

Chinese Language Teaching in Chinese Heritage Schools

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Chinese Language Teaching in Chinese Heritage schools

Multiple Terms

- Complementary school
- Supplementary school
- Heritage school
- Community school

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Complementary School

- operates on a part-time basis by community organizations to meet specific cultural and/or language needs of minority ethnic communities (Thorpe 2011)
- charges a small fee to parents as they are not funded by local or national government
- positive connotation of completion as it 'evokes a non-hierarchical relationship to mainstream schooling (Mau et al. 2009: 17)
- used by educational scholars in UK

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Supplementary School

- shares the same characteristics as complementary schools
- the term has a negative connotation of inferiority vis-à-vis mainstream schools
- this term is avoided in the UK because of the incomplete notion (Thorpe 2011)

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Heritage School

Usage:

Mostly used in US following the long history of Chinese migration and the concomitant Chinese schools (Liu 2010)

Core objective:

established by Chinese immigrants to support the learning of their languages and cultures to 'keep open the option for their children of identifying themselves on a cultural continuum with their parents' (Bradunas 1988: 13)

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History

- First Chinese heritage language school established in San Francisco in 1886. Objective: reinforce sentiments of patriotism and ensure smooth transition in case of return to China
- End of the 1920s proliferation of Chinese-language schools
- After WWII decline of Chinese schools due to increased interest in mainstream American culture and English.

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History

- After abolishment of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1965, dramatic increase of Chinese immigration
- America embraces multiculturalism, leading to renewed interest in Chinese language among Chinese community.
- The rise of China is concomitant with interest for Chinese language learning

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Community School

-in the US synonymous to heritage school

-in UK: outcome of a EEC directive of the mid-1970s (Chen 2010)

which regards the children's home language as positive asset of multicultural education

which charges MS to ensure that mother tongue and cultural teaching are available to minority children

Result: many new mother tongue schools were set up by community groups. Hence: community schools

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Main objectives in UK:

- to provide Chinese language knowledge and skills for overseas Chinese children.
- to educate children about Chinese culture and history
- to pass on and imbue young generations with 'Chinese values and attitudes': Chinese morality and sense of identity
- to bridge the gap between parents and their children in communication as well as in views and believes
- to supplement mainstream schooling by providing extra lessons on various core subjects

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How to understand and contextualize these objectives?

Historical background

- First Chinese class started in 1928 in a Chinese restaurant (Chen 2010).
- In 1934 first Chinese school developed in East London, Chung Hua School (Ny 1969; Jone, D. 1980). Expansion of Chinese supplementary schools, providing teaching on Saturday and Sunday

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UK Context

- Parents want children to retain Chinese identity and thus Chinese language skills while at the same time ensuring a profound knowledge of English.
- Great emphasis on transmission of Chinese language and culture in formal ways as well as through cultural and extra-curricular activities.

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UK Context

Chinese school=extension of the English school

Chinese school: space where they can develop and perform their bilinguality

Chinese school: support them in a successful education career in the majority society

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Practical but Urgent Issues

-Which Chinese language to teach:

general shift from Cantonese to Mandarin Chinese worldwide

general shift from 繁体字 to 简体字

-Does education in Chinese schools generate educational success in mainstream schools? (Gordon et al. 2003; Chow 2004; Francis et al. 2008)

-Do we need to develop a transfer credit system between complimentary school and mainstream institutions?

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Practical but Urgent Issues

- What with the perceived or real disparate quality of teaching between complementary schools and mainstream schools?
- How do community-driven complementary schools relate to the recent state-driven Confucius institutes?

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Reflections Fundamental Issues

-What is 'Chinese culture' :

- (In)tangible cultural heritage (such as festivals, songs, food)

- Chinese morals, Chinese values, Chinese attitudes and intuitions enacted in daily life:

- Concern for smooth interhuman relationships within family, community and beyond

- Filial piety towards parents

- Ambition to 'make' it in life through hard work and sacrifice

- Propensity for excellence

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Reflections on Fundamental Issues

- School as a space of discursive identity making (Prookopiou 2003; Chow 2004; Creese & Martin 2006; Chiu 2009; Archer, Francis and Mau 2010;)
- Emergence of new languages based on multilingual /bilingual capacities of Chinese with hyphenated identities (translanguaging space) (Li 2010)