Creating Stories:
On the Design of Dialogue Experience in Chinese Language Pedagogy

Thesis

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Abstract

Dialogue, as a genre in foreign language materials, is an important element in Chinese language pedagogy. However, an examination of the design of dialogue experiences in the current Chinese materials reveals that it is often divorced from an understanding of learners’ processing and memory of them. For a pedagogy that aims at preparing students for future participation in the target culture, one major consequence is that instructors are at a loss in terms of how effective the dialogues are and how much is retained after practicing them.

The thesis proposes to use the idea of story to guide the composition and exploitation of dialogues with a view to helping students form culturally appropriately stories or memories that they can readily apply to future encounters in the target culture. Story is viewed as an instrument of the mind that processes experiences according to narrative structures that contain essential components. The proposal is based on two principles: first, the more narrative components an experience satisfies, the more memorable that experience is; second, when an experience lacks a certain narrative component, the mind will automatically try to compensate by filling in speculated information. Particularly, four elements of story are discussed as the most relevant for creating culturally appropriate stories in Chinese learning, i.e., world model, scenario simulation, expectation disruption and coping strategy. Pedagogical suggestions are
offered with regard to the use of these story components in the design of dialogue experience.
Dedicated to Father, Mother and Grandmother
Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1: Understanding Dialogue Experience in Chinese Language Pedagogy

1.1 Defining Dialogues

This study views dialogues as a long-standing genre in the materials for teaching foreign languages (Dobson 1973, 61), especially in the beginning and intermediate levels. Here, they refer to the model dialogues that usually appear at the beginning of each unit or each unit section. They can be presented in the form of text, audio or video. They usually serve as a source for cultural and language input (Kaplan and Knutson 1993, 170) for the unit, as well as a foundation upon which the grammar and exercises portions of the materials are created.

In addition, this study makes the distinction between dialogues in the beginning- and intermediate- level materials and conversations that happen in everyday life in the target culture. The significance of making such a distinction is to understand the characteristics as well as limitations of dialogues as a genre in the materials. Later pedagogical discussions and suggestions about the design of dialogue experience can only be done within the confinement of what is allowed by this genre.

First of all, a conversation is more than a ritualized or formulaic verbal interchange (Donaldson 1979), and must include “topical talk which is pre-eminently cognitive and informative” (Goffman 1971, 17). This also means it can be very lengthy at times.
However, some dialogues, especially those in the beginning-level Chinese materials, are solely devoted to formulaic expressions that do not involve adding new information to the speakers’ prior knowledge about each other. Exchanging greetings is one example. Also, although dialogues in the materials are often organized around topics, the extent of information covered by each topic is very limited and controlled because of pedagogical decisions about what students can or cannot do with the language at a certain stage of their learning. Moreover, while a conversation can last for hours, a dialogue has to stop reasonably after a number of exchanges that usually do not exceed two pages given the layout of materials.

Secondly, in a conversation, participants enjoy equal “speaker rights” (Wilson 1987, 96) in terms of “initiating talk, interrupting, responding, or deciding not to do any of these” (Warren 2006, 8). Since it is the materials developers who compose most dialogues, what the speakers choose to say or not to say is not technically determined by their will. Developers take the liberty of deciding who speaks next and what usage of language should be included in the script. Often, speakers in a dialogue take turns in an orderly manner unlike in conversations. And, interruption rarely occurs.

Thirdly, a conversation is marked by its spontaneity and unpredictability with regard to topic choices, unfinished articulation of ideas (Crystal and Davy 1969, 102-4), and topic shifts (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975, 4). Dialogues, on the contrary, are tailored for pedagogical purposes. Their topics are predetermined, and topic shifts within one context are uncommon. Speakers usually have no half-expressed thoughts. In fact, as Jones and
Ono (2000) observed, speakers almost convey too much information within one single utterance to the point of impeding communication (1).

1.2 The Rationale for Dialogues

Despite the fact that dialogues are not as extensively informative, voluntary in speakers’ will and spontaneous as conversations, the use of them as representations of native conversations is still necessary and even indispensable in foreign language pedagogy. One big reason has to do with the interdependent relation between language use and social participation, which scholars have referred to as language socialization. Ochs (1996) defined language as “a system of symbolic resources designed for the production and interpretation of social and intellectual activities” (407). This definition is twofold. On the one hand, any social relationship or event presupposes the presence and use of a mutually intelligible language for participants. On the other hand, social constructs or activities are the very things that language depicts, and more importantly, they also contextualize and justify the intentional choice of specific lexicon and linguistic structures in communication. Conversation, as Rieger (2007) posited, is “the primary and necessary domain for language socialization and development” (251). In other words, it is the most ubiquitous and basic social communicative event (Schiffrin 1988, 251-2) in daily lives where one needs to be concerned with how to “use language meaningfully, appropriately, and effectively” (Ochs 1996, 408) according to established social norms. Thus, in the context of foreign language study, the use of dialogues as imitations of native conversations first helps expose learners to the way in which a foreign society
operates and how its language is used. It also urges the learners to converse in the target language with a view to deliberately participating in another society or culture, and get involved in the lives of those who hold a different worldview.

In addition, as Walker (2010) pointed out, the goal for learning to communicate in a foreign language is to be able to “establish intentions in the foreign culture” (9):

Whatever you set out to accomplish in a social environment, whether by conducting business, research, or personal relations, your intentions must be recognized and accepted by the people with whom you are interacting. And you must be able to perceive their intentions as well. In the absence of mutual understanding of intentions, whatever you create with your use of language will rarely be what you intend. (9)

That is to say, language use is always driven by a purpose, and this purpose needs to be recognized and accomplished through “joint activities” (Clark 1996, 325) in the foreign culture by the participants. Since conversations are a key venue for these “joint activities” to take place, it is then natural to use dialogues for demonstrating and practicing how intention is communicated and accepted by using the foreign language. Specifically, dialogues show how common ground, an important determinant for successful conveyance of intention (325), gets to be established among the interlocutors. They illustrate not only how speakers of the foreign language “co-ordinate on the content of what they say … but also on the processes by which they establish that content” (329).
This characteristic of dialogues in a sense renders them a more straightforward teaching aid than, for example, monologues in the foreign language materials and classroom. Monologues such as event narration with no specified audience and no explanation of its intentional use of communicative strategies is just a one-way transmission of information. It is unclear whether the intended message has gotten across. In contrast, dialogic exchanges make it explicit if and how the intent is achieved among the interlocutors.

1.3 Defining Dialogue Experience

A dialogue experience in this study refers to an experience that instructors, programs or materials developers create for their learners through the composition and presentation of a dialogue as well as the exploitation of it in the forms of carefully designed drills or exercises. Learners are engaged in many dialogue experiences throughout a beginning- or intermediate-level program. It is the common expectation of instructors, programs and materials developers that these dialogue experiences will prepare the learners for situations that are likely to transpire in their future dealings with people from the target culture (Walker and Noda 2010, 26). In short, dialogue experiences should provide learners with the scaffolding and rehearsal that they need for participation in the new culture.

1.4 Dialogue Experience in Existing Chinese Pedagogical Materials

To understand dialogue experiences that include dialogue composition and presentation as well as drills and exercises design, it is worthwhile to examine how they

1.4.1 Presentation of Dialogues

1.4.1.1 Principles of Organization

   In general, these materials differ in their principle of organizing dialogues across lessons/units, despite the fact that the majority of them have two or more than two dialogues every lesson/unit according to Table 1. *Chinese: Communicating in the Culture* has the broadest category of dialogues for each unit. Its five units are “Meeting and Identifying People”, “Places and Activities Associated with Them”, “Time When: Events, Schedules, and Consequences”, “Going Places and Doing Things” and “Speed (Distance and Time)”. This partially explains why each unit would have seven to eight dialogues and these dialogues tend to cover a variety of topics. *Perform Suzhou* divides its units according to the general areas of life that learners will encounter after their arrival in Suzhou, China, such as settling down, campus life, food and friendship, sightseeing, social engagements and research. Dialogues that belong to the same unit present different
experiences related to that life area. For example, in the unit Food and Friendship, the
three dialogues cover an informal dining experience with a Chinese friend, a visiting
experience to a Chinese friend’s home and a formal banquet event with a Chinese
company manager.

Materials like *Integrated Chinese (Level 1)* and *Basic & Intermediate Spoken
Chinese*, comparatively speaking, organize their lessons/units around specific life events,
with each dialogue in one lesson/unit demonstrating one aspect of an event. In other
words, the event that is captured by one dialogue in *Perform Suzhou* is roughly regarded
as the theme for an entire lesson/unit in *Integrated Chinese (Level 1)* and *Basic &
Intermediate Spoken Chinese*. For example, while the formal banquet experience is
illustrated in one dialogue in the Food and Friendship unit in *Perform Suzhou*, it becomes
the theme for an Eating And Drinking unit in *Intermediate Spoken Chinese* and has three
consecutive dialogues demonstrating different parts of that experience. *New Practical
Chinese Reader* has a similar organizing principle as *Integrated Chinese (Level 1)* and
*Basic & Intermediate Spoken Chinese*, but for some lessons, the relation between the two
dialogues is not very clear. For example, in Lesson 2 “Are You Busy?”, the first dialogue
is greetings between Lin and Lu, while the second one is about Ding and his brothers
ordering coffee.

As for *Integrated Chinese (Level 2)*, the focus of the one dialogue for each lesson is
not so much what to say or do in a typical life scenario or event, but rather an
introduction of discourses on the various aspects or issues of the Chinese school and
social life. Some lesson titles are “Working Part-Time”, “Life and Wellness”, “Gender
Equality”, “Environmental Protection and Energy Conservation”, “Money Management and Investing”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average Number of Dialogues Per Lesson /Unit</th>
<th>Complements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Dialogue related picture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Using the speaker’ portrait instead of name to indicate who is speaking. (Integrated Chinese: Level 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integrated Chinese (Level 2): 20 lessons</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Practical Chinese Reader (Vol. 1): 14 lessons</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic &amp; Intermediate Spoken Chinese: 24 units</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perform Suzhou: 8 units</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chinese: Communicating in the Culture (Vol. 1-IV): 5 units</strong></td>
<td>7-8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Presentation of Dialogues in the Chinese Materials (I)

1.4.1.2 Complements of Dialogues

All of the dialogues in the above textbooks have either photos or illustrations that are supposed to help learners visualize the scenarios the dialogues present. *Integrated Chinese (Level 1)* goes so far as to use the cartoon portraits of the characters, instead of their names, to indicate who is speaking in the dialogue scripts.

Besides the text form, the same dialogues are also presented in audios or videos. One reason for having the audiovisual rendering of the dialogues is to bring into life the otherwise static or cartoony depiction of the scenarios by photos or illustrations. Learners then get to have exposure to natural speech and witness how language and behavior actually works in the flow of a conversation. Videos also give the learners a glimpse of
the cultural setting where a dialogue takes place, such as a campus corner in a Chinese university or a street view of a Chinese city. Sometimes, through the acting in the video, the intention and personality of the speakers are more explicitly revealed.

Materials such as *Chinese: Communicating in the Culture* prioritize the use of audio and video over other ways of dialogue presentation. But, in most cases, despite the good intention of materials developers, compared with the text form, audios and videos are less frequent mediums through which the learners encounter dialogues during their study. In fact, many users of the above materials reported that their instructors never made these audios and videos a mandatory part of the curriculum. In other words, even though audiovisual resources exist, since they have not explicitly made their way into the learners’ awareness, they are not part of the learners’ language learning landscape.

1.4.1.3 Mediums of Dialogue Presentation in Text

As shown by Table 2 below, the developers of these materials seem to have different beliefs as to how to present the dialogues in text. Even though *Basic & Intermediate Spoken Chinese, Perform Suzhou, and Chinese: Communicating in the Culture* all have a clear focus on the spoken aspect of the Chinese language, *Basic & Intermediate Spoken Chinese* choose not to print any Chinese characters; *Chinese: Communicating in the Culture* presents the writing system in separate units and characters are not introduced in accordance with the order of dialogues; and *Perform Suzhou* presents the dialogues in nothing but characters. Besides, *Basic & Intermediate Spoken Chinese* has English translation under each pinyin line in the dialogue, as if trying to make sure learners
understand what is going on right away. Such treatments of writing systems reveals two underlying assumptions about the role Chinese characters, or hanzi, play in learning spoken Chinese. One assumption seems to be that characters are only relevant in the reading and writing of the Chinese language and do not assist students in the learning of spoken Chinese. That is why they can be taught separately without following what students are able to produce orally. The other perceives characters as the way native speakers record the spoken language, and perhaps also as a good tool for differentiating Chinese homophones. Although it is not within the scope of this study to judge which assumption has more evidence, it will certainly be interesting to explore in the future which way of dialogue presentation is more effective for learners in terms of learning spoken Chinese.

The rest of the materials use both characters and pinyin to present the dialogues, and Integrated Chinese (Level 1 and Level 2) also has their English version at the end of every lesson. The co-existence of characters and pinyin might be because these materials are so designed as to train learners in both spoken and written aspects of the language. However, how exactly to treat pinyin in the texts is not consistent among the materials. Integrated Chinese (Level 1) has a separate pinyin version of the dialogue after the character version. Integrated Chinese (Level 2) places the pinyin dialogue at the end of each lesson. And New Practical Chinese Reader puts pinyin right above the characters in the dialogue.
## Table 2. Presentation of Dialogues in the Chinese Materials (II)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediums of Dialogue Presentation in Text</th>
<th>Dialogue Setting</th>
<th>Dialogue Content Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Character</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pinyin</strong></td>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Chinese (Level 1): 20 lessons</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Chinese (Level 2): 20 lessons</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Practical Chinese Reader (Vol. 1): 14 lessons</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic &amp; Intermediate Spoken Chinese: 24 units</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perform Suzhou: 8 units</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese: Communicating in the Culture (Vol. I-IV): 5 units</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1.4.1.4 Dialogue Settings

All of the chosen materials consider the introduction of dialogue settings a necessary component to the presentation of dialogues. It is done either by introducing the speakers and their relationships, or by providing a description of the scenarios before the dialogue scripts, or both.
In terms of speaker introduction, *Integrated Chinese (Level 1 & 2), New Practical Chinese Reader* and *Perform Suzhou* give learners an encounter with the cast of characters at the very beginning of the materials since all the dialogues revolve around their experiences. *Chinese: Communicating in the Culture* has five different groups of speakers, and each of them is introduced in the scenario description of the first dialogue that concerns them. *Basic & Intermediate Spoken Chinese* does not have a fixed cast. Every dialogue is conducted by new speakers who are introduced alongside the scenario description as well. Generally speaking, speakers’ backgrounds determine the scope and diversity of the cultural specifics and language use that are possible in the dialogues. For a set of materials whose cast mainly consists of Chinese language learners in a Chinese university, such as *New Practical Chinese Reader*, most of the dialogues will be done between these learners and people they meet on and off campus. The culture demonstrated by these dialogues is, thus, restricted by what Chinese learners can do in the Chinese society and how they should behave in the various likely scenarios. The use of language will also mostly concern informal situations. In contrast, materials like *Basic & Intermediate Spoken Chinese* whose intention is not to depict lives of a particular group of people, allow the dialogues to be conducted between people from all walks of life. This not only renders possible a wider variety of interactions in the Chinese culture but also the use of different conversational styles (Christensen and Warnick 2006, 20).

It is also interesting to note that other than the speakers’ names, their nationalities are seen as the second most important information to include in the introduction. Characters in *Integrated Chinese* come from the widest range of countries, including
some European countries, Korea, the United States and China. *New Practical Chinese Reader* covers countries such as Britain, Canada, the United States and China. Speakers in *Perform Suzhou* and *Chinese: Communicating in the Culture* are from either the United States or China. *Basic & Intermediate Spoken Chinese* is the same as them in this regard, but it also brings Taiwan into the picture. However, the value for such treatment of nationality is debatable. On the one hand, the reason for having a variety of nationalities, as in *Integrated Chinese* and *New Practical Chinese Reader*, is probably to make the materials more appealing to Chinese learners of diverse backgrounds. Yet, apart from that, it is not obvious whether such arrangement has any practical consequences in the way these characters interact with the Chinese culture. In other words, judged from what these characters say or do in the dialogues, their base cultures seem to affect neither their perception about the Chinese culture nor their use of the Chinese language. On the other hand, the inclusion of Taiwan could potentially reveal interesting differences between Taiwanese and Chinese cultures. For example, words that are neutral in China could have negative connotations in Taiwan.

With regard to scenario description, except for *New Practical Chinese Reader*, all the other materials have some information about each individual dialogues. However, the concreteness of information varies in terms of the types of information given such as time and location, the power of prediction for dialogue content, etc. Take the following as examples.
Example 1: *Integrated Chinese (Level 1)* Lesson 3: Dates and Time
Dialogue I: Taking Someone Out to Eat on His/Her Birthday
(Gao Wenzhong is talking to Bai Ying’ai.)

Example 2: *Integrated Chinese (Level 2)* Lesson 1: Beginning of Semester
Zhang Tianming is a college freshman. Just before school started, he had to come to school by plane because he lives far away. He was on the plane for more than two hours. After getting off the plane, he immediately hailed a cab, and soon arrived at the dormitory on campus. [Originally in Chinese. Translation mine.]

Example 3: *Basic Spoken Chinese* Unit 1 Part 2: “Long Time No See!”
Michael Smith, an American who works for an international bank, meets his Chinese friend Zhao Guocai on the street in Beijing one morning. The two men, both in their early 30s, have been acquainted for years, but they haven’t seen each other for a while. Smith is in a bit of a hurry, as he has an appointment in a few minutes.

Example 4: *Chinese: Communicating in the Culture* Unit 2 Stage 3: Locating the Action (Sino-American Trade Co., Beijing Office)
The following conversation takes place as Sheng Ying is accompanying her boss to a meeting with the head of a factory. They are to meet him at the entry to the Friendship Store, a large department store catering to foreigners where many Chinese export items are on display. Sheng Ying’s boss, Fang Guanying (Gwen Fountain), is fresh from the main office in the U.S. Sheng Ying is not too familiar with Fang who has recently been assigned to head the Sino-Am Trading Company by the multinational corporate entity that owns it.

Example 5: *Perform Suzhou* Unit 3.1: Do as the Host Thinks Fit
Characters: Zhou Danrui, Sun Hao, Server at the restaurant
(Right after the tutoring session, Zhou Danrui and Sun Hao remained in the classroom.)
(Sun Hao and Zhou Danrui arrived at the restaurant Jiangnan Renjia. They sat down and wanted to order some food.)
(After the meal, it was time to pay the bill.)
(Sun Hao and Zhou Danrui walked out of Jiangnan Renjia.)
[Originally in Chinese. Translation mine.]
Example 1 uses very generic terms (e.g., someone, his/her) to introduce the situation. Although the speakers’ names are given and their relationship implied, it is unclear who is taking whom out. Besides, the description does not explicitly say whether the dialogue will be about giving invitation or about the actual eating scene on the person’s birthday. Therefore, such setting is very unspecific and low in its prediction power. Example 2 narrates in some detail what has happened before the dialogue. It also sets the dialogue in a particular time and place. But, other than Zhang Tianming, the other speakers are unknown at this point. And for that very reason, it is difficult to predict what exactly the dialogue will be about. Since Examples 3 and 4 do not have a cast introduction at the beginning of the materials, both have provided a relatively detailed account of the speakers’ background and their relationship. Time and location are also mentioned. In terms of time, Example 3 is more specific (i.e., one morning) than Example 4 (i.e., some time after Fang has been promoted). In terms of location, Example 4 has supplied additional information about what kind of place the Friendship Store is. Moreover, both examples, to some extent, help the learners predict the dialogue content. And, it is worth pointing out that in Example 3, the statement about Smith’s eagerness to leave for his appointment further hints at how the conversation is going to end. Example 5 shows the typical way Perform Suzhou handles its dialogue settings. Because each dialogue in this set of materials usually depicts the progression of one experience, which often involves the appearance of new speakers or a change of locations, the descriptions of context will occur at every turn of events. The prediction power of the descriptions sometimes depends on how formalized the context is. In this particular example, it is hard to predict
why they end up in a restaurant and what they will talk about after they leave the place for the first and last settings. But it is relatively easier to imagine what they will do in that restaurant.

1.4.1.5 Content Sources of Dialogues

Among the chosen materials, only *Chinese: Communicating in the Culture* selects and adapts its dialogues from existing materials in the Chinese society such as Chinese movies *Strange Friends* and *A Great Wall*, and all the others have their dialogues composed specifically for each unit/lesson. There are pros and cons for both types of materials.

Materials that choose dialogues from existing sources have the advantage of presenting the target language and cultural behaviors in an uncompromising way. Sometimes, they also allow the learners to be aware of the historical change that a culture has gone through. The following dialogue taken from *Chinese: Communicating in the Culture*, which is a scene from the movie *Strange Friends*, presents the Chinese language and culture in a way that a composed dialogue hardly can.

**Dialogue Setting** *(Train Trip to Fuzhou)*

While passing time on the trip to Fuzhou, Tongsheng is getting into a slightly delicate area of Du Qiu’s relation with his wife by using playing cards to tell fortunes (*suànmìng*).

Tóngshēng: Búguò, nǐ shì-bù-shì......éi, wǒ shuō-le nǐ kě bié shēngqì a!  
Du Qīū: Shuō ba, shuō ba, méi-

Tongsheng: But, aren’t you … well, after I tell you, don’t get angry!  
Du Qiu: Say it! Say it! I can take
guānxí, shuō ba!
Tóngshēng: nǐ shì-bu-shí yǒu yídān(r) pà tā?
Dù qiū: Āiya, gēmenr, nǐ kě zhěnshì tài shēn le. Shíhuà dui nǐ shuō ba, wǒ nàkǒuzi a, shénme dōu hǎo, jiūshì píqi dà diànr.

it. Say it!
Tongsheng: Are you a bit afraid of her?
Du Qiu: Wow, buddy, you’re really incredible. To tell you the truth, my wife is fine in every way except that she is a bit bad-tempered.

This dialogue is rich in the use of interjections (i.e., “éi”, “Āiya”), sentence-end particles (i.e., “a”, “ba”), repetitions (i.e., “Shuō ba, shuō ba”), unfinished sentences (i.e., “Búguò, nǐ shí-bu-shí......”), and informal terms of address (i.e., “gēmenr”, “wǒ nàkǒuzi”), which are all features of natural conversations. Each of them serves a genuine purpose in the given context and is culturally meaningful. For instance, the unfinished “Búguò, nǐ shí-bu-shí......” shows that Tongsheng is hesitant to talk about the downside of Du Qiu’s marriage, and needs to prepare Du Qiu for what he is going to tell him. Meanwhile, it also indicates that Tongsheng is fully aware of the comfortable distance between himself and Du Qiu and what is socially expected from that distance, since he has only known Du Qiu for a few hours. Apart from language, the visuals of the dialogue such as the look of the train and its interior, what people do to pass time, as well as the actors’ clothing all point to the past of a culture and its change since then. Composed dialogues can rarely achieve this sense of a developing culture, since they mostly deal with contexts in the present-day Chinese society.

Despite the advantages of using such dialogues, materials developers have to give up some control over what and how to present to the learners. First of all, as they decide which chunks of the original source can be incorporated into the new materials for a
particular group of learners, it is often hard to find enough of those that can serve the specific objectives of each individual unit/lesson. It is even harder to encounter those chunks that contain all that the developers have in mind for the learners to know for a certain lesson that do not require any further editing or adaptation. Usually, additional drills and exercises need to be created to complement it. Secondly, the language and behaviors that learners are exposed to in the dialogues are restricted to the characters’ social identities and relationships in the original materials. Learners might not be able to relate those to themselves or to their own goal for learning Chinese. Also, contrary to what most foreign language materials do, those that contain original dialogues from the target culture might present vocabulary and grammar not in the order from easy to difficult, but as subject to the contexts of the dialogues. Therefore, the grammatical points that are generally considered as difficult in Chinese, such as le 了 and ba 把 structure might be taught relatively earlier.

For materials where all dialogues are composed, the developers can be fully in charge of the above areas. But, the quality and usefulness of those materials will vary greatly depending on how the Chinese language and culture are presented.

1.4.2 Composition of Dialogues

As discussed in the previous section, dialogues in the materials are either composed or selected from existing sources in the target culture. Whichever type a dialogue belongs to, ideally, it would be so tailored as to model for learners the actual linguistic and social behavior in the target culture (Walker 2010, 8). In other words, it should not only reflect
spontaneous speech interactions between at least two people who speak the target language (Rieger 2007, 253), but also demonstrate the unspoken protocols of appropriate and effective communication in the culture (Schiffrin 1990, 4).

However, previous studies have shown that dialogues in the language materials are far from reaching the above criteria. Particularly, many scholars have found fault with the composed ones, questioning their resemblance to daily conversations (Beresova 2015, 195-6). For example, Siegel (2014) investigated the chosen topics in the materials and found a gap between them and actual conversations conducted in that language. Scholars like Uso-Juan (2008) and Jones and Ono (2000) also pointed out that the language functions and speech acts included in the dialogues do not reflect the diversity and complexity of actual situations. Attention was also drawn to the lack of natural conversation features in the dialogues such as repetition, repair, false starts, clarification, backchannels, interruptions, fillers and hesitations (Rieger 2007, 254). Some scholars such as Widdowson (1990) even suspected whether it is possible to have dialogues in natural speech in a language learning setting (44). Still others like Rings (1986) posited that the authenticity of dialogues denotes a spectrum: from the most authentic one that is spontaneously conducted between native speakers of the language to the least authentic one that is composed for the purpose of developing language materials, and feasibility is one important factor to determine what dialogues to be used (207).

Valuable as the results of these studies are, they mostly drew their conclusions from what is already in the dialogue, i.e., given an existing dialogue the way it is, what are its deviations from the actual conversation in a similar scenario. In other words, they provide
a kind of post-analysis that offers only suggestions for revision. They do not question whether a dialogue is worth revising in the first place. In other words, the issue of whether there are other attributes that a dialogue should satisfy other than a relevant topic, appropriate speech act realizations and conversational features is not considered. Take the following dialogue from Discovering Chinese (Shen 2006) as an example.

李大中：你叫什么名字？
Li Dazhong: What’s your name?

王小文：我叫王小文。你叫什么名字？
Wang Xiaowen: I’m Wang Xiaowen. What’s your name?

李大中：我叫李大中。他叫什么名字？
Li Dazhong: I’m Li Dazhong. What’s his name?

王小文：他叫白大卫。她叫什么名字？
Wang Xiaowen: He’s Bai Dawei. What’s her name?

李大中：她叫白玛丽。
Li Dazhong: She’s Bai Mali.

Using the methodologies or perspectives adopted by the previously mentioned studies, many observations and revisions can be made with regard to the naturalness of this particular dialogue. One can, for instance, examine its topic, and note that since the situation is a simulation of a possible future encounter in China where names need to be exchanged among people of similar ages, it qualifies for a model dialogue in the materials. One can also analyze the language use in this dialogue, and be dissatisfied with its overt grammar-orientation (i.e., sentence pattern repetition and pronoun usage) as well.
as its ignorance of a variety of other introductory conventions such as to proactively initiate a name exchange by saying “Wǒ lái gěi nǐmen jièshào yíxià” (“Let me introduce to you…”). Besides, a conversation analysis approach may suggest incorporating more discourse features to the dialogue.

Yet, none of the analyses offer a clear set of guidelines as to what makes this dialogue an adequate model in the materials. What gives a dialogue its sense of sufficiency? Is a true-to-life topic or context enough to qualify a dialogue? Should diverse name-introduction strategies be present in a single dialogue? If not, what determines a particular strategy’s occurrence? Also, how many speech interactions or communicative behaviors should be included in a dialogue? And, what legitimizes the appearance of one discourse feature over another in a composed dialogue? Last but not the least, given all the revisions, how do we know if the revised dialogues are good for classroom practice and useful for learners? Even dialogues chosen from text/audio/video sources in the target culture are not immune from some of these questions. For example, it is difficult to determine what and how many exchanges of the original conversation should be included in one dialogue to make it suitable materials for teaching and learning.

1.4.3 Exploitation of Dialogues

Despite the fact that dialogues in some of the materials are used to teach all four skills of language use, the main purpose for having dialogues as the medium to present the target language is to prepare learners to conduct a similar conversation in the target society later. In that sense, dialogues are supposed to be performed, and all drills and
exercises arranged in the language classroom should target at building up learners’ competence for dialogue performances.

Usually, the way instructors approach a dialogue is to ask students to practice the different parts of the scenario depicted by the dialogue until they are ready for performing in the entire scenario. Then, it is reasonable to think that how a dialogue script is composed directly affects how instructors are going to dissect it to make each part of it understandable and performable for the learners.

An ideal script constitutes a conventionalized sequence of procedures that informs a person of what to expect next in a given situation (Schank 1990, 7). It includes what is expected both verbally and behaviorally (Christensen and Warnick 2006, 26). Take for example a dialogue about purchasing a bag at a night market in China. Its script might roughly include in succession greetings between the buyer and seller, discussion and promotion of the product, price negotiation, payment or refusal to buy, and parting remarks. For each step, the script would introduce commonly used vocabulary, structures and behaviors that serve the different intention of the buyer and seller in this scenario.

However, in the existing Chinese materials, the scripts that instructors are faced with differ quite a bit even for a similar scenario. Consider the following three dialogues about making purchases at a department store. The first one below is from Intermediate Spoken Chinese (Cornelius 2013). The script starts with the customer’s expression of her need. It is followed by a discussion of the product, namely its size. During the discussion, the action of trying on the shoes is inserted as an important behavioral step of the script. Next,
price is solicited and negotiated. The script ends with the customer’s euphemistic refusal of buying and the salesperson’s polite parting words.

售货员: 你穿几号的?
Shōuhuòyuán: Nǐ chuān jǐhào de?

售货员: 这双大一号，你试试看。
Shōuhuòyuán: Zhèshuāng dà yíhào, nǐ shìshì kàn.
(Takes out a pair of shoes for her to try on)

这双大小怎么样?
Zhèshuāng dàxiǎo zěnmeyàng?

售货员: 刚上市的，没有办法。
Shōuhuòyuán: Gāng shàngshìde, méiyǒu

售货员: 一千八。
Shōuhuòyuán: Yīqiān bā.

售货员: 刚上市的，没有办法。
Shōuhuòyuán: Gāng shàngshìde, méiyǒu

售货员: 这双卖多少钱?
Shōuhuòyuán: Zhèshuāng mài duōshào qián?

售货员: 刚上市的，没有办法。
Shōuhuòyuán: Gāng shàngshìde, méiyǒu

售货员: 这双卖多少钱?
Shōuhuòyuán: Zhèshuāng mài duōshào qián?

售货员: 刚上市的，没有办法。
Shōuhuòyuán: Gāng shàngshìde, méiyǒu

售货员: 这双卖多少钱?
Shōuhuòyuán: Zhèshuāng mài duōshào qián?

售货员: 刚上市的，没有办法。
Shōuhuòyuán: Gāng shàngshìde, méiyǒu
The second dialogue script, Huò bǐ sān jiā 货比三家 (to compare prices in different stores before buying) from Perform Suzhou (Jian et al. 2016) contains all the steps in the first script, yet it is different in these two major respects: First, the purchasing scene is only the second half of the entire dialogue. The first half mainly deals with why and how the person ends up in the store. In other words, this script seems to be a more complete account of the purchase experience. Secondly, it is clear that not all the previously mentioned steps are assigned the same weight in completing this buying scene. Here, price negotiation serves as the main procedure where other steps (i.e., product discussion and fitting trial) are inserted. The third dialogue script, “Buying Things” from Integrated Chinese (Level 2 Part 1) (Liu et al. 2010), is similar to the first script in that it has the steps such as expression of needs, discussion of products, price solicitation, decision to buy or not, and parting remarks. Yet, it has left out the steps of fitting trials and price bargaining. And the majority of the dialogue (including expression of needs, discussion of products, and decision to buy) is conducted between friends, not between the shop assistant and the customers.

In addition to the diversity of scripts for a similar context, the complementary drills and exercises in the materials that are supposed to support instructors in making pedagogical decisions as to how to perform the different parts of the dialogue only
complicate the situation even more. Largely because it is unclear why a script should have the content as it does, the design of the drills and exercises are often unfocused. One consequence is that it gives undue attention to some sections of the dialogue and neglecting the others. For the dialogue “Shopping for Clothes”, its Language Practice section only puts emphasis on the first two steps of the script, namely expressing one’s need or desire by the use of yao 要 and xiang 想 and discussing the different aspects of a product such as its color, size or length. And the other four steps illustrated above do not receive much attention even though these steps also contain new lexical, structural and culture information. For the dialogue Huò bǐ sān jiā 货比三家, only one drill is relevant to the first half of the script and all of the other six focus on the second half of the script, i.e., the purchasing scene. The narration exercise also gives priority to the shopping experience itself rather than what has happened before. Such arrangement might make instructors doubt the value of having the first half of the script in this dialogue since it is not given extensive practice later.

Another consequence is that the dialogue script is treated as an undifferentiated whole without pinpointing the procedures that it is composed of. It is seen merely as a place to introduce vocabulary and grammar. In other words, the drills and exercises have more to do with how to use a grammatical structure in random contexts, and could have little relevance to the original dialogue. It gives the impression that another dialogue that contains the same grammatical structures could also serve the purpose of this particular unit.
1.5 The Main Problem with Dialogue Experience Design

The main problem with dialogue experience design is that it is divorced from an understanding of learners’ experience of it. That is to say, when designing a dialogue experience, materials developers, instructors or programs have little knowledge about how that experience will affect the learners, or whether the experience is effective enough that the learners will be able to retain the information they are supposed to remember from that experience.

For example, in terms of dialogue presentation, the different treatment of dialogue scenario descriptions among the materials shows a lack of understanding about whether these descriptions are just some background introduction that can be omitted at times, or whether they can actually affect learners’ processing and memory of the dialogue materials.

Also, the ways mentioned above of evaluating the composition of dialogues indicate an isolated view of dialogues in pedagogy. The assumption is that once the dialogues in the materials are closest in every way to conversations in the target culture, they will certainly be an effective model in the process of teaching and learning. But, in fact, this assumption disconnects the content of dialogues from their use in the classroom and their impact on the learners.

Furthermore, as demonstrated by the above observations, drills and exercises do not often fully exploit what is composed into the dialogue. It is reasonable to think that the part of the dialogue that does not get extensively practiced will be forgotten more quickly later. As a result, learners will leave the classroom with only fragmented memory about
the dialogue situation, which can hinder their participation in a similar scenario in the future. Therefore, without principles to guide the design of drills and exercises that are derived from an understanding of how learners learn and remember, the outcome of learning is likely to run counter to what is expected by instructors and programs.

1.6 A Proposal

In order to understand how learners process and remember their learning experiences, the concept of story put forth by Walker and Noda (2010) is a useful one. Their basic assumption is that learning a foreign language involves constructing a memory about how to communicate effectively in this foreign culture (26). And teaching a foreign language is ultimately facilitating the construction of this memory (32). Ideally, this memory could help learners cope with similar situations that transpire in their future dealings with people from the target culture (29) by providing them with the appropriate language and behaviors (i.e., knowing what to say, when to say it, what specific actions to take) called for in these situations. And on top of these, this memory could also become the foundation for creating new memories from unfamiliar contexts.

Figure 1 illustrates the role story plays in this memory compilation process in the learning environment (32).
Story is defined as a “personal memory of having experienced a performance” (Walker and Noda 2010, 39). It is essentially learners’ takeaway from their performances in class, including performances based on model dialogues or dialogue segments. As learners accumulate more and more stories about conducting the dialogues, these stories are organized in the individual learners’ mind to represent a second-culture worldview. This worldview, in turn, will influence the learners’ persona\(^1\) in the study of this language and affect their interpretation of their later experiences with the dialogues in the materials.

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1. Persona is the initiator of the whole process. It is everything that a learner wants to present to others in the foreign language classroom (Walker and Noda 2010, 33). It refers to the part of self that a learner will dedicate to learning the language, and it changes throughout the learning experience. It is the hope of the instructors that learners will become more and more committed in the process as their memory of the new culture expands, and as a result of a pedagogy that can effectively facilitate their memory construction.
Given that what learners end up remembering about the target language and culture is closely connected with their personal stories formed through the dialogue experiences in class, then if we can understand how these stories are formed, i.e., what aspects of an experience are processed and retained, we will be in a better position to know how to make the cultural stories contained in dialogue experiences learners’ own stories. The design of dialogue experiences will then focus on facilitating this process of story formation.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 2. A Story-Informed Design of Dialogue Experience**

Based on the concept of story defined by Walker and Noda, this study will further explore story as a cognitive scheme for processing experiences, and propose using the elements of story structure to guide the design of dialogue experiences. Figure 2 demonstrates a story-informed approach of designing dialogue experiences. It starts from the input *story* in the full circle. Here, *story* refers not only to a culturally feasible story that will be composed into a dialogue, but also to the elements of story structure that this cultural story contains and through which it will be processed. In other words, *story*
denotes both the content of the dialogue and the categories of information in the content. The former makes sure what learners receive is culturally appropriate while the latter facilitates the processing and memorizing of the dialogue content by the learners. After composing a dialogue according to the above two criteria, the exploitation of the dialogue will be designed around the elements of story structure to reinforce the memory of the essential components of this particular cultural story. Optimally afterwards, learners will be able to retain that story and integrate it into their knowledge system. The dotted circle around the resulting story suggests a potential transformation of the original story when it interacts with individual learners’ prior knowledge. However, its essential components will hopefully still be retained.

1.7 Organization of This Thesis

This current chapter has first defined dialogues as a genre in the foreign language materials, and pointed out the limitations of dialogues in the materials as compared to conversations in everyday life. It has also examined the design of dialogue experiences in the existing Chinese materials, and argued that the main problem with it is its disconnection with learners’ experience. It has proposed that elements in the story structure, which learners use to process their experiences with, should be incorporated into dialogue composition, and also guide the exploitation of dialogues.

Chapter 2 will be devoted to an explication of story as a cognitive scheme for processing experiences. It will also focus on the four components of story structure, and
discuss the advantages of using them as principles for composing the stories in the dialogues that Chinese programs aim to teach the learners.

Chapter 3 will offer pedagogical suggestions about how a dialogue could be exploited or practiced in the classroom, given the four components of story structure it already has. Future research directions will also be discussed.
Chapter 2: From Story to Dialogue: Composing Dialogues

2.1 A Case for Story in Chinese Language Pedagogy

As discussed in Chapter 1, the dialogue experiences that the materials offer are often designed without considering how learners will remember about them later, and whether what learners do remember is indeed what is considered socially appropriate in the target culture. To bridge this gap, the rest of the paper will be concerned with the idea of story. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Walker and Noda (2010) perceived the creation of stories as one of the crucial steps in the memory compilation of a second culture. They defined story as “a personal memory of having experienced a performance” (39). This chapter will start to carry this idea further to explore the nature and significance of story in human experiences in general, and discuss its implications on Chinese language pedagogy, particularly the design of dialogue experiences.

2.1.1 Story as a Cognitive Scheme

Polkinghorne (1988) described human experience as “a construction fashioned out of the interaction between a person’s organizing cognitive schemes and the impact of the environment on his or her sense apparatus” (16). These cognitive schemes help “organize

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2. In this study, story is treated as an equivalent to narrative (Sarbin 1986, 3; Polkinghorne 1988, 13).
and interpret” experiences and produce meaningful memories about those experiences (16). And story is one of the cognitive schemes (e.g., Sarbin 1986; Bruner 1986, 1991; Polkinghorne 1988). What this means, first of all, is that story represents a mode of human thinking or knowledge (Carter 1993, 6) that emerges from interaction with cultures (Dowling 2009, 1). It is a mechanism of the mind through which humans interpret and construct the reality around them (Murray 2008, 112).

As humans reflect on their various experiences (Robinson and Hawpe 1986, 122), they do not just archive a series of often-disjointed or disorderly episodes. Instead, they have the tendency to organize them into a coherent narrative shape (Murray 2008, 115). Specifically, they will impose a temporal framework onto the events and give them a beginning and an end (115). At the same time, the mind is intensely involved in making meaning out of these events (Carter 1993, 7) in an attempt to understand how and why something happened. The mind is particularly interested in explicating people’s intentions by analyzing their behaviors in a given situation (6). It will also create causal links between these events, using information known or speculated (7), and construct a story to represent a model of the world “according to its own mix of cultural and individual expectations” (7). This story-making process is so natural and intuitive that our brain will see to it that stories are produced to explain our experiences, even if this means sometimes it has to fabricate a story for a situation not completely understood (Gottschall 2012, 99).

It is then not surprising that, when describing the characteristics of human memory, Schank (1990) argues that “[m]emory is memory for stories, and the major processes of
memory are the creation, storage, and retrieval of stories” (16). When the mind has made up a story as a result of making sense of what is happening, some aspects of the story will become the indices or labels to access that story in the memory (11). In other words, these are the memory traces that are used to represent that story. The more labels people create for a story, the more chances there are for them to remember and connect this story with other stories in the memory (11). When people are faced with a new experience, they will try to comprehend it by “extracting elements from the input story that are precisely those elements used to label old stories in memory” (59). That is to say, what is really involved in understanding an experience is to compare it with the old stories that a person has accumulated in the memory. Similarities will be reinforced to the point where they have become default expectations when processing experiences alike. Novelties that old stories cannot seem to provide any ready clues for explanation will be noted and later compared to similar “new” experiences until they eventually become the norm for particular contexts (Schank 1999, 23).

It is worth mentioning that for people who experience the “same” event, the content of their takeaway story will not be exactly the same. Undoubtedly, their stories will share a lot of similarities, but what details of the event are experienced and remembered will differ from one person to another. Plus, the indices for their prior experiences that they use to process this event can vary greatly.

In the Chinese classroom, learners are also engaged in making stories out of their experiences. Whatever they do (e.g., performing a dialogue, doing drills, getting feedback from the instructor, and dealing with miscommunication) serves as the source for the
creation of those stories. It is important that the stories learners walk away with can benefit their future encounters in the target culture. Materials and learners’ classroom experiences should all be designed towards that goal. However, as was pointed out above, the creation of indices in the memory is a highly idiosyncratic process. Even though learners sit in the same classroom, their experiences and stories will still vary considerably. If the mental representation of experiences is so complicated and somewhat unpredictable in some aspects, how can Chinese teachers guarantee that learners’ takeaway stories from the same dialogue experience will preserve the targeted language and behavior, and will eventually lead to the formation of a culturally appropriate memory about that culture?

The answer is that we cannot. But, if we can understand the components or structures that almost all stories share, which are arguably the rules by which our brains follow to construct stories, we will be in a better position to frame the dialogues in the materials so that the source of the takeaway story provides the most relevant information for processing and remembering. These “constant” elements of a story will be further discussed in the next section.

2.1.2 Story Structure

It is important to point out in the first place the inextricable relation between story as the mental representation of experiences and story as the product of telling or enacting of the mental “stories”. Bruner (1991) wrote about it very concisely as below:
… [there is] a great difficulty in distinguishing what may be called the narrative mode of thought from the forms of narrative discourse. As with all prosthetic devices, each enables and gives form to the other, just as the structure of language and the structure of thought eventually become inextricable. Eventually it becomes a vain enterprise to say which is the more basic—the mental process or the discourse form that expresses it—for, just as our experience of the natural world tends to imitate the categories of familiar science, so our experience of human affairs comes to take the form of the narratives we use in telling about them. (5)

One implication of this is that people’s articulation or staging of an event reflects how they have processed it, and meanwhile, it is precisely their processing of the event that prompts the particular way of expressing it. Therefore, given that it is nearly impossible to detect what exactly a story is composed of in the mind, the study of story as a processing structure has to rely on the various narratives that people produce. The assumption is that we can deduce from the stories people convey the schemas or grammars that they use to process and remember their experiences in their minds (Dowling 2009, 11).

According to Mancuso (1986), indeed, a “typical adult person assimilates input, … to an acquired, internal representation of narrative grammar structure” (91-2). And, this structure is not subject to change despite the varying content in different stories (92). Psychologists have identified the essential components that constitute this structure
Despite some differences, these components typically include “a setting or beginning event, a predicament, a protagonist who reacts, and an ending” that are joined together “temporally and causally in what might be called a plot” (10). Research has found that people are better at recalling stories that contain more story components than those that have fewer components (Stein and Glenn 1979). In addition, people tend to fill in the missing information according to their own speculation when one or more components of a story are missing (Mandler and Johnson 1977).

Understanding narrative grammar structure, or more specifically the categories of information that learners need to “complete” their story about an experience, can help prioritize the content to be included in dialogues, and make the practice of dialogues more focused. The following section will explore in detail the four elements of story that are relevant to dialogue design, and propose that if a dialogue captures these components of an intended story, the dialogue will be more memorable for learners.

2.2 Story Components Relevant to Dialogue Composition

2.2.1 Element One: World Model

World model refers to the setting that situates the dialogues that the learners are supposed to learn. It is the foundation for everything else in the dialogues. According to Bruner (2002), stories “provide models of the world” (25), where characters have expectations as to how this world operates (17), and through which these characters strive to give meaning to their experiences (27). Sachs (2012) also pointed out in his definition that the central message of a story is the worldview manifested through it (18). To Boyd
(2009), stories “in both factual and fictional forms … consolidate and communicate norms” (64). In other words, a story captures or represents a world that functions by certain assumptions, and where people behave in accordance with those assumptions.

When learners interact with a dialogue in the materials, they have consciously or unconsciously begun to construct a story or memory about the world model that the dialogue assumes. Ideally, in Chinese study, the dialogues that learners are presented with can demonstrate a Chinese world model, even when the cast in the dialogues involves foreigners, or the setting is not in China. Two questions can be helpful to test the authenticity of the world model embodied in the dialogue:

a) Is the context presented in the dialogue likely to happen in a Chinese communicative event?

b) Would Chinese people say or act in the way presented in the dialogue given the context?

If the answers to the above two questions are both an unhesitating yes, then the dialogue is a good candidate for the materials, because it has avoided any serious misrepresentation of the target culture for the learners.

A closer look at the materials that have been examined or mentioned in Chapter 1 reveals that many dialogues are not very effective in terms of presenting the Chinese world model. Here is an example.

Wang Peng’s little sister Wang Hong has just arrived from Beijing. She is going to college in the United States. Now she is staying at Gao
王鹏的妹妹王红从北京来，要在北京上大学，现在住在北京大学。为了提高英语水平，她每天看两个小时的电视。

高：快把电视打开，足球比赛开始了。
王：是吗？我也喜欢看足球赛。……这是什么足球啊？怎么不是圆的？
高：这不是国际足球，这是美式足球。
王：足球应该用脚踢，为什么那个人用手抱着跑呢？
高：美式足球可以用手。
王：我看了半天也看不懂。还是看别的吧。

Xiaoyin’s place to study English. In order to improve her English, she watches TV for two hours every day.

Gao: Turn on the TV quickly! The football game has started.
Wang: Really? I like watching football games too. … What football is this? Why isn’t the ball round?
Gao: This isn’t international football, but American football.
Wang: People should be kicking the ball. Why is that person running with ball?
Gao: You can use hands in American football.
Wang: Look! Look! So many people are piling up together. Won’t the person at the bottom be crushed?
Gao: No worries. They have strong bodies. They also have jerseys that are specially made. So, no problem.
Wang: I can’t understand anything. Let’s watch something else.
although Wang Hong speaks Chinese, it is questionable whether Gao Xiaoyin can speak Chinese as well. Gao Xiaoyin, according to the introduction of cast at the beginning of this set of materials, is from Britain and has a little brother who is studying Chinese. She has already graduated from college, and is now working as a school librarian (Liu et al. 2009, xxxi). Nothing is mentioned as to her experience with Chinese. Secondly, it is clear in the background information of this dialogue that Wang Hong is staying at Gao Xiaoyin’s place to study English. If so, it should be more promising for Wang Hong to speak English with Gao Xiaoyin, rather than Chinese. Thirdly, the content of the dialogue has more to do with a Chinese person trying to learn the basics of American culture than the other way around. For a Chinese learner in the United States who is familiar with American football, this dialogue provides very little information about China, other than the fact that Wang Hong, as a Chinese, does not have a clue about popular American sports. In terms of the second testing question, this is not an ideal dialogue either. Disregarding the inquisitiveness of Wang Hong for now, she does not seem to model for the Chinese learners a culturally appropriate way of reacting to an uninteresting situation as a guest. It is Gao Xiaoyin, the host, who initially wants to watch the football game. Therefore, it would be impolite to show no attempt at understanding the game rules in the first place, not to mention that she actually suggests doing something else.

From this analysis, we can see that it takes the consideration about many aspects of a particular set of materials to properly present the world model of the target culture, for example, the cast and their background, the legitimacy for using Chinese in that dialogue
context, the content of the dialogue, and the attitude and strategies that students are
learning from the dialogue.

2.2.2 Element Two: Scenario Simulation

Stories involve the “predicaments of the human condition” (Gottschall 2012, 55). And the reason for stories to have such a “problem structure” is to “[give] us practice in dealing with the big dilemmas or difficulties of human life” (83). Boyd (2009) also contended in the same vein that information in stories simulates the scenarios that could happen in the future (193), which is exactly what make stories crucial for our survival as social beings. To add to what has already been said about human mental representation of experiences, when we first form our personal memory of an experience, the parts that may be “directly related to present or future choices of actions” (176) are most likely to be retained. The rationale is that we are able to gain insight from others’ experiences (Hunte and Golembiewski 2014, 73), and learn from what works and does not work in the present situation to guide our future judgment and behavior in a similar situation in the future.

The purpose of designing dialogues is to present the various scenarios that are most useful and most likely to transpire in students’ future dealings with people in the target culture. It is also arguable that learners are able to remember the most when they see a connection between what they are taught and what they might do with the language in the future. A student who chooses to learn Chinese for the purpose of traveling in China will benefit from materials that focus on everyday life scenarios, while a business-oriented
student will get more out of the materials that teach what to expect in Chinese companies or how to do business with the Chinese. Therefore, when designing dialogues for a specific set of materials, we need to ask who the targeted learners are and whether the scenarios presented are congruent with the life situations that they are likely to face in the future. By doing so, the dialogue content in one particular set of materials can be more focused.

One helpful way to introduce simulated scenarios is through sagas. A saga refers to “a series of stories about a specific set of people or a specific location” (Walker and Noda 2010, 40). Materials like Integrated Chinese, New Practical Chinese Reader and Perform Suzhou have a group of foreign learners of Chinese as their key characters in the dialogues. And the scenarios involved are basically about their experiences on and off campus. The biggest advantage of this type of materials is that learners can, to a large extent, identify with the characters. The things that these characters are able to do in the target language can become the goals for the learners. Sometimes, through the mistakes that these characters make, students also learn what not to do in a particular situation, and more importantly how to make up for the mistakes once made. Another way of arranging the scenarios is to connect them with a specific place. For example, other than having a saga around a group of foreign students, Perform Suzhou, as its name indicates, have all the scenarios taken place in Suzhou. Students learn about real roads, shopping places, tourist attractions and famous dishes in Suzhou. The intention is that by learning how to participate in the Suzhou life, students can potentially apply the knowledge to other cities or sub-cultures in China.
For materials that cover different levels of Chinese, sometimes, it is worth introducing again in the more advanced level the scenarios that have already been taught in the lower level. The goal is to increase the complexity of language involved and also to expand the number of things students can do in the same scenario. For example, for a situation that includes name exchanges, students can start by simply saying their Chinese names at the beginning, and then move onto explaining how to write their names by using different name introduction strategies, and finally manage to tell relevant stories about their names in an appropriate context. Another example is that for a shopping scenario, students can be taught to do more and more things at different stages of their Chinese study. These things range from asking for price, comparing products, bargaining, returning purchases, discussing trends and styles, and so on.

2.2.3 Element Three: Expectation Disruption

A story also contains “some breach in the expected state of things” (Bruner 2002, 17). The breach is what makes a story worth remembering or telling (Bruner 1991, 15). According to the discussion in the previous section, whenever a person encounters a new experience, the novelty will stand out in the memory. If dialogues in the materials can cause a sense of disrupted expectations on the part of the learners, then information related to this sense of disruption will stand a better chance of being incorporated into their memory of the new culture.

On the other hand, expectation originates from personal experiences of recurrent situations and how things are customarily done in those situations within a world model.
When students begin to learn a foreign language, they bring with them their expectations of how this new language works based on their stories about their own culture(s) and language(s). Because of this “default mode”, if nothing in the dialogues attract their attention, then, the new language will just be treated as a translation of their base language(s).

In the study of a foreign language, the chances for a sense of disruption to occur are actually plenty. If dialogues in the materials satisfy the first element of a story discussed above, i.e., it reflects the world model of the target culture, a sense of disrupted expectation can naturally occur. First, it can result from the fact that some contexts are uniquely Chinese. For example, in the first Food and Friendship dialogue of Unit 3 in Perform Suzhou, when the waiter mentioned to Sun Hao (the Chinese student) and Zhou Danrui (the American student) that the restaurant was running out of fāpiào 发票, Sun Hao asked the person to charge them less. This part of the dialogue might strike the learners in three different ways: 1) A franchised restaurant could run without the necessary receipts in China; 2) The concept of fāpiào, though translated into English as receipt, operates somewhat differently than the receipts that American students are familiar with when they dine out; 3) Customers can negotiate the bill if fāpiào is not given. Here, the dialogue has opened another possibility of dining experiences for its learners. And if the teacher gets to explain what is going on and the students are asked to practice the strategy involved in this kind of scenario, then very likely, a story is created in the students’ memory. But sometimes, this type of expectation disruption can happen with just one simple sentence in the dialogue. In another dialogue in Perform Suzhou,
Zhou Danrui was going to get a SIM card for his phone because he had just arrived in Suzhou. Sun Hao wanted to help him by offering several times to go with him. One time, he said, “Yǒu hǎoduō zhòng tào cànn de, wǒ pà nǐ nòng bù qǐngchǔ.” (有好多套餐的，我怕你弄不清楚。) There are a lot of phone plans. I’m afraid that you won’t be able to figure them all out.) One student raised the question if it is appropriate to talk to people in that way because Sun Hao sounded like he was treating Zhou Danrui like a child, and she added that in the United States, one would never talk to their peers like that. Her concern about the things that the Chinese do and that the American don’t actually captured the moment of expectation disruption.

The sense of disruption can also occur when what should be said or done is observably different in a context that is common to both cultures. Examples are many. In a company setting, the American can address their superiors by their names while the Chinese would often use titles. In a banquet setting such as a wedding, the way the American and the Chinese give toasts differs greatly in terms of what to say and the amount of drinking that is expected.

Of course, expectation disruption can also come from the twists and turns of the plots in the dialogues. Being secondary to the types of expectation disruption just described, this type of expectation disruption, if used effectively can become the most revealing moments about the target culture. Then, the possibility of retaining the culturally appropriate information can be largely increased.

2.2.4. Element Four: Coping Strategy
The fourth component of a story, which is closely related to all of the previously mentioned elements, is the coping strategy for a particular situation. Gottschall (2012) made it an indispensable part of a story the resolution of troubles, or the “attempted extrication” from the predicaments (52). Also, according to Bruner (2002), the characters of a story will eventually exert “efforts to cope or come to terms with the [expectation] breach and its consequences” (17). Surely, for a story to become meaningful for a person or an audience so as to guide future plans and actions, the story has to contain “strategic information” (Boyd 2009, 176).

This is especially true for foreign language study. The mental representation of having experienced a certain simulated situation or expectation disruption will not be useful or complete for learners if no information about how to get through the situation (i.e., what optimum language or behavior to be adopted) is incorporated into the picture, or if the “how to” is too vague or culturally inappropriate that it will work poorly in the target culture. It should also be pointed out that sometimes teaching coping strategies through dialogues does not mean showing students the concrete steps to resolve a situation. Rather, it means helping students accept the expectations of the native speakers in this particular situation and reconcile themselves to the native way of dealing with it. Therefore, a coping strategy can end up being “not coping with it” if it is the native expectation not to say or do anything about the situation at a specific moment.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that this element of story is arguably the one that a learner devotes the most time to in and out of class. Therefore, the effectiveness of the presentation of coping strategies in the dialogues deserves greater attention.
Here is a dialogue that provides an inappropriate example of coping strategies for a visiting-a-friend’s-home scenario. Its failure is largely due to an ambiguous presentation of the Chinese world model that leads to an elimination of expectation disruption on the part of the learners.

(The doorbell rings.)
高文中：谁呀？
Gāo Wénzhōng: Shéi ya?
王朋：是我，王朋，还有李友。
Wáng Péng: Shì wǒ, Wáng Péng, háiyǒu Lǐ Yǒu.
高文中：请进，请进，快来！来，我介绍一下，这是我姐姐，高小音。
Gāo Wénzhōng: Qǐng jìn, qǐng jìn, kuài lái! Lái, wǒ jièshào yīxià, zhèshì wǒ jiějie, Gāo Xiǎoyīn.
王朋、李友：小音，你好。认识你很高兴。
高小音：认识你们我也很高兴。
Gāo Xiǎoyīn: Rènshi nǐmen wǒ yě hěn gāoxìng.
李友：你们家很大，也很漂亮。
Lǐ Yǒu: Nǐmen jiā hěn dà, yě hěn piàoliàng.
高小音：是吗？请坐，请坐。
Gāo Xiǎoyīn: Shì ma? Qǐng zuò, qǐng zuò.
王朋：小音，你在哪儿工作？
Wáng Péng: Xiǎoyīn, nǐ zài nǎr gōngzuò?
小音：我在学校工作。你们想喝点儿什么？喝茶还是喝咖啡？
Xiǎoyīn: Wǒ zài xuéxiào gōngzuò. Nǐmen xiǎng hē diǎnr shénme? Hē chá hái shì kāfēi?
The purpose for the design of this dialogue, presumably, is to teach the students how to be a guest in a Chinese household or in a family where communication is done in Chinese. However, the hosts in this dialogue are both British, and one of the guests is American, which again makes the legitimacy of speaking Chinese a prominent problem. Even if they are highly motivated to use Chinese in this specific scenario, it is still questionable whether the hosts are operating in the British world model but in the Chinese language. And any unnatural language use by the hosts will increase the ambiguity of the presented world model, such as the almost too formal speech style between peers (e.g., qīng 请, wǒ jièshào yīxià 我介绍一下), and the awkward use of Shì ma? 是吗? to show modesty before compliment. In terms of the strategies to cope with the scenario, first of all, it is somehow hinted to the learners that it is fine to stop by friends’ place without notifying them beforehand. Gao Wenzhong’s Shéi ya? 谁呀? at the beginning of the dialogue as well as Wang Peng’s response most likely imply that the hosts are not aware of the guests’ coming. Also, when offered drinks, it is more culturally acceptable to pick one of the options that the hosts have supplied. It is rather uncommon for the guests to give suggestions, let alone give two suggestions as demonstrated in the
dialogue. Although Wang Peng, as the only Chinese in the dialogue, has responded appropriately in this regard, his reaction, which can potentially cause a sense of expectation disruption on the part of the learners, is obscured by the more lengthy depiction of Li You’s reaction. Therefore, the teaching of coping strategies in this scenario is not very successful.

Although the four components are discussed separately above, they are not independent from each other. Among them, world model is indeed the most fundamental element that makes all the other three culturally congruent. Or rather, it is only when the other three elements reflect the target world model are learners presented with what they can actually say and do in the culture.
Chapter 3: From Dialogue Exploitation to Story: Creating Cultural Memories

In the previous chapter, four elements of story are proposed as the components for more memorable and effective dialogues in the Chinese language materials. However, good composition of dialogues alone cannot help learners create good stories that can benefit their future participation in the target culture. Deliberate practice of these different elements in the classroom is also very important. In this chapter, instructional suggestions will be given as to how to practice the elements in dialogues with a focus on listening and speaking. The ultimate goal is to intentionally provide students with the necessary information to form useful and culturally appropriate stories and to avoid their own compensation for information required by the story structure as far as possible.

3.1 The Goal for Dialogue Practice

Like any deliberate practice, dialogue practice requires “well-defined, specific goals” (Ericsson and Pool 2016, 15). These goals should not only guide the design of notes and drills in the materials that support the dialogues, but also govern the way dialogues are treated in the classroom.

3.1.1 Goal Description in Existing Chinese Materials
All the materials studied in this paper are aware of the importance of giving learners an overview of what to expect in a new lesson. This is done in the format of either listing learning objectives, or asking warm-up questions at the beginning of each lesson. Some general trends can be observed with regard to how these goals are presented.

Goal descriptions are sometimes very broad. Using the goal descriptions for greetings as an example. *New Practical Chinese Reader* (Lesson 1) says, “By the end of the lesson, you will be able to express some everyday greetings in Chinese.” This goal suggests to students that what they are going to practice is the kind of greetings that they can use everyday with anyone on any occasion in China. But what the two dialogues in that lesson teach is *Nǐ hǎo* (你好) and *Nǐ hǎo ma?* (你好吗?), which arguably are not what Chinese people will use on a daily basis and towards anybody. The descriptions for *Integrated Chinese* (Lesson 1) and *Basic Spoken Chinese* (Unit 1) are similar: the former says, “you will learn to use Chinese to exchange basic greetings”, and the latter, “Greet Chinese people you meet and respond to their greetings”. *Chinese: Communicating in the Culture* (Unit 1 Stage 1) has provided more details by saying, “greet people using appropriate terms of address”. But still, it does not specify with whom and in what situations the use of appropriate terms of address is necessary.

Also, goal descriptions are often based on key vocabulary and sentence patterns presented by the dialogues. For example, the learning objectives for the rest of the *Integrated Chinese* (Lesson 1) are: 1) “Request a person’s last name and full name and provide your own”; 2) “Determine whether someone is a teacher or a student”; 3) “Ascertain someone’s nationality”. The advantage of such listing is that students get to
know the items covered in a specific lesson. But the downside is that they have little idea of how these different items would fit into a coherent picture in the dialogue.

3.1.2 Goal Description for Practicing Dialogues with Story Elements

A dialogue containing the four story elements are very specific in terms of the scenario it presents, the kind of expectation disruption it brings given the world model and the coping strategies it wants to teach the students. The scenario usually determines what expectation disruptions will likely occur, and also restricts the number of coping strategies that are needed. World model is what informs all these elements and weaves them into a coherent whole. But overall, all these elements are intended for the creation of a culturally appropriate story that the language teachers want the learners to remember. This story should capture the important strategies that the learners need to know in order to perform in a particular context. Plus, these strategies should demonstrate the differences, if there are any, between operating in the target culture and the assumed base culture. Here is a sample dialogue designed for a set of beginning level Chinese materials with a sample goal description at the end.

Sample Dialogue:

*Speakers:* Wang Jun, whose English name is Jacob Warner, is currently an American college exchange student studying Chinese in the XX Language Institute in Beijing. He arrived in the city two days ago. Li Lin is the daughter of Wang Jun’s Chinese host family when he was visiting Beijing two years ago. Wang Jun and Li Shan are about the same age.

*Setting:* In a bookstore around noon, Wang Jun ran into Li Shan who recognized him first, and they exchanged greetings.
李琳：欸，王军？
王军：李琳！
李琳：你在北京啊！
王军：是啊！好久不见。
李琳：你在北京啊！
王军：是啊！好久不见。
李琳：好久不见。

Li Lin: Hey, Wang Jun?
Wang Jun: Li Lin!
Li Lin: You are in Beijing!
Wang Jun: Yes! Long time no see.
Li Lin: Long time no see.

Goal description: In this dialogue, you will learn to greet a peer that you haven’t seen for a while. Here are some strategies you will practice:
1) Get their attention by saying “Éi”.
2) Greet them by correctly pronouncing their names with a tone of surprise.
3) Point out the obvious state they are in or the things they are doing.
4) Use conventional expressions such as “Hǎojiǔ bùjiàn.” to literally mean “Long time no see”.

It is worth noting that at first glance, the sense of expectation disruption is not very obvious in the above dialogue and goal description. But, as discussed in Chapter 2, there are three contexts in which expectation disruption on the part of the learners is likely to happen: 1) The scenario is uniquely Chinese; 2) The way of handling the scenario is observably different between the Chinese culture and the learners’ base culture; 3) There is an unexpected event that the character in the dialogue is experiencing which the learners can sympathize with. Here, the designer of the dialogue has assumed that expectation disruption can happen because of the latter two contexts. For context 2), some learners might notice that in their own culture, stating the obvious is rather silly but in the Chinese culture it is prevalent. For learners whose culture has similar way of
treating this scenario, they can take the perspectives of Wang Jun and Li Lin and understand their surprises at that moment. In either case, this would be a story that stands better chance of being told later.

3.2 Dialogue Practice

One of criticisms of existing Chinese materials, as discussed in Chapter 1, is that the drills and exercises that accompany the model dialogues do not have a focus as to what to practice in the dialogues. Sometimes, they would give undue emphasis on only part of one dialogue even when the rest of the dialogue is also rich in cultural information and strategies. Moreover, these drills and exercises often treat the model dialogues as pretext for the introduction of vocabulary and grammar. One major consequence is that the things that are actually practiced depart greatly from the contexts given by the model dialogues.

In this section of the chapter, specific instructional suggestions will be provided to resolve the above issues based on the four elements of dialogues. The sample dialogue shown above will continue to be used as an example to show how practice can be carried out given this piece of material.

3.2.1 The Role of World Model and Simulated Scenario in Practice

The two elements World Model and Simulated Scenario set the criteria for any practice that is to be done based on the model dialogue. World Model serves as a testing ground for the authenticity of the contexts, language and behavior that are involved in the
practice. Simulated Scenario helps limit the possible variety of contexts to the most relevant ones in a particular set of materials and in the practice of the dialogue. Additionally, these two elements are the source places where the explanation of vocabulary and grammatical structures are derived from for both the model dialogue and extra materials in the practice. In other words, cultural assumptions, expectations and intentions behind the surface meaning of the lexicons and sentence patterns can only be found in the World Model and the specific scenario where they appear.

3.2.2 Practicing Coping Strategy: Dialogue and Drills

3.2.2.1 The Treatment of Vocabulary and Grammar

For the kind of dialogue practice that aims at helping students remember the specific strategies that they can use in the future, its focus should not be vocabulary and grammar. But, this is not to say that no time should be devoted to the practice of linguistic codes. Rather, the learning of linguistic codes should be treated as a means towards a better execution of the strategies in the dialogues. In other words, a considerable amount of class time needs to be given to the practice of strategies to ensure students’ automaticity in applying them in various contexts.

This attitude towards vocabulary and grammar also indicates that the sequence of grammar introduction, especially in the drills where skills in the model dialogue get to be expanded, might not follow the traditional from-simple-to-difficult order. Instead, it will depend on what strategies are to be taught, which however still requires a reasonable gauge on the ability of students by the materials developers and instructors.
3.2.2.2 Dialogue Performance

Model dialogues are the first place to introduce the target strategies; therefore, it is only logical to practice the strategies in them first before expanding on the relevant skills. It would also be ideal to have high-quality audiovisual materials to accompany the dialogues so that students can imitate the pronunciation, intonation and behaviors required by the scripts.

If a dialogue is relatively brief, like the sample dialogue above, and the strategies it introduces serve the same social purpose, this dialogue can be practiced in a single performance. But if the dialogue is long and the strategies involved belong to different categories, then practice performances should be based on one chunk of the dialogue at a time that deals with one particular group of strategies.

3.2.2.3 Drills

The purposes for the practice of coping strategies in drills include: 1) To expand on one particular strategy in the dialogue by introducing a set of new vocabulary to increase the variation of the context; 2) To expand on one particular strategy in the dialogue by introducing several new sentence patterns that serve the same communicative function; 3) To supplement the strategies in the dialogue by introducing other useful strategies that serve a similar social function. The complexity of drills gradually increases as more linguistic codes and cultural information are to be absorbed.
Take as an example the practice of the third strategy in the above sample dialogue, i.e., “Point out the obvious state they are in or the things they are doing”. The drills can look like the following.

First, city names in China and the word zhèr/zhěl 这儿/这里 (here) can be introduced to put this encounter in various places. That is to say, if this dialogue happens in Shanghai, the student will say “Nǐ zài Shànghǎi a! (你在上海啊!)”. This is the easiest type of drills for the learners since they are already familiar with this structure when they practice the sample dialogue.

Then, other structures that can be also used to point out the obvious state people are in or the things they are doing are introduced. The first option is the structure “Nǐ (adj.) le.” to explicitly comment on the other person’s change in appearance. Adjective candidates are shòu 瘦 (skinny/slim), pàng 胖 (fat/chubby), gāo 高 (tall). However, although the context of the original dialogue does not necessarily need to be changed, it must be pointed out to students that this structure can only be used between friends or when an older person is talking to the younger. Another option is the structure “Nǐ zài (verb phrase) a!” to explicitly describe the activity the other person is engaged in at that moment. Verb phrase candidates are kànshū 看书 (read a book), xiě zuòyè 写作业 (write a homework assignment), chīfàn 吃饭 (eat), děngrén 等人 (wait for someone). Also, by introducing this structure, the context needs to be changed from a long-time-no-see scenario to an everyday encounter.

The third type of drills, which is also the most demanding for learners, involves an introduction of another strategy for greeting people—asking questions. In this case,
structures can vary according to different purposes. For instance, the question structure “Nǐ (verb phrase) le ma?” (e.g., Nǐ chī fàn le ma? Have you eaten already?) is useful when you expect the other person to have done something. Here, it takes careful judgment on the part of the materials developers and instructors as to what structures to include and what not.

3.2.2.4 Improvisation

Having practiced the model dialogue as well as the different drills that expand their ability to handle similar scenarios, students should be given the opportunity to improvise on their own. For a situation that is as simple as greeting, instructors can let the students come up with multiple culturally appropriate possibilities themselves. For a more complex situation, instructors can first determine several elements of the performance (e.g., the place, time and roles), and then let students create their own conversations. It is reasonable to imagine that at the beginning level, students will rely more on the set phrases and structures they have learned. But as they move to more advanced levels, the variation of their language will increase tremendously.

3.2.3 Practicing Describing Expectation Disruption: Storytelling or Narration

The element Expectation Disruption determines whether a story, or a dialogue performance experience in particular, is worth remembering and telling. The purposes for the practice of this element are manifold: 1) To help students reflect on their dialogue experience and form a story; 2) To reinforce the memory they already have about the
dialogue experience; 3) To start training narrative discourse at an early stage; 4) To push their conversation skills to another level (since conversations often contain narrative components).

3.2.3.1 Whose Story to Tell

There are two types of students’ storytelling, one is from their own perspective and the other is from the perspective of a character in the model dialogue. While the latter depends more on plot twists or memorable events in the dialogues, the former relies on learners’ real encounter with and reflection on the dialogue experience. Also, the latter kind of story is more manageable from a pedagogical point of view than the former, because the character’s experience in the dialogue is straightforward and students are equipped with the same structures to describe it. But, to elicit meaningful personal observations and stories of the differences in culture and language and to be able to do that in the target language require a lot more time and effort from both the students and the teachers.

It is maybe because of that very reason and of the fact that speaking classes are solely focused on the production of target language and behaviors that the value of learners’ own stories about their dialogue experiences is in most cases ignored in language teaching. Instructors do not often get to hear what confuses or interests the learners in a deeper sense other than questions about vocabulary and grammar. It can be argued that learners’ stories can potentially reveal a lot of cultural peculiarities and discrepancies that instructors are not aware of (Walker 2010, 14) in a more direct and
experiential way, even though this means these stories have to be told in the base language at the beginning.

3.2.3.2 The Difficulties of Storytelling

Storytelling or narration in the target language requires a different set of procedures or pedagogical scaffolding than the practice of coping strategies discussed in the previous section. Its complexity cannot be fully explored given the scope of this paper. But if students’ competency for storytelling can be built up gradually and systematically, the chances for retaining appropriate cultural stories from the dialogue experience will be much higher since memory about an experience is more likely to be reinforced when that experience is told in the form of stories (Dowling 2009, 6) over and over.

Here are some very general observations of students’ narration in class, which poses challenges for the instructors but at the same time sheds light on the pedagogical decisions that need to be made about narration classes. These observations are restricted to students’ narrating from the perspective of a character in the dialogue. And most of the time, they are telling a specific listener what new experiences they have had based on what has happened in the dialogue materials.

The first challenge is that students would often disregard whom they are telling the stories to. However, this type of narration is only meaningful when the teller understands the role of the listener and chooses only the most relevant information that might interest him or her. This is actually a very natural information selection and story construction process that everyone goes through every day during conversations (Schank 1990, 36).
But it seems difficult when this is done in a foreign language. And, partly because of this challenge, maintaining the coherence of narration is another problem. Their stories are usually constructed according to chronological order rather than around the central message that they want to convey. An attempt to do so would often lead to disorganization of information. The third challenge is the accurate delivery of vocabulary and grammar structures. But the big question underlying this challenge is that how to effectively introduce linguistic codes to the learners to better help them express their thoughts in storytelling. Given these challenges, future research can be focused on the scaffolding of narrative strategies in the language classroom.

3.3 Conclusion

Dialogue, as a genre in the foreign language materials, is an important element in Chinese language pedagogy. However, an examination of the design of dialogue experiences in the current Chinese materials reveals that it is often divorced from an understanding of learners’ experience of them. For a pedagogy that aims at preparing students for future participation in the target culture, one major consequence is that instructors are at a loss in terms of how effective the dialogues are and how much is retained after practicing them.

In this thesis, I have proposed to use the idea of story to guide the composition and exploitation of dialogues. The ultimate goal is to help students form culturally appropriately stories or memories that they can readily apply to future encounters in the target culture after deliberate dialogue practice. Specifically, story is viewed as an
instrument of the mind that processes experiences according to narrative structures that contain essential components. The more narrative components an experience satisfies, the more memorable that experience is. Meanwhile, when an experience lacks a certain narrative component, the mind will automatically try to compensate for that missing by filling in speculated information. Based on this understanding of story, I have discussed in detail the four elements of story, i.e., world model, scenario simulation, expectation disruption and coping strategy, as the most relevant components for creating culturally appropriate stories in Chinese learning. I have further proposed that the composition and practice of dialogues should center on these four elements.

Future research can be conducted first to understand what stories learners have retained from their dialogues experiences, and whether these stories reflect the cultural memories that instructors expect them to walk away with. Research can also be done to empirically test the idea proposed in this study by designing classroom experiences using dialogues that contain these components. Moreover, research needs to be done in terms of how to build up narrative strategies. Such understanding would allow stories in the form of mental representations to be more effectively articulated and shared with people from the target culture.
References


