Given the above-mentioned, by the very nature, bilingualism in education is endowed with immense creativity and criticality, as it “entails tension, conflict, competition, difference and change in a number of spheres, ranging from ideologies, policies, and practices to historical and current contexts” (Li & Martin, as cited in García & Li, 2014, p.24). In this regard, employing a translanguaging lens thus facilitates the bilingual Chinese teacher-researcher to construct critically and creatively on what to teach and how to teach by building on his entire linguistic and cultural repertoires within the Australian education context. Namely, the native Chinese teacher-researcher is given the full agency to perform his teaching critically and flexibly through engaging in such translanguaging practices.

It is further argued that “translanguaging in schools not only creates the possibility that bilingual students could use their full linguistic and semiotic repertoire to make meaning, but also that teachers would ‘take it up’ as a legitimate pedagogical practice (García & Li, 2014, pp.67-68). In this sense, translanguaging as a pedagogical choice not just empowers the Australian local school students to “construct and constantly modify their sociocultural identities and values”, but also to make the native Chinese teacher-researcher “respond to their historical and present conditions critically and creatively” (García & Li, 2014, p.67). In this translanguaging vein, the native Chinese teacher-researcher's teaching practices are “brought together in ways that not only develop an extended bilingual repertoire capable of deeply involving them (the local school students) cognitively, but also a more sophisticated metalinguistic awareness that would enable them to negotiate these extended linguistic repertoires” (García & Li, 2014, p.67). In so doing, it provides the local school students a space where they are able to maintain their learning of Chinese language on a regular basis.

It is also claimed that “enhanced contacts between people of diverse backgrounds and traditions provide new opportunities for innovation and creativity” (García & Li, 2014, p.24). In addition, “individuals are capable of responding to historical and present conditions critically” (García & Li, 2014, p.24). Taking the above-mentioned into consideration, in a translanguaging space, the native Chinese teacher-researcher's linguistic and cultural repertoires are deployed critically and creatively to respond to the local students' actual curiosities and preferences towards Chinese learning content and teaching methods.

### 3.2 Critical Thinking - A Product of Western Culture?

Critical thinking is defined as “the intentional application of rational, higher order thinking skills, such as analysis, synthesis, problem recognition and problem solving, inference and evaluation” (Angelo, 1995, p.6). Critical thinking is also “the kind of thinking involved in solving problems, formulating inferences, calculating likelihoods, and making decisions” (Halpern, 1996, p.117). It is believed that “critical thinking entails the possession and active use of a set of traits of mind, including independence of thought, fairmindedness, intellectual humility, intellectual courage, intellectual perseverance, intellectual integrity, curiosity, confidence in reason, the willingness to see objections, to enter sympathetically into another’s point of view” (Paul & Nosich, 1991, p.5). Willingham (2007) defines critical thinking as being “open to new evidence that disconfirms your ideas, reasoning dispassionately, demanding that claims be backed by evidence, deducing and inferring conclusions from available facts, solving problems” (p.8). Siegel (2009) indicates that critical thinking is “not just the competent evaluation of reasons already available, but also the disposition to evaluate, and to seek and produce further reasons, evidence and arguments relevant to candidate beliefs” (p.29). Hence, Huang (2010) also considers critical thinking to be “important components of intellectual quality and creative power” (p.69). Furthermore, Dong (2012) argues that critical thinking includes “objective, reflective and open-minded disposition, as well as analytic, interpretative, evaluative and innovative thinking skills” (p.64). Definitions of critical thinking show that people are willing to use their thinking skills in daily lives. Namely, critical thinking is regarded as an approach or attitude that people have their own choices whether to use it or not in their daily lives (Rear, 2017).

When it comes to the application of critical thinking, for example, in the field of medical education, it is noted that students are cultivated to develop critical thinking skills in active problem-solving on patient care (Scott & Markert, 1994). Similarly, in the engineering field, it is argued that the “development of students’ abilities to think critically about engineering problems and design projects is an important educational objective” (Siller, 2001, p.108). Besides, Lloyd and Bahr (2010) note that critical thinking has gained “heightened attention in higher education” with being “purposefully integrated into student activities, particularly assessment items” (p.2). It is also argued that critical thinking abilities facilitate the students in Ireland to think independently, to solve the complex issues, and to utilise it deliberately for deep knowledge production on their own (Dwyer, Boswell & Elliott, 2015).

However, it is declared that Western Anglophone students are “experienced students who are already enculturated into Western style of critical thinking” (Durkin, 2008, p.18). In this regard, teaching critical thinking capabilities means “teaching foreign notions to foreign students” (Egege & Kutieleh, 2004, p.75). Critical thinking is thus said to be a dominant thinking pattern in English without the consideration of the embodiments of critical thinking in other languages (Raineri, 2015). This stance means neglecting “the modes of critical thinking practiced by multilingual students from diverse intellectual cultures”, and “critical thinking is constructed as a supposedly unique Western mode of expression” (Lu & Singh, 2017, p.5).

Another argument regarding critical thinking is the opposition of orthodoxy and rote learning, however, in support of individuality (Paton, 2011; O’Sullivan & Guo, 2010). It is further concluded that “the depth and variety of thought shown in the students’ responses indicate a remarkable level of critical thinking, which would seem to belie the strident claims by those such as Atkinson (1997) that critical thinking is the preserve of Western culture” (Paton, 2011, p.36). By contrast, it is pointed out that Confucianism embodies typical characteristics and principles on reflective thinking in terms of instruction materials and styles (e.g. 因材施教), which is said to be similar to the modern concept of critical thinking (Kim, 2003). Critical thinking is therefore in line with certain Asian cultural values, and can be relevantly impacted by them (Rear, 2017, p.20).

However, it is debated that “the discourse of Asian learners as uncritical and passive has become widespread in Western universities, passing almost unchallenged as an educational orthodoxy” (Rear, 2017, p.23). Further, Lun, Fischer and Ward (2010) conclude that “Asian students’ apparent lack of critical thinking is a consequence of the need to use English as a second language in academic discourse” (p.614). Arguably, critical thinking is considered as a pure cultural trait inherent in Western culture, whereas Asian students are considered inherently deficient in questioning the authority, and thus lacking in critical thought (Rear, 2017; Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Biggs, 1996; Cadman, 2000). Likewise, critical thinking is compared to the “pores” that exudes the Western cultural inculcations through being reflected in a certain social practice (Atkinson, 1997, p.73). On the contrary, it is asserted that students from China studying in Anglophone universities can represent their critical thinking abilities through utilising written Chinese (Wang, 2011). For Chui (2009), modes of critical thinking in Zhongwen involve examining a statement by its “assumptions, the accuracy of supportive evidence and the logical reasoning advanced in reaching conclusions, with sensitivity to situated contexts” (p.44). Also, some native students can manage to deploy and transfer their indigenous critical thinking modes formed in academic Chinese to academic English (Singh & Meng, 2011).

In other words, translanguaging activates bilingual/multilingual native Chinese teacher-researchers to think critically

through shifting between different languages, which can scaffold and extend their critical thinking abilities in teaching Chinese to the Australian local school students. That could also marry and transform the indigenous knowledge and modes of critical thinking shaped from Chinese linguistic and cultural repertoires to deepen their critical thinking capabilities in this regard. Therefore, translanguaging as a pedagogical tool can not only help native Chinese teacher-researchers stimulate their indigenous linguistic and cultural repertoires, but can also assist them in transferring and transforming their capabilities and modes of critical thinking to source and select suitable instructional materials that effectively facilitate Chinese learning for the Australian local school students. Namely, the Australian students can benefit from native Chinese teacher-researchers' translanguaging capabilities in terms of critically choosing what to teach and how to teach them in a local context.

Basically, this paper takes a native speaker of Chinese teacher-researcher as an example, representing and discussing his critical thinking and translanguaging capability to build intercultural pedagogy for Chinese language education, and to question the prevailing assumptions on native Chinese teachers' inability to adopt a culturally appropriate teaching approach as the departure point to connect with Australian local school students. Therefore, a study set within the Australian education context for Chinese language learning provides an insight into the native teacher-researcher's approach in deploying his critical thinking ability to construct an intercultural pedagogy through the translanguaging lens, backed by his indigenous linguistic and cultural concepts and metaphors, to make Chinese learnable. Accordingly, such a research focus sets the boundary of this paper as well as the defined perspective that underlies the following research questions:

- (1) What critical thinking abilities does the native teacher-researcher strategically deploy in the process of teaching and research, when teaching Chinese language in the Australian local education environment?
- (2) How does the teacher-researcher use his critical thinking reflections derived from his linguistic and cultural repertoires as an alternative intellectual resource to contribute in shaping up a localized Chinese curriculum by incorporating intercultural translanguaging in his pedagogical approach?

#### 4. The Study

The study was based on ROSETE (Research-Oriented School-Engaged Teacher Education) Program. The data were collected from the teacher-researcher's daily teaching practices through a case study methodology, which included photo-elicitation interviews with the classroom teachers (Yin, 2018; Torre & Murphy, 2015). It is hereby also worth mentioning that the native Chinese teacher-researcher undertook dual roles in this study. One was the role of the instructor delivering Chinese lessons to the local students in a primary school through his personal involvement in the eligible program, and the other was the role a researcher collecting and analyzing relevant evidence gathered from his daily Chinese teaching practices. The teacher-researcher is a bilingual user, which means he can fluently and flexibly employ the two named languages, Chinese and English, both in his daily teaching and research activities in the Australian local education milieu.

During the process of teaching Chinese language to the local school students, the teacher-researcher utilized his critical and creative abilities, backed by his indigenous Chinese linguistic and cultural repertoires to source and select proper instructional materials to promote Chinese learning in a local context. In so doing, the teacher-researcher conducted a series of Chinese lessons from 2016 to 2018 in an Australian primary school. The data presented in this study were mainly collected from his teaching period in 2017, over a duration of four terms (Term1, Term2, Term3 and Term4) altogether. However, due to the lack of an Australian local teaching certificate, classroom teachers in this school were needed to be in class to manage these students while the teacher-researcher was delivering his Chinese lessons. After completing the teaching periods, photo-elicitation interviews were carried out among three classroom teachers respectively. Their feedback on the native teacher-researcher's critical selection and creative utilisation of teaching materials and methods was further provided, which were audio-recorded, and then transcribed. Meanwhile, all the participants were given different Chinese names, as their pseudo names to protect their identity and privacy in terms of research ethics.

For data analysis, the thematic analysis was utilized by the teacher-researcher to help categorise, decode, and analyse the patterns of the generated data, to extract meaning out of these qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2017; Kiger & Varpio, 2020). In so doing, a two-cycle coding process, including open coding and focused coding, was applied for the purpose of generating the thematic codes (Saldaña, 2009). The first-round coding was informed by the methods, such as descriptive coding and in vivo coding based on the recurring expressions and topics in the collected data (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2013). That enabled the teacher-researcher to establish the basic sense of familiarity with the generated data, and a catalogue of the identified themes. After that, the second-round coding was based on pattern coding and theoretical coding (Miles, et al., 2013; Saldaña, 2009). That not only grouped such similar themes into a condensed pattern, but also integrated the conceptual constructs and salient themes into the construction of a

theoretic-pedagogical framework. Next, the strategy entitled evidentiary-conceptual unit analysis was adopted for data display and explanation in terms of conducting the process of writing data analysis (Miles, et al., 2013; Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011). Therefore, each of the following subsections was entitled with a theme from the collected evidence, which were used as the main findings illustrated and reported in the subsequent section.

## 5. Findings - Thinking Critically the Sourcing and Selection of Content

### 5.1 ‘就地取材’ (jiù dì qǔ cái)<sup>1</sup>

Evidence of the teacher-researcher’s critical thinking was embodied in the process of selecting locally appropriate learning content for the students of the Australian school. Backed by his accumulated indigenous concepts and metaphors from zhōngwén (中文), this native Chinese teacher-researcher recombined, readapted and reshaped such intellectual resources from his linguistic repertoire to develop the localized Chinese curriculum. In this regard, the content sources chosen, and the instructional materials compiled for Chinese learning were favoured by both the local students in class and their classroom teachers. The corresponding evidence is reported as follows:

I think you have done a great job of selecting concepts or ideas that are important to the students. I think that they could connect with. And I think that give[s] their real enthusiasm and purpose to learn the words, because they like playing handball, table tennis, and chess. It is really good how you try to connect the type of activities and the things that they do. (Classroom Teacher, Ms Shǐ, Year 4, 19/09/2017)

Another classroom teacher commented:

You have photos from the basketball court, you have photos from the handball court. So, everything you do relates to the space and environment. Chinese concepts are so abstract to them at home, you know, so it attaches them to the Australian culture. (Classroom Teacher, Ms. Mù, Year 5, 21/11/2017)

According to the two classroom teachers’ commentary, this Chinese teacher-researcher is adept in converting the abstract language knowledge (Chinese) into concrete daily recurring activities that students could easily identify with in their school-based community. They benefited from the teacher-researcher’s original beliefs in pedagogical choices, which is unavoidably influenced by his existing intellectual assets accumulated from zhōngwén (中文). It is, however, argued that native speaker of Chinese teachers in Australia always tend to employ teacher-centred instruction methods and styles, as a result of their previous education background in China, lacking the awareness and focus on the local students’ interest and actual ability in learning of Chinese (Orton, 2008; Leng, 2005; Moloney, 2013). Also, they are always labelled as those Chinese teachers who do not know the local school students very well, having no creative and innovative ways to motivate their real and sustainable enthusiasm towards learning Chinese (Orton, 2016; Moloney & Xu, 2018). Considering the mentioned issues and challenges encountered when teaching Chinese in the Australian local education context, this native Chinese teacher-researcher focused on the students’ daily accessible activities, adapting his teaching resources to empower and spur enthusiasm in his students to learn Chinese. That helped make abstract Chinese the embodiments of their popular daily sports and gaming activities. As proposed by Guillot (1996): “exposure to, and familiarity with authentic texts also helps instil confidence in the face of the target language” (p.152).

In addition, it is noticed that these instructional materials do create connections and effectively relate to these students’ daily lives in terms of their surrounding space and environment. Such space and environment reduce the students’ unfamiliarity with Chinese language in the local education milieu because the cultural mechanism as the functional medium becomes activated during such a process. Transferring and linking those resources existing in this school, such as photos taken from basketball court and handball court to teaching and learning Chinese in class not only achieves the goal of realistically portraying relevant and interest-capturing contextual learning, but also makes the intangible intercultural capability happen as the embodiment of translanguaging during the process of conducting Chinese education practices. Namely, incorporating such content into the target language teaching is meaningful as it allows and facilitates the local students to utilize Chinese autonomously and confidently within these real situations in school (Coyle, 2013). On the other hand, it also breaks the stereotype of the native speaker teachers of Chinese being ignorant of the local students’ preferences and proficiencies towards the learning of Chinese language and that of using a one-size-fits-all, obsolete method of teaching. Taking advantage of his cultural and linguistic repertoires as his translanguaging competency, the Chinese teacher-researcher succeeds in changing and reshaping the classroom teachers’ point of view in this public school contrary to their prior impressions on native teachers of Chinese in Australia.

It is by deploying a Chinese concept - ‘就地取材’, that this native teacher-researcher was able to effectively identify

<sup>1</sup>It is defined as obtaining materials from the local area to make full use of the potential potency of local resources.

and select the types of instructional material potentially appropriate for these local school students. It shows that this native Chinese teacher-researcher is adept at utilising the handy resources to activate and serve their meaningful educational purpose. It can be noted that curriculum construction based on the learners' practices from their daily lives, would enable the students, themselves, to voice their own ideas on choosing the proper learning topics and activities which can be identified both in class and after class (McKay, 2013). Thus, being engaged in the concept '就地取材', not only helps this native Chinese teacher-researcher get rid of the habit and the tendency of using commonly and regularly chosen teaching content deemed suitable from a teacher's sole perspective (teacher-centred pedagogical choice), but also facilitates his task in making changes, exploring, gathering and negotiating contextually suitable learning contents from the students' own perspective (student-centred pedagogical guidance). Here, the native Chinese teacher-researcher effectively tapped into his indigenous linguistic and cultural repertoires to facilitate Chinese learning for his students. Importantly, taking into account the existing spatial and contextual differences, the concept '就地取材' from zhōngwén(中文) was significantly introduced in the localization of Chinese teaching in an Australian education context. To differentiate from other native teachers of Chinese, the feat of this Chinese teacher-researcher gained popularity among the local students and their classroom teachers. As observed and stated, '就地取材' originally implies the full and best utilization of the various locally available resources and materials, to achieve optimal outcome. This 'zhōngwénised' (中文化的 - Chinese style) concept is spatially, transnationally and critically transformed and transferred to the Australian Chinese teaching and learning. Hence, the intercultural attribute and the translanguaging aptitude is effectively preserved during such a dynamic process.

In the post-monolingual context, as the emergent bilingual teacher-researcher, he was not only able to consciously mobilize his linguistic and cultural repertoires from zhōngwén(中文), but was also able to reasonably and effectively apply such valuable intellectual expertise to better serve those Australian young Chinese learners in an English-only instructional environment (Zhao, 2019). Accordingly, as the above data set illustrated, this native Chinese teacher-researcher is bestowed with the translanguaging ability and 'zhōngwénised' (中文化的) critical thinking proficiency responsible for his robust intercultural capability in the process of developing localized Chinese curriculum and making Chinese learnable for Australian local school students.

5.2 '三人行，必有我师焉；择其善者而从之，其不善者而改之' (*sān rén xíng, bì yǒu wǒ shī yān; zé qí shàn zhě ér cóng zhī, qí bù shàn zhě ér gǎi zhī*)<sup>2</sup>

To further explain and justify that, compared with a previous native Chinese teacher-researcher volunteered in this local public school, it is informed that:

They really enjoyed it, particularly you are focusing on a lot of the sports and activities this year and last year as well, which was different towards what the previous Chinese teacher did. And you can tell that the kids really responded very well towards it. While the previous teaching had been focused on the colours, so the days and weeks they feel like [that is just] normal school to them. Because you asked the kids 'what would you like to learn about?' And you often do that with them, they really like that. (Classroom Teacher, Mr. Kē, Year 4, 20/06/2017)

As the above information indicates, this Chinese teacher-researcher is different from the former one, in terms both selecting teaching content focussed on student need as well as linking it to their daily recurring sociolinguistic activities, such as various popularised ball sports in the school-based community. As a native speaker teacher of Chinese in the Australian education context, he has not only mastered the basic linguistic expressions of the English medium of instruction, but has more importantly also integrated and retained the very Chinese concepts and metaphors as his translanguaging knowledge, through critically engaging with his intercultural pedagogical choices. For instance, the above data excerpts can show the teacher-researcher's indigenous awareness towards deciding on the content he chooses to teach these local young Chinese learners. Through his daily observations in this school, he was able to discern that diverse sporting activities, such as table tennis, basketball, handball favoured and performed by the students in school can be transferred to their learning of Chinese language in class.

Here, this Chinese teacher-researcher is also aware of deploying the local students' intellectual knowledge and skills, namely their linguistic repertoire. Consequently, the students are empowered to be involved in the negotiation and construction of their learnable, rather than just teachable Chinese content, giving rise to a dynamic process of knowledge co-construction in class. To be exact, Western pedagogy mainly emphasises the constructivist approach to instruction, such as the student-centred pedagogy. Such an approach is committed to making education happen through the involvement and participation of students in curriculum co-construction. It is a meaningful process that strives to

<sup>2</sup>It originates from *the Analects of Confucius*, and literally means while three persons are walking together, one of them is sure to be as my instructor, selecting their good qualities to follow, and meanwhile getting rid of their bad ones.

educate learners with the ability to establish independent thinking and understanding (Wilson, 1996). In student-centred pedagogy, students regard themselves as active, self-governing and inspired mediators in constructing, reflecting and questioning a series of their desired instruction pedagogy and content for curriculum (Von Glasersfeld, 1989; Orr, Yorke & Blair, 2014).

For instance, as mentioned by one of the classroom teachers, these students are allowed to put forward what they prefer to master from Chinese class, and importantly their opinions and choices are always valued and fulfilled in class. That is to say, the role and responsibility of a teacher is of a facilitator in class, helping students ‘dig out’ unknown knowledge and identifying their existing aptitudes to co-create supportive learning atmosphere (Altinyelken, 2011). In so doing, the relationship between the native Chinese teacher-researcher and the local students tends to be balanced and rectified to a certain extent. To discover the learnable and appropriate instructional materials, locating oneself in a specific environment is crucial and conducting effective communication with the target Chinese learners is equally important in enabling their agency in decision-making. The process of transferring and enlarging students’ discourse power lowered the risk of just one person “the teacher” deciding on what to teach.

To negotiate and exchange ideas with each other is another characteristic of Chinese critical thinking pattern, tactic and strategy, this being embedded in the classic Chinese saying ‘三人行，必有我师焉；择其善者而从之，其不善者而改之’. It can literally be translated as: if there are three persons walking together, there is bound to be a teacher, select the good qualities to follow, and get rid of or change the bad ones. Based on this idiom, it can be deduced that critically learning from each other is part of the Chinese culture, and this can be clearly observed in the native Chinese teacher-researcher’s study. Relating such a principle to the local Chinese classroom facilitates the native teacher-researcher to have a better understanding of these Australian students’ preferences and suitability in terms of making Chinese a learnable language for them. The classroom is a learning community whereby students can freely express their own opinions and share their concerns in regards to their studies with their respective teachers and peers. In class, such a group of local students can always inspire the native Chinese teacher-researcher to know which Chinese knowledge and content they seek to master, and what needs to be conveyed and delivered to facilitate their learning process. Therefore, it is the traditional zhōngwén (中文) knowledge that helped the native Chinese teacher-researcher identify the proper locally available learning resources for Chinese teaching in Australia.

Also, this approach is in accord with the student-centred pedagogy as stipulated within the Australian syllabus, as well as with the basic principle on curriculum construction and development in the local education setting. The concepts and metaphors derived from indigenous Chinese language and culture outstandingly guided and modified this native teacher-researcher’s pedagogical orientation and choice, enabling him to employ his critical thinking capability and corresponding actions in constructing the localized and learnable Chinese content and the curriculum. Considering this, that not only breaks the most negative stereotype in regards to native speaker of Chinese teachers working in global Chinese education among overseas Chinese learners, but also contrarily proves the relevance and success of their own unique strategy, tactic and understanding of critical thinking as originated from zhōngwén (中文). Explicitly, that is reflected firstly in the native Chinese teacher-researcher’s initial focus and belief, secondly in his pedagogical choice and ultimately in his actual actions which were different from both the previous Chinese teacher who volunteered in this local public school and other native speaker teachers of Chinese who worked in Australian schools.

As a result, the process of deliberately selecting content sources for the purpose of teaching Chinese demonstrates this native Chinese teacher-researcher’s critical thinking ability in understanding the Australian students’ characteristics and their habituated instruction styles through his observation of what is practically going on within the local education environment. This instance of critical selection of Chinese learning resources resolves one common phenomenon whereby native speaker of Chinese teachers are criticised of being uncritical instructors lacking the ability to facilitate the overseas students’ learning of Chinese language and that they just uncritically deliver textbook-based knowledge in such an obsolete way, that it fails to encourage these students to further master advanced Chinese knowledge and maintain sustainable learning enthusiasm in learning Chinese.

These illustrations of evidence are linked to the capabilities, strategies and modes of critical thinking that this native Chinese teacher-researcher is bestowed with from zhōngwén (中文). Seen from this perspective, it is opposed to those studies that indicated teachers from China are just able to instruct overseas Chinese learners in such out-of-date teaching styles and teacher-centred methods due to deep influences by the Confucius culture and lack of cultivation of critical awareness during their education process. As a result, they are always uncritically labelled as being deficient in the ability to engage these emergent overseas Chinese learners. Given that, the translanguaging pedagogical insight facilitated by such indigenous Chinese concepts and metaphors, as well as the arguments informed by the Australian local classroom teachers are both critically reflected in the teacher-researcher’s process of selection of content sources. This native speaker teacher-researcher of Chinese could identify the existing educational resources in this school, and importantly he could critically exploit and transform them into reasonable and favoured learning content among the local school students.



## 6. Discussion and Conclusion

Through the above analysis, it can generally be concluded that critical thinking is the ability to observe, identify and analyse problems in all their complexity; to find possible multiple solutions, and take actions. Here, critical thinking is defined as a bilingual teacher-researcher enacting translanguaging capabilities by using intercultural intellectual resources to inform emergent reflections on contemporary issues of concern, many of which commonly occur in Chinese language education. Such critical thinking is necessary for teacher-researchers in China in order to enable them to use their linguistic and cultural repertoires stemming from their inherent Chinese intellectual assets to generate concepts and metaphors that would help them formulate a workable and realistic theoretic-pedagogical framework.

To achieve such a purpose, this paper represents the process, strategies, and modes of critical thinking to verify the intercultural and translanguaging capabilities of the native teacher-researcher of Chinese in teaching Chinese to the Australian local school students. This is evidenced by the teacher-researcher's daily teaching practices through the selection and construction of proper and relevant pedagogical content. The relevant data excerpts shown reflect his critical interaction with indigenous Chinese concepts and metaphors for conducting practical teaching classes in order to make Chinese learnable in the Australian education context. In addition, based on the analysis of the above-mentioned information, this paper further identifies the noteworthy intellectual resources the teacher-researcher employed in his teaching, and also pinpoints the use of his abilities, strategies and modes of critical thinking, already existing in his original Chinese mindset, to facilitate Chinese learning in a western context. In so doing, the evidence collected and analyzed reveals and proves that the native speaker teacher-researcher of Chinese is able to positively deploy his cultural and linguistic repertoires, as well as critically engage such knowledge and competency into localising Chinese education in Australia. Also, it is important to note that the teacher-researcher's former native educational and professional development background was key in explicitly influencing his critical thinking patterns in regards to his pedagogical orientation and choice he applied to his research on Chinese teaching and learning in an Australian education milieu.

To redress the argument that native speaker teachers of Chinese are deficient in constructing and choosing culturally appropriate teaching approach and learning resources for overseas Chinese language education, this paper has introduced a different perspective in relation to critically utilizing cultural and linguistic concepts and metaphors shaped by the traditional Chinese education model to direct the teacher-researcher's practice and performance pertaining to his teaching of Chinese in Australia. It is therefore obvious that indigenous Chinese cultural and linguistic concepts and metaphors can be critically integrated in the construction of a localized curriculum for overseas CFL education through the deployment of intercultural pedagogical knowledge and the use of translanguaging capacity. Inspired by such Chinese notions, they can "exceed their literal meaning" and can help this native teacher-researcher along with his Australian school students to co-produce proper learning materials, demonstrating the pedagogical dialogue between the East and the West in order to localize Chinese education (Meng, 2012, p.249). In this regard, indigenous Chinese intellectual resources should be exploited and employed to balance the barriers and influences incurred by such a monolingual mindset on shaping pedagogical beliefs and choices in the post-monolingual education context (Yildiz, 2012). Undoubtedly, the advantage and essence from traditional Chinese education schema need to be critically taken in and appropriately applied to these specific education environments for CFL worldwide.

As a way of constructing an intercultural pedagogy, an alternative perspective is adopted to rectify the prevailing statement and situation that native speaker teachers of Chinese are uncritical, used to obsolete instruction style and reluctant to interact with students' existing knowledge when teaching Chinese overseas. Also, it is reported that a flexible bilingual pedagogy has been proposed by Creese and Blackledge in 2010, which "adopts a translanguaging approach" (p.112). Such a bilingual pedagogical principle emphasizes the synthesis of languages for teaching and learning, as opposed to the separation between them (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Creese & Blackledge, 2011; Gort & Sembiane, 2015). That is to say, monolingual theoretic-pedagogical framework has little function in promoting the intercultural pedagogy, being as a potential restraint on overseas Chinese education in the post-monolingual era (Yildiz, 2012). A habituated position added to those native Chinese teachers' inability to engage overseas Chinese learners does not consider the alternative intellectual assets provided by these teachers' heritage knowledge, which may "over-simplify and distort" the media underscoring a contested label for them (Meng, 2012, p.15). Therefore, an intercultural theoretic-pedagogical framework developed from the native Chinese teacher-researcher's critical thinking enacted by his translanguaging capability, not only embodies making Chinese learnable in the Australian education context, but also contributes to localizing Chinese education for more native speaker teachers and global emergent second language learners of Chinese.

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**Authors contributions**

Dr. Zhao was responsible for study design, data collection, drafted the manuscript and revised it. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

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