

DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION STUDIES
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

INTEGRATION OF ETHNIC CHINESE CHILDREN INTO
IRISH PRIMARY SCHOOLS

VOLUME II OF II

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Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Montessori Education

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of
Doctor of Philosophy

Supervisor: Dr. Carmel Mulcahy

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Appendix A

Plain language statement (English and Chinese versions)

Dublin City University Plain Language Statement

Dear principal/teacher/parent,

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Jia Liu, a full time research student in the School of Education Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, DCU. The research title is *Integration of Chinese Students into Irish Primary Schools*. The purpose of the research is to identify ways in which Irish schools can ease the integration of Chinese students into Irish society. Through the research it is intended that the Chinese community in Ireland will benefit through increased knowledge into the process of integration, which is involved in schooling at Primary level providing them with a voice in the research process.

The principal investigator of the research is Dr. Carmel Mulcahy and the investigator is Jia Liu.

Principal Investigator Name and Contact Details:

Dr. Carmel Mulcahy Tel: +353-1-7005566 (8102) E-mail: carmel.mulcahy@dcu.ie

Address: The School of Education Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, DCU.

Investigator Name and Contact Details:

Jia Liu Tel: +353-857147299 E-mail: jia.liu4@mail.dcu.ie

Address: CA126 Postgraduate Room, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, DCU, Ireland.

The research will be of direct benefit to the children, who are currently being integrated into Irish schools. The process of the research will be focussed on parents of children at primary level within the Chinese community in Dublin, school principals and class teachers in at least 20 schools in the Dublin region and children attending these schools.

Schools will be the first point of contact in order to establish a relationship with students, teachers and parents. Requirements of the research may include involvement in interviews, completion of observations, questionnaires, audio/vidiotaping of events, etc. The amount of time each of the session may take varies from approximately fifteen minutes to an hour. Legal process will be observed at all times to guarantee safety and protection of the child, e.g. presence of another adult. Meetings will take place in an accessible public space instead of taking place at the researcher or participant's home.

The aim of the investigation is to ease Chinese children's integration into Irish schools. It will benefit Chinese children, their parents, the teachers and the schools in a variety of ways, for example, in helping to build more bridges between the parents and the schools, to involve the parents more and improve the communications between the two groups; to give children more support in varieties of ways, such as cultural, language and psychological support, etc. through the dissemination of research findings to the Chinese community; and to give Chinese children more confidence, which will not only help them to fit into the Irish society more smoothly, but also to maintain their own culture.

In order to protect the confidentiality of the participants, their involvement will be catalogued numerically. All personal names will be omitted. Nonetheless, in spite of employing this measure, taking into account that the sample size of participants involved in the project is relatively small, maintaining participants' anonymity may be difficult; therefore each participant from the outset is advised that there is a possibility that confidentiality may be breached. Participants are asked to consider this carefully prior to committing to their involvement in the project. If participants agree at the outset to participate they can withdraw from the project at any time and this will be made clear to them throughout the research process.

The involvement of the research study is on a voluntary basis. Therefore participants (including children) may withdraw from the Research Study at any point. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the Research Study have been completed. The researcher will ensure the consent of parents and assent of children if they are willing to participate. As children are a vulnerable group, their individual consent will be sought as well as the consent of their parents who will sign the form. At all times the researcher will ensure that the child is not coerced, is free to withdraw from the process and the interviews will be conducted in a neutral setting.

If your child immigrated from China to Ireland, s/he was born in Dublin, or s/he was adopted from China, it would be very appreciated if you could take part in this research. If you do wish to participate, please fill in the following DCU Consent Form and bring it back when your child comes to the school next time; if you do not wish to participate, please bring the blank form back to school as well.

Thank you very much for all your help!
Kind regards,

Jia Liu
School of Education Studies, DCU

If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Office of the Vice-President for Research, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel: +353-1-7008000.

尊敬的老师/家长，

您好！

我是一名来自于都柏林城市大学（DCU）人文社会科学院教育系的博士研究生。目前我正在进行一项关于中国孩子在爱尔兰学习生活状况的研究，研究题目为《中国孩子在爱尔兰小学的融合》，主要针对从中国移民到爱尔兰，出生在爱尔兰，以及被收养的中国孩子等展开研究。此课题的主要目的在于了解广大家长和孩子在爱尔兰教育体系中的需求，寻求爱尔兰小学帮助中国孩子的方法等。

此项研究的管理研究者为卡莫尔·穆卡黑博士（Dr. Carmel Mulcahy），研究者为刘嘉。

管理研究者姓名及联系方式：

Dr. Carmel Mulcahy 联系电话: +353-1-7005566 (8102) 电子邮箱: carmel.mulcahy@dcu.ie
地址: The School of Education Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, DCU, Ireland.

研究者姓名及联系方式：

刘嘉 联系电话: +353-857147299 电子邮箱: jia.liu4@mail.dcu.ie
地址: CA126 Postgraduate Room, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, DCU, Ireland.

在研究调查过程中，您可以对您孩子在爱尔兰的学习生活情况畅所欲言，及时反馈您的孩子所遇到的难题，并非常欢迎您向我们提出您的想法及宝贵意见。研究过程中可能会应用问卷调查，抽样采访（采访中会录音），观察研究等方式。

特此声明，此研究对参与者无任何风险，所有提供的个人资料将受法律保护。对这项课题的参与完全建立在自愿前提下，即使在参与过程中您也可随时退出，无任何处罚措施。**此课题纯属学术研究，与爱尔兰移民局无任何关联，请大家放心！**

调查研究结果密切关系着我们所有在爱尔兰的家长及孩子，它将帮助您孩子更好地融入当地爱尔兰学校，更好地汲取中国文化，并增建家长与老师，家长与学校间的友好交流桥梁。

衷心希望大家都能百忙中抽出一点时间，积极参与配合调查研究工作！若您愿意参与此项调查研究，请在以下《都柏林城市大学调查研究参与者同意书》上签字，并于下次上课时交还于学校；若您不愿意参与此项研究，也请将空白表格交还给学校。

再次感谢大家的积极配合！

此致，
敬礼

刘嘉
DCU 人文社会科学院教育系
二零一零年十一月二十八日

Appendix B

Informed consent form (English and Chinese versions)

Dublin City University Informed Consent Form

Research Study Title

Integration of Chinese students into Irish Primary Schools.

Principal investigator: Dr. Carmel Mulcahy, the School of Education Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, DCU.

Investigator: Jia Liu, the School of Education Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, DCU.

Clarification of the purpose of the research

The purpose of the research is to identify ways in which Irish schools can ease the integration of Chinese students. The study will concentrate on the Chinese children's specific needs in Ireland and how schools can answer these needs. The result of the investigation will benefit Chinese children in Irish schools, and also the parents, teachers and schools.

Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the plain Language Statement (*Requirements may include involvement in interviews, completion of questionnaire, audio-taping of events*)

Participant—please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question).

Have you read or had read to you the Plain Language Statement? Yes/No

Are you aware that your interview will be audiotaped? Yes/No

Do you understand the information provided? Yes/No

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? Yes/No

Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? Yes/No

(*If you haven't got satisfactory answers to your questions, the researcher will be at the Chinese school where your child is attending, or you can contact the researcher: Jia Liu, Tel:085-7147299, E-mail: jia.liu4@mail.dcu.ie.*)

Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary.

Involvement in this research is entirely on a voluntary basis. Therefore participants(including children) may withdraw from the Research Study at any point. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the research study have been completed. Legal process will be observed at all times to guarantee safety and protection of the child, e.g. presence of another adult. Meetings will take place in an accessible public space instead of taking place at the researcher or participant's home.

Advice as to arrangements will be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations.

In order to protect the confidentiality of the participants, their involvement will be catalogued numerically. All personal names will be omitted. Nonetheless, in spite of employing this measure, taking into account that the sample size of participants involved in the project is relatively small, maintaining participants' anonymity may be difficult; therefore each participant from the outset is advised that there is a strong likelihood that confidentiality may be breached. In which case participants are asked to consider this carefully prior to committing to their involvement in the project. Although even if participants agree at the outset to participate they can withdraw from the project at any time.

Signature:

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researchers, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project.

Participants Signature: _____

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Your Child's Name: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

都柏林城市大学调查研究参与者同意书

研究项目简要介绍:

此调查研究题目为《中国孩子在爱尔兰小学的融合》。卡莫尔·穆卡黑博士 (Dr. Carmel Mulcahy) 为此项研究的博士生导师，刘嘉为博士研究生。

这个课题的主要目的在于了解广大中国孩子在爱尔兰教育体系中的需求，寻求爱尔兰小学帮助中国孩子的方法等。研究将针对中国孩子在爱尔兰的独特需求展开调查，调查研究结果将会帮助中国孩子更好地融入当地爱尔兰学校以及更好地汲取中国文化，不仅会使孩子，而且会使家长，老师与学校等多方面都受益。

参与者请阅读并完成以下问题（请在“是”或“否”上划圈）。

您明白此研究可能会需要您做问卷调查，抽样采访吗？ 是/否

您意识到您的采访会被录音吗？ 是/否

您已经阅读了研究者给您的信了吗？ 是/否

您明白以上研究者所给的信息吗？ 是/否

您有机会问研究者问题吗？ 是/否

若您有问题，那您的问题被研究者满意解答了吗？ 是/否

（若您有问题，研究者将在学校为您解答，或者您可以直接联系研究者刘嘉，电话：085-7147299，电子邮箱：jia.liu4@mail.dcu.ie）

特此声明，对这项课题的参与完全建立在自愿前提下，即使在参与过程中您可随时退出，无任何处罚措施。此研究对参与者无任何风险，所有研究都依照合法程序执行以确保您的安全，例如：采访总是会安排在公共场合进行（例如：学校），而不会在研究者或参与者的私人家中；对孩子的采访总会有家长或老师的陪同等。

为了保证参与者私人资料的保密性，在文献中参与者姓名将全部使用数码编录或匿名。尽管如此，由于此项研究参加者相对较少（一百五十人），如果您担心您的身份可能会被猜到，您可以慎重考虑是否参与此研究。但即使您已经参与了研究，您也可以在任何时候退出。

我已经阅读并理解以上款项。我的问题和不解已被研究者解答。研究者将会在我同意参与后给我一份同样的《都柏林城市大学调查研究参与者同意书》备份。所以，我愿意参与此项研究。

参与者签名： _____

日期： _____

Appendix C

Child's assent form (English)

Integration of Ethnic Chinese Children into Irish Primary Schools

Child's Assent Form

My name is Jia Liu. I am trying to learn about what you think about studying in Irish Primary Schools. I am trying to learn about what you think about studying in your schools, because I want to know whether there are any difficulties for Chinese children studying in Ireland. For example, I want to find out if there are any difficulties and if so how the school can help with them, etc. If you would like, you can be in my study. The research will benefit you, your parents, your teacher and your school.

If you decide you want to be in my study, you will have a chat with me for about half an hour, and all of your words will be recorded. At the same time, one of your parents or your teacher will be with us as well, just to give you some company. If you like, I will sometimes sit in your classroom to observe what your school life is like.

Other people will not know if you are in my study. I will put things I learn about you together with things I learn about other children, so no one can tell what things came from you. When I tell other people about my research, I will not use your name, so no one can tell whom I am talking about.

Your parents or guardian have to say it's OK for you to be in the study. After they decide, you get to choose if you want to do it too. If you don't want to be in the study, no one will be mad at you. If you want to be in the study now and change your mind later, that's OK. You can stop at any time.

My telephone number is 085-7147299. You can call me if you have questions about the study or if you decide you don't want to be in the study any more.

I will give you a copy of this form in case you want to ask questions later.

Agreement

I have decided to be in the study even though I know that I don't have to do it. Jia Liu has answered all my questions.

Signature of Study Participant (the child): _____ **Date:** _____

Signature of the parent: _____ **Date:** _____

Signature of Researcher: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix D

Questionnaire (English and Chinese versions)

Questionnaire

Please fill the blanks and tick the relevant boxes below. Please note that if you have two or more than two children, "your child" means the 4-12 years old Chinese child; if you have two or more than two Chinese children who are between 4-12 years old living in Ireland, please complete one form for each child.

Part One: Child's Profile

Name of child _____ Sex: Male Female

Age of the child _____ Nationality _____

Which country was the child born in? _____
(If the answer is China, can you indicate which region in China? _____)

How long has the child been in Ireland? _____ years

Has your child ever attended primary school in China? Yes No
(If your answer is yes, how many years did your child attend in the primary school in China? _____ years)

Has your child ever attended primary school in any other country besides Ireland or China? Yes No
(If your answer is yes, which country was it? _____
How many years did your child attend primary school there? _____ years.)

Family contact phone number _____

Name of child's Irish primary school _____

School's address (if available) _____

Part Two: Family Background

1) How many children do you have in your family? _____

If you have more than one child, please list their ages: _____

2) City of origin of mother: _____

3) Number of years of mother has spent in Ireland: _____ years

4) What is the Mother's native language? (Single Choice)

- English
- Chinese Mandarin
- Chinese Cantonese
- Irish
- Other languages (please specify): _____

5) Mother's education level: (Single Choice)

- No formal education
- Primary school
- Secondary school
- Third level education
- Higher degree (MA, MSc, PhD etc.)
- Professional qualification

6) Mother's English fluency: (Single Choice)

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- None

7) City of origin of father: _____

8) Number of years of father has spent in Ireland: _____ years

9) What is the father's native language? (Single Choice)

- English
- Chinese Mandarin
- Chinese Cantonese
- Irish
- Other languages (please specify): _____

10) Father's education level: (Single Choice)

- No formal education
- Primary school
- Secondary school
- Third level education
- Higher degree (MA, MSc, PhD etc.)
- Professional qualification

11) Father's English fluency: (Single Choice)

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- None

Part Three: Child's Language

1) What is your child's native language? (Single Choice)

- English
- Chinese Mandarin
- Chinese Cantonese
- Irish
- Other languages (please specify): _____

2) Which language do you think is the most important one for your child? (Single Choice)

- English
- Chinese
- Both English and Chinese
- Irish
- Other languages (please specify): _____

Please use grade 1—5 ("1" means "not important", "5" means "very important") to rate the importance of each language for your child in your opinion.

English _____
Chinese Mandarin _____
Chinese Cantonese _____
Irish _____
Other languages _____

3) Does your child get extra help with their English at school? Yes No

If the answer is yes, how does your child get extra help at school?

If the answer is no, do you think your child needs more help with his/her English at school?

Yes No

If yes, do you have any suggestions for how the teacher could provide more help?

4) How would you rate your child's fluency in English? (Single Choice)

- Very Advanced My child speaks and understands English fluently.
- Advanced My child speaks and understands very well but sometimes has problems with unfamiliar situations and/or vocabulary.
- Pre-advanced My child speaks and understands well but still makes mistakes and occasionally fails to make himself/herself understood.
- Upper Intermediate My child can communicate without much difficulty but still makes quite a lot of mistakes and is misunderstood sometimes.
- Intermediate My child can speak and understand reasonably well and can use basic tenses, but has problems with more complex grammar and vocabulary.
- Low Intermediate My child can make simple sentences and can understand the main points of a conversation but needs much more vocabulary.
- Pre-Intermediate My child can understand and communicate simply in familiar situations but only with some difficulty.
- Elementary My child can say and understand a few things in English.
- Beginner My child does not speak any English.

5) Do you feel you are in a position to help your child's English at home?

Yes No

If the answer is yes, how often do you do it? (Single Choice)

- Everyday
- More than once a week
- Once a week
- Once every two weeks
- Once a month
- Less than once a month

How do you provide this help?

6) How would you rate your child's Chinese? (Single Choice)

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- None

7) How does your child learn Chinese? (Multiple choice, tick as many as apply)

- My child learns Chinese in a Chinese school in Dublin
- My partner or I teach our child Chinese at home
- Our child has a private tutor to teach them Chinese
- My child does not currently study Chinese
- Other ways
Please specify: _____

8) What language does your child usually speak at home? (Single Choice)

- English
- Chinese
- Both English and Chinese
- Irish
- Other languages (please specify): _____

Part Four: Friends

1) Are there any other Chinese children in your child's **class** in his/her **Irish primary school**?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

If your answer is yes, roughly how many Chinese children are in the class?

2) Does your child normally socialize with these Chinese children in his/her Irish primary school?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Part Five: Difficulties & Suggestions

1) In your opinion, what aspect of studying in an Irish school presents the greatest challenge for your child? (Multiple Choice, tick as many as apply)

- Language
- Cultural differences
- Lack of Chinese culture
- School application
- Social relationships
- Communication between parents and the school/teachers.
- Others

Please specify : _____

Do you have any more thoughts about this question?

2) Do you have any suggestions for the Chinese schools in Ireland?

3) Do you have any suggestions for the Irish primary school your child is attending?

Participant signature: _____

Date ___/___/_____ (dd/mm/yy)

Thank you for your participation and help!

中国孩子在爱尔兰小学融合的调查问卷

请填写并在相关方框内打对钩。请注意如果您有两个或两个以上的孩子，“您的孩子”是指您的4-12岁有中国血统的孩子；如果您有两个或两个以上4-12岁有中国血统的孩子，请为每个孩子各填一份问卷。

第一部分：您孩子的部分基本信息。

您孩子姓名：_____ 性别： 男 女

您孩子年龄：_____ 国籍：_____

您孩子是在哪个国家出生的？_____

(如果您的答案是中国，请指出是中国哪个地区：_____)

您孩子已经在爱尔兰居住了多久？_____年

您孩子以前在中国上过小学吗？ 是 否

(如果您的答案是肯定的，请问您孩子在国内上过几年小学？_____年

您孩子以前在除中国和爱尔兰之外的其他国家上过小学吗？ 是 否

(如果您的答案是肯定的，请问您的孩子在哪个国家上过小学？_____

请问您的孩子在此国家上过几年小学？_____年

您的联系电话：_____

您孩子所在爱尔兰小学名称：_____

学校地址(如果您知道的话)：_____

第二部分：家庭背景情况

1) 您有几个孩子？_____

如果您有两个或两个以上的孩子，请列举每个孩子的年龄：_____

2) 请问孩子母亲来自于哪个城市？_____

3) 请问迄今为止孩子母亲已居住于爱尔兰多久? _____年

4) 孩子母亲的母语为哪种语言? (单选)

- 英语
- 普通话
- 粤语
- 爱尔兰语
- 其它语种 请指明_____

5) 孩子母亲受教育程度: (单选)

- 无正式教育
- 小学
- 中学
- 职业学校
- 大学专科或本科
- 大学硕士或博士
- 其它 请指明_____

6) 孩子母亲的英文水平? (单选)

- 非常好
- 好
- 一般
- 不太好
- 无任何英语基础

7) 请问孩子父亲来自于哪个城市? _____

8) 请问迄今为止孩子父亲已居住于爱尔兰多久? _____年

9) 孩子父亲的母语为哪种语言? (单选)

- 英语
- 普通话
- 粤语
- 爱尔兰语

其它语种 请指明_____

10) 孩子父亲受教育程度: (单选)

- 无正式教育
- 小学
- 中学
- 职业学校
- 大学专科或本科
- 大学硕士或博士
- 其它 请指明_____

11) 孩子父亲的英文水平?(单选)

- 非常好
- 好
- 一般
- 不太好
- 无任何英语基础

第三部分: 孩子的语言

1) 孩子的母语为哪种语言? (单选)

- 英语
- 普通话
- 粤语
- 爱尔兰语
- 其它语种 请指明_____

2) 您认为对您孩子来说最重要的是哪种语言? (单选)

- 英语
- 汉语
- 英语汉语同等重要
- 爱尔兰语
- 其它语种 请指明_____

请用数字 1--5 级来表示您认为以下每种语言对您孩子的重要性（其中 1 级表示一点儿也不重要，5 级表示非常重要）：

英语 _____
普通话 _____
粤语 _____
爱尔兰语 _____
其它语种 _____

3) 您认为您孩子现在的英文水平如何？（单选）

- 非常高级 我的孩子在听，说和理解英语上没有任何问题。
- 高级 我的孩子听和说方面很好，但有时在碰上不熟悉的环境或单词时有点障碍。
- 初高级 我的孩子听和说方面不错，但仍然会犯错误，有时会误解别人或被误解。
- 高中级 我的孩子交流没有太大的困难，但仍会犯较多语言上的错误。
- 中级 我的孩子英语还算可以，能够用基本时态，但对更复杂的语法或单词有困难。
- 低中级 我的孩子可以造简单的句子，可以理解对话的大概意思，但需要更多的词汇。
- 高初级 我的孩子在熟悉的环境下可以用简单的句子交流，但仍会犯错误。
- 初级 我的孩子只会说和理解一点儿英语。
- 始学者 我的孩子不懂任何英语。

4) 在学校您的孩子在英文方面会得到老师比其他孩子更多的帮助吗？（单选）

- 是
- 否
- 不清楚

I. 如果您的答案是肯定的话，那您的孩子会得到老师怎样的额外帮助呢？

II. 如果您的答案是否定的话，那您认为您的孩子在英文方面需要老师更多的帮助吗？

- 是
- 否
- 不清楚

III. 如果您认为您孩子在英文方面需要更多的帮助，那您对爱尔兰学校老师有什么好建议吗？

5) 您平时在家会有意识地帮助您孩子提高他/她的英文水平吗？ 是 否

如果您的答案是肯定的，请问您帮助您孩子英文的频率大约是怎样的？（单选）

- 每天
- 多于每星期一次
- 每星期一次
- 每两星期一次
- 每月一次
- 少于每月一次

您是通过怎样的方式来帮助您孩子提高英文水平的？ _____

6) 您认为您孩子的汉语水平是在哪个层次？（单选）

- 非常好
- 好
- 一般
- 不太好
- 无任何汉语基础

7) 您孩子是怎样学汉语的？（多项选择）

- 我的孩子在中文学校学汉语
- 我或我家人在家教孩子汉语
- 我的孩子有私人中文教师
- 我的孩子中文很好，不用刻意去学中文
- 我的孩子不懂中文，也不学中文
- 其它

请指明 _____

8) 您孩子在家一般讲什么语言？（单选）

- 英语
- 汉语
- 英语和汉语
- 爱尔兰语
- 其它语种 请指明 _____

第四部分：朋友

1) 在您孩子的**爱尔兰学校的所在班**里有其他中国孩子吗？

- 有
- 没有
- 不知道

如果您的答案是有的话，据您所知您孩子班里大约有多少中国孩子呢？ _____

2) 您孩子经常和他/她爱尔兰学校的这些中国孩子在一起玩耍吗？

- 是
- 不是
- 不知道

第五部分：困难与建议

1) 您觉得您的孩子在爱尔兰小学中学习最困难的是哪些方面呢？（多项选择）

- 语言
- 中西文化差异
- 对中国文化的欠缺
- 孩子申请学校问题
- 孩子的社交
- 父母和学校及老师间的交流
- 其它

请指明： _____

在这个问题上，您还有什么更多的想法吗？

2) 您对在爱尔兰的中文学校有什么建议吗?

3) 您对您孩子所在的爱尔兰小学有什么建议吗?

参与者签名: _____

时间 ____/____/____ (年/月/日)

衷心地感谢您的参与合作!

Appendix E

Interview schedules

E.1 Interview Questions for Parents

1. Firstly, would you like to briefly introduce your child?

2. Are you familiar with Irish primary school and the curriculum?

Do you know anything about Chinese primary school and the curriculum? If the answer is yes, what are the key differences and similarities?

3. How well does your child integrate into the Irish primary school? Are there any difficulties that your child encounters? If there are any, what difficulties does your child experience within the Irish primary school?

Language— Does your child have language support in Irish class? If not, do you think s/he needs it? How do you help your child's English at home?

Social development— What do you think of your child's social interaction with his/her peers in school? Does your child have many friends at school? Does s/he have any Chinese friends?

4. Does your child go to a Chinese school in Ireland? If the answer is yes, why do you send your child to the Chinese school?

Chinese language and culture— Do you think that Chinese language and culture is important for your child? If so, how do you help your child to learn Chinese language and culture? Do you know whether your child's teacher has ever taught anything about Chinese culture in class?

5. Does your child attend a school where religious education is taught? How does this affect you and your child?

6. How do you get involved with the school work normally? In what ways do you normally communicate with the class teacher and the school? Are you happy with the level of communication between you and the teacher at the moment? Do you have any suggestions?

How do you compare your expectations of your child compare with those of Irish parents?

7. If there were a primary school that taught both the Irish and Chinese curricula, would you be interested in sending your child there?
8. Is there anything else that you think would be interesting for me to know?

E.2 Interview Questions for Chinese Children

1. How old are you? Which school year are you in?
2. Have you ever had any experience in a Chinese primary school before? If you did, how do you compare the Chinese and Irish schools? What similarities and differences are there? Which kind of school do you prefer? Why?
3. What do you think of your English level? How much can you understand in class? Do you have a language support teacher? If so, how does this teacher help you normally?
4. Do you have any Irish friends in your class? Is making Irish friends easy or difficult for you? What topics do you talk about with your Irish friends?
5. How do you learn Chinese language normally?
6. How do you learn Chinese culture normally? Have you ever learned any Chinese culture in your Irish school?
7. How do you compare your parents with Irish parents? What do you think of their expectations? Which kind of parents you prefer? Why?
8. Do you have religious class in your school? What do you think of it?
9. Is there anything else that you think would be interesting for me to know?

E.3 Interview Questions for Chinese Principals and Educational Scholar

1. Firstly, would you like to briefly introduce yourself and your school? How long has the school been established? Why was this school established?

2. Are you familiar with Irish primary school and the curriculum?

Do you know anything about Chinese primary schools and their curriculum? If the answer is yes, what are the key differences and similarities?

3. In your opinion, how well do Chinese children integrate in Ireland? Do you think there are any difficulties? If there are, what difficulties do Chinese children normally have?

Language— What do you think of the English level of Chinese children in Ireland?

Social development— What do you think of their social interaction with their peers in school?

4. Do you think Chinese language and culture is important for Chinese children in Ireland? If so, can you explain why?

How does Confucianism influence Chinese children's education in Ireland?

5. What do you think of the influence of religious education on Chinese children in Irish primary schools?

6. What do you think of Chinese parental involvement in Irish schools?

7. What do you think of Chinese parents' expectations? How do they compare to those of Irish parents?

8. Do you have any suggestion to help Chinese children to integrate better in Irish schools?

9. Is there anything else that you think would be interesting for me to know?

E.4 Interview Questions for Irish Principals

1. Do you have any students of non-Irish background in your school? If so, how many are there? Do you have any Chinese children in your school? If so, how many are there?
2. How well have they integrated? What in your opinion are the most common difficulties in integration for non-Irish students into Irish primary school? Do you think that children from different countries have the similar difficulties or different difficulties? Do you think there is any specific difficulty encountered by Chinese children?
3. How does your school support the integration of Chinese children?
4. How many language support teachers are in your school? Normally how do they help with the child's English?
5. Does your school introduce different cultures to your students? If so, can you elaborate?
6. What do you think of the expectation of the parents of children from non-Irish background? Do you think the parents' expectations are the same for different nationalities? In particular what do you think of Chinese parents' expectation? Do you think social class and gender effect Irish parents' expectation?
7. How is communication managed between school staff and Chinese parents?
8. Do you have any suggestions for non-Irish parents in order to help their children integrate better?
9. What are the main challenges you face as a principal in trying to support integration within your school?
10. Is there anything else that you think would be interesting for me to know?

E.5 Interview Questions for Irish Teachers

1. Do you have any experience working with children from other countries? Do you have any experience working with Chinese children?
2. How would you rate this child's integration level in the class? Are there any difficulties they encounter? If there are, what are they?
3. How do you facilitate these integration needs?
4. How good is the Chinese child's level of English? Does s/he have language support? How does the language support teacher help the child?
5. How is the child's social interaction within the class?
6. How well does the child learn in class? What are their strongest and weakest subjects?
7. What do you think of Chinese parents' expectations compared to those of Irish parents?
8. What is the biggest challenge in being a class/language support teacher with children from different culture backgrounds?
9. Do you have any suggestions to help Chinese children to integrate better?
10. Is there anything else that you think would be interesting for me to know?

Appendix F

A sample matrix

Matrix for T1 Parent 1

| Phrase/Word/Term | Page | Sub-Category | Category |
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| There are a lot of differences, such as the number of students in each school. They (the Irish primary school) have much less students. There are normally several classes in each year in a Chinese primary school. It is very normal to have more than five classes in every year, and there are more than 40 students in each class . There are much less students in an Irish primary school. | 1 | Number of students | Educational Environment |
| The other thing is that the amount of homework is much less than the amount of homework in China. My child is a good example. She came to Ireland when she finished her first year in school in China. Every day, she normally needs to use one to one and a half hours to finish her homework (in China). The amount of homework would be doubled on Friday . Because the teacher would think that the children also have Saturday and Sunday two days free, so of course there will be more homework during weekend. However, in Ireland, she started at the 2nd class, she normally spends half an hour to do her homework. When she got to 3rd class, she takes about 45 minutes to finish it. There is no homework on Friday . If there is any holiday, there is also no homework. | 1,2 | Amount of homework | Educational Environment |
| They (the Irish teachers) seem want the children to play more. | 2 | Play | Educational Environment |

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| <p>There is another differences is the length of the school day. The school day in China is longer than the one here. In a Chinese primary school, students normally arrive at school around 7:40am. I remember that the 1st year students finish school about 3:40pm in my daughter's school. I just heard from one of my colleagues that the 3rd year students finish school about 4:30pm. It was said that school lunch time is from 12:00 noon to 1:30pm, however, in reality, the time is shorter. Especially when it is close to final exams, the teacher would ask the students to do some tests after lunch. The students only need to arrive at school around 8:40am in Ireland, and they finish school around 2:15pm. So the length of school day is approximately three hours shorter here.</p> | 2 | Length of School day | Educational Environment |
| <p>The other thing is that children have plenty of free activity time in school here. Chinese primary schools do have P.E. Class, a P.E. Class per week is still can be promised. There is about ten minutes break between each classes. In Ireland, the school day is already very short. The children also get two breaks. The first one is about 20 minutes. It is pure playtime on playground. The second time is about 40 minutes and it is students' lunch time.</p> | 2 | Length of break | Educational Environment |

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| <p>The other thing is that the atmosphere during the class in Irish schools is different from the one in Chinese schools. All the students sit in pairs, rows and rows, the teacher teaches in the front of the classroom. However, in Irish primary school, the seating plan is kind of like a kindergarten. The students are divided into groups. There are three groups in her class. There are about seven or eight people in each group. They are divided into three groups and each group has a leader. The leader is changed often. The group is changed once a month. So the children can have different people in their group. It is better for teamwork. The teacher also gives them projects often. So this can help them to learn how to work with other people.</p> | 2,3 | Seating Plan | Educational Environment |
| <p>Irish education emphasises literature a great deal. This might be because there were many famous writers in Irish history, so great emphasis is put on language and literature. For example, their school has a small library with more than 1000 books. Every student is required to borrow a book every week. The school also sent a letter to all the parents to let parents encourage their children to read more, and try to buy books for their children and borrow books from the library. The school also suggested the parents can read the books with their children, afterwards the parents can ask some questions to the children. The children can talk about their own opinion, and are encouraged to write a book review. What is this book written about? Who is your favorite character? What did you learn from this book? So they need to write a book review every time they finish a book.</p> | 3 | English Reading | Language Curriculum |

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| <p>I'm actually one of their volunteers who work in their library. We take turns. I help them once or twice a month. The children can borrow books from Monday to Thursday. There would be two or three parents there every day to help to lend and get back the books, and classify the books, etc. I think this is really very good.</p> | 3,4 | Volunteer work | Parental involvement |
| <p>However, their mathematics seems not that good. I remember the government emphasis to improve their mathematics education last year. Their mathematics, well, compare to the mathematics in Chinese primary school, it is much easier. For example, same in 3rd year, the Chinese mathematics textbook already covered the two digits multiplication and three digits division. The divisor can be three digits number too. They also learned indivisible division. Anyway, it is much higher level than the one in Irish schools. They only learned one digit multiplication, three digits addition and three digits subtraction. The mathematics level in Chinese primary school is much higher. It is too easy here.</p> | 4,5 | Mathematics | Curriculum |

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| <p>She... well, she is not that easy, because she needs to learn Chinese curriculum at the same time. She is going back to China to do her 4th year, so she has to study the Chinese curriculum. Every day, when she finishes her homework in Irish school, she also needs to do her Chinese homework, Chinese and mathematics. Look at that pile of books! (She points to a pile of book on her desk). See, she has all the Chinese textbooks for 3rd year and 4th year. The first term and second term, she has them all. The books on the other side are for her 2nd year, she has finished them. So now she has finished her 3rd year Chinese curriculum. I would teach her the Chinese curriculum at the same time. I also bought lots of exercise books and let her do the exercises there.</p> | 4,5 | Chinese curriculum | Curriculum |
| <p>Chinese primary schools have exams. Even the first year students have exams. They have tests when they finish a unit, they also have mid-term exams, final exams each year, even mock exams, the first year students have mock exams before their final they do have mock exams. Children have lots of pressure. In Irish primary school, there is no exam... well, I can't say these is no exam, there is a sort of test once a year, English and mathematics. I don't know whether it is organized by the Department of Education. The tests seem quite easy anyway.</p> | 5,6 | Assessment | Curriculum |

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| <p>She started to learn English when she was in kindergarten. The English language education is very good in China now. It is different from the English education when we were young. I learned English from the fifth class in primary school. Nowadays, most of the kindergartens in China has English subject. She also had English when she was in primary school.</p> | 6 | Child learnt English at a young age. | Language Curriculum |
| <p>I never see her do revision before her test, the teacher never said anything about reviewing the things they had learned for the test. The teacher just let us know there will be an English test on a certain date.</p> | 7 | Teachers' attitude towards assessment. | Curriculum |
| <p>When she was in 2nd class, her teacher has a small test every Friday. Her teacher in 2nd class would give them paper, they need to spell fifteen words on the paper. There are also about ten mathematic exercises. In the English session, there are also about ten English session, for example to add punctuation to the sentence, or give you a word and let the children put the word in a sentence, and so on. They have this kind test every Friday, and then give the papers back and let the parents sign on Monday.</p> | 7 | Informal assessment | Curriculum |
| <p>So the teacher gives the exercises to test how well the children have learned. They don't have the formal final exam at the end of each term. There is also no formal mid-term exam. The schools here don't have the formal exams as Chinese primary schools do.</p> | 7 | No formal assessment | Curriculum |

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| <p>I: How is her Irish then? P: Her Irish is all right. She can catch up with other children. Her teacher said she studies Irish very hard. She got a B in an informal test this time. I: How do you help her Irish at home P: I don't help her Irish at home. I don't know any Irish. I don't know how she learns Irish. She has Irish homework every day. The homework can be reading and writing.</p> | 8 | Irish | Curriculum |
| <p>Oh, there is another very good thing in Irish schools that I think I must mention. She has reading homework every day. When she started her 2nd class, she had reading homework. When she was in 1st class in China, the teacher also would emphasise the importance of reading, but not as much as the degree in Ireland. In Irish schools, the children are asked to read. They need to borrow books from the library every week and the parents are encouraged to buy books for children as well. They also need to write a review after reading. The Chinese primary school doesn't emphasise reading as much as Irish primary schools.</p> | 8 | English Reading | Language Curriculum |
| <p>The other thing is that most of the Chinese family just has one child nowadays. So the parents would ask their children to go to all kind of classes during weekend, such as English class, music class, chess class, mathematics class and so on.</p> | 8 | Extra Curriculum | Curriculum |
| <p>I: Are you familiar with the Irish curriculum? P: I'm not quite clear about their curriculum, but I know what subjects they learn. They learn Irish, mathematics and English.... they seem also have geography.... and science. They have music and P.E. as well.</p> | 9 | Uncertainty about Irish curriculum | Curriculum |

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| <p>I: Then in your opinion, which subject is her best in Irish primary school? P: Should be mathematics. (Laughter) To be honest, I'm not that clear, because I didn't pay so much attention to her study. She has very good self-discipline. She does her homework after school every day. I think that she is very good academically compare to her Irish classmates.</p> | 9 | Mathematics | Curriculum |
| <p>I: I see. How well do you think she integrates with her Irish classmates? P: It is fine. To be honest, I still think there are some differences between Western and Eastern people. Western people still can't talk with you like the way that they talk to westerners. She is comparably good. When her Irish friends have a birthday party, they would invite her. Compare to the children from other Asian country, she is relatively good.</p> | 9 | Social integration is fine, but not a high level. | Social development |
| <p>My child is fine and she can play with most of the children. However, I still feel that the Western children won't have a deep friendship with her. How can I express this.... I can't say that she can't integrate, she is fine in this aspect, but she can't integrate as good as the Irish children. For example, if she met a friend on the way to school in the morning in China, the two kids would chat and laugh, and feel very close to each other. It is not like that in Ireland. When she met a friend on the way to school last time, they just said hi to each other, then continued to walk on their own. So I feel..... I don't know how to express this. I can't say that she doesn't integrate well, but I can't say she integrates very well neither.</p> | 10 | Problems with social integration | Social development |

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| <p>I think it needs to be improved from a social aspect. She has no problem with the language communication. From a cultural aspect, I think she accepts and adapts to the culture quite well. A child is different from an adult. We had stayed in China for so many years and we already have our own way of thinking. Our child isn't an extravert child. She won't go to ask an Irish child to play with her first. I think she needs to improve in this respect.</p> | 10 | Social integration needs to improve | Social development |
| <p>She had one language support teacher. According to what I know, every Irish primary school would have language support teacher. If you are from a non-English speaking country, you will have one class per week at least for the first year. When my daughter was in the 2nd class, the language support teacher helped her English like that. The teacher helped a few Asian children in her class. So they have the extra help and extra homework. After one school term, the teacher would decide whether the child still needs any help. The children would certainly have the language support teacher.</p> | 10 | English language support teacher | Language |
| <p>I: Do you help her English at home normally? P: No. I don't. I think my English is not as good as her English now. I: So she learned all her English in school and she just does some homework at home, right? P: Yes. After finishing her homework, she just reads English novels.</p> | 10,11 | Parents don't want to teach English to the child. | Parental Involvement |

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| <p>She has no problem with communication. I used to ask her how much she could understand during the class, she told me she could understand 90% of what the teacher says. So she can understand most of it and she can do whatever the teacher asked her to do as well. For example, the teacher asked the students to bring something to school the next day, or to describe certain things to their parents. She has no problem with that. You know the level of children's English isn't that high, her teacher said she has no problem with speaking and listening. Sometimes her Irish friends come to our home to play on Friday and she had no problem with playing with them.</p> | 11 | Child's English communication level | Language |
| <p>She had difficulties when she just arrived in Ireland. She came at the end of June, but the school had summer holiday since the 3rd of Jun. So she didn't go to school the first two months. During these two months holidays, we helped her to improve her English. Although she had some English foundation when she was in China, it was not used much in daily life.</p> | 11 | Parent helped the child's English before the school term started. | Language Parental involvement |
| <p>Once we came to Ireland, one of our friends gave us a daily English book. This book contains about 1000 words of vocabulary. So she learned these 1000 words during the summer holiday. She also likes to watch cartoons on TV.</p> | 11 | Parent helped with Child's English before the school term started. | Language Parental involvement |

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| The first two months, her teacher said she was all right, there was no big problem, but she needed to improve her writing . I found that the teachers in Ireland normally don't correct children's spelling. They try to encourage the children to write more. However, they would teach you how to write and express yourself. | 11,12 | The child is weak in English writing | Language |
| After the first school term, in general, she has no big problem anymore. Now, I think her English is very good. Her listening and speaking is good, reading is her best . For example, I bought her a few <i>Harry Potter</i> books, and she also borrowed a few from the school library. She has finished reading them all! | 12 | Reading is good | Language |
| Her reading has no problem. Her writing is fine too, better than before. At first she had some problems with tense , for example, when she wrote about an event that had happened, she use the present tense. The teacher taught her some grammar, so her writing is much better than before. In general, her English level is... not low. | 12 | English grammar is not good | Language |
| I would help her learn the Chinese textbooks for 2nd year, 3rd year and 4th year. | 12 | Chinese curriculum | Curriculum |
| It (the Chinese culture) is very important of course. | 12 | Chinese culture is important | Culture |

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| <p>I think she will be fine with learning. However, she needs to get used to the change in the amount of homework and pressure. Irish primary school is very easy and the school day is very short as well. The school day (in China) starts at 7:40, the formal lesson starts at 8am, and it finishes nearly at 5pm every day. The students' daily schedule is very full, their homework is much more than in Irish schools. I heard from my friends that in 3rd year in Chinese primary school, even if a student who studies very well, s/he needs about two hours to do homework. Therefore, she needs to adjust this a bit when she goes back.</p> | 13 | Challenge in Chinese school | Educational Environment |
| <p>I think it is all right to have religious education. I used to read her Religion book. When she was in 2nd class, sometimes her religion homework is to read the story with the parents. So there would be a story, a picture and some questions. I think the book is quite good. The stories are mostly about the Jesus. It aims to teach the children to have courtesy, to help other people, and not to laugh at other people. They are the stories that have moral meaning. I think the book is quite good. Their religion education is different from what we thought. What I thought is Buddhism learning in China, the learners need to learn the Buddhist scriptures and so on. The Irish religion education is more like the Moral Education in Chinese primary school.</p> | 13,14 | Religious education | Curriculum |

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| <p>I think they (religious education and moral education) are similar. I had that subject when I was young as well. Um..... I think the Irish way is easier to accept, because they use lots of small stories. I remember when I was in primary school, our principal made a few speeches in the meeting in front of all the students and the teachers in the school to talk about moral issues. He gave some example as well, but the words he used were too abstract to understand for us at the time.</p> | 14 | Moral education | Curriculum |
| <p>I: In her Irish school, there would be communion and confirmation. Normally would she participate? P: Yes, yes, she would participate. She often goes to church with them. However, she won't go for the real communion. The Indian and Chinese children in her school don't have to go to the communion ceremony, but they can go when other children have the rehearsal.</p> | 14 | Religious education | Curriculum |
| <p>I: What do you think of the communication between you and the teacher? P: It is good. I can talk to the teacher when I collect the child. There are parent-teacher meetings as well.</p> | 15 | Communication | Parental involvement |
| <p>Expectation..... to be honest, I think our expectation is different. Why do I say that? In China, every parent wants his/her child to be great academically. There are exams in Chinese primary school, so the exam marks can be the decider. The parents can see the exam marks and know how well the child learns. So every Chinese parent has high expectation. However, in Irish primary school, there is no formal exams, there is no pressure, so the parents don't have high expectation academically.</p> | 15 | Chinese parent's expectation is higher | Parental involvement |

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <p>So my expectation of my child now is not as high as it was in China. The other reason is that I know she will only be in Ireland for about two years, so my only expectation is that she can learn English well and she can catch up her English with her Irish classmates. We only stay in Ireland for a short period, so we didn't expect much. She did well herself anyway. If we were in China, our expectation would be very different.</p> | 15 | Chinese Parent lowered expectation in Ireland | Parental involvement |
| <p>The situation in China is very different. The pressure is much higher. As only the child is in a good primary school, then she can have good marks to go to a good Junior secondary school, then s/he can have more chance to have good marks to go to a good Senior secondary school, then s/he can have more chance to have a good Gaokao mark to go to a good University. The pressure is continuous and it is always there, it won't stop until you get to the highest level. In Ireland, at least in primary school, there is not this kind of pressure.</p> | 15,16 | Pressure is higher in China | Parental involvement |

Appendix G

Sample parent interview

Interview with T2 Parent 5

I: Hi, my name is Jia Liu. I am doing a PhD on integrating Chinese children into the Irish primary school system. Thank you very much for doing this interview with me today. First of all, I would like to know some general information about your child. How old is she?

P: Seven.

I: Which year is she in primary school.

P: First class.

I: How much do you know about the Irish primary school system?

P: I think that Irish primary school system emphasises the child's interests, such as drawing, or other art works. They take these things very seriously. Children here (in Ireland) have more freedom and enjoy the study a bit more. Because my child would never say, "I don't like to go to school." She always misses school during weekend.

I: Really?

P: (Laughter) Yes.

I: Do you think there are any similarities and differences between Irish and Chinese primary schools?

P: I think the children in Irish primary school can have a happier childhood. In Chinese education there is lots of forced learning, so children can have too much burden for their age. It seems that children in China don't have time to learn the things that they like. They have lots of homework. Children in Ireland don't have much homework, and they can finish homework in ten minutes .

I: Ten minutes?

P: Yes, my child has lots of time to read the books she likes. She can practice her music instruments. So in general, I think children's growth in Ireland is healthier.

I: How much do you know about Irish primary school curriculum?

P: So far, I feel that the difficulty level in Irish primary school curriculum is lower than the one in the Chinese curriculum. They have great emphasis on the things like drawing, colouring, these kinds of things and making things, maybe some simple spelling. However, the Chinese curriculum... it seems that it is much more strict than this, and the level is much higher as well. For example, her mathematics in the first class here (in Ireland) is kind of like the level of preschool class in China. Mmm... in Art however the Irish system is better. The child's creativity can be developed very well. She can do the thing which she is interested in. My child went to infant class since she was four years old. That has been three years so far, and she just needs to know the twenty-six letters of the alphabet now. Mathematics is the same, she only does the addition and subtraction up to one hundred. Ummm..... it seems too easy. Because it is too easy, she sometimes asks me for more homework.

I: Did she? Such a good child! (Laughter)

P: (Laughter) Yes, she always does. She wants to be more outstanding in her class, sometimes she asks for more homework. She has already mastered the things the teacher taught her very well.

I: Do you do extra work with her at home normally? Such as English or other subjects?

P: She needed extra work with her English in the first year in school. When she just started to learn letters in the first year, her pronunciation was very important. As we are Chinese family, we speak Chinese at home. So she needed extra work at the start. We encouraged her to listen to the teacher, the recordings, English songs and watch children TV programs. We tried to help her to have a feeling of speaking English confidently. In general, it is not very difficult, she picks up English very naturally. In later stage, we didn't help much, she caught up with her classmates by herself. She loves to read. She has lots of books, and she reads them herself.

I: That's great. Was she born in Ireland?

P: No, she was born in China. She came to Ireland when she was one year old.

I: I see. Had she ever attended any kindergarten in Ireland?

P: Before she started her Junior Infant, she was in the kindergarten for a month, as I'm afraid that her English could have been a problem. Then I let her try in a preschool class. From my experience so far, she has had no problem with schooling. In that month (in the kindergarten) actually there was a good understanding between the teacher and her. They know each other's thoughts very well.

I: Really?

P: Yeah, maybe she didn't know many words, but she could memorise them once she heard them. She absorbs new things very well.

I: Before she went to the kindergarten, did you ever teach her English?

P: No, I didn't teach her English. I taught her Chinese. I often bring her to a playground to play. There are many foreign friends there and they go there at a fixed time. They speak English to us. So I think she learned her English outside, not at home. I think, living in an English-speaking country, as a parent, my aim is not to teach her English, I don't think I can teach her English well enough. It is better that she learns English in this society.

I: She is great. She started primary school without much English foundation. Which subject is her best at school now?

P: Actually, English is her best.

I: Is it? English is her best?

P: Her spelling is the best in her class. Because she reads a lot of books, she is also the best helper of the teacher. When the teacher says a topic that they are going to learn today, lots of Irish children know how to say it, but they don't know how to write it and how to spell it. There are always some spelling mistakes for most of the children. However, my daughter can spell words perfectly, she has a large vocabulary. She can also remember how to spell it after she read it in books.

I: Can she?

P: Yes. She can spell perfectly. Her teacher told me that XX is her good helper in the class. I feel so proud. If she is good at other things also, I think it is quite normal because we help her at home. However, she learned English all by herself. So I'm very happy with her study.

I: That's great! What do you think of her mathematics in her class?

P: She was chosen for a mathematics class for gifted children before. There were two children chosen in her class and she was one of them. Her mathematics is very outstanding. She can digest the more difficult mathematics. I think normally that the Chinese children's mathematics should be better, as we were educated in the Chinese educational system, so we kind of keep the tradition.

I: Do you normally help her with mathematics?

P: Yes, I would. When she was in Senior Infants, we would let her to do the exercise in a Chinese mathematics book. We read it completely in Chinese, let her listen, let her know what it means, because she doesn't understand some of the Chinese words. We hope she can keep some of our own culture. We let her feel that it is very easy to be in school in Ireland. Chinese children actually are studying in this way. Although you are good here, but compared to the same age of children in China, there is still a lot to catch up with. She likes to try. She sometimes says that they (children in China) are so great that they know so much. She has the confidence to be the same as children in China. She said it is not only children in China that can do it, she can do it in Ireland too. So she likes to do more work. We normally take one hour to help her mathematics every weekend. We would go over what she had learned in school for this week, and then add a bit extra on her curriculum. We won't let her feel that pressure is too heavy but she is like a sponge and we just want her to absorb a little bit more.

I: I see. Beside mathematics, do you help her other things? I heard you said earlier that you help her with her Chinese.

P: She goes to Chinese weekend school, so she has Chinese homework every day. The old textbook she used was very good, lots of homework, she can digest it completely. However, the Chinese textbook the school is using now contains too little and not much homework, even though she finishes she still can't remember. We let her read all the stories in her book. Let her understand it completely and not just learn to write the characters. We want her to know more things about China through these little stories. She asks lots of questions. Then we find lots of things that she is interested in on the Internet. Just like that she learned a steam story in the Chinese class last time, the concept actually was very difficult. She didn't understand it. Then we use the Chinese primary school textbooks that have similar content to explain to her so that she could understand. She has a desire to learn. She found lots of things that she didn't understand in the text. She could read with no problem but for something more difficult, she couldn't understand it completely. So we give her extra information to help her to learn. She knows that she needs to learn, knowledge is infinite, she couldn't possibly know everything at such a young age.

I: That's great!

P: Yes, I found that one of the problems of the Chinese school is that teaching is too mechanical. Children only learn a limited amount of things in the weekend schools. There is no good environment for children to learn Chinese in this society. Even the TV is all in English. Although we speak Chinese at home, for adapting to our society, we speak English outside. However, there is not much Chinese culture here. Therefore there is still a big blank on Chinese culture. We need to find more information on the Internet or buy some books in China and bring them over.

I: Yes. Previously we could play videos in the classroom. However, after we changed classrooms, there was no facility to play video anymore.

P: Yes. She is very interested in the video thing, she would tell me so every time she came back from the school. I know that the teachers try to finish the contents of the textbook, so there are less extra things that can be taught. I think that children need a bigger environment. Whenever they go to school, there should be something new to get into their brains. It is important to learn things through sensorial methods.

I: Yes, that's right. In your opinion, how well is your child's integration in her primary school?

P: I think the parents worry a lot at first, but the children are not afraid of anything at all. She is very confident with herself. She is a very outgoing child, so it is very easy for her to have her own friends. I told her that the tasks she has in the school come first. She needs to study well and master the knowledge which the teachers have taught. Secondly, because she has her own advantages, some children might think that she is quite good and then like to make friends with her or show interests in her, so she could also find the friends she likes. She always has play dates and she goes to her Irish friends' home to play or they come to our home from time to time. This is very important because they can't talk so much with each other during the classes. She has about two or three good male friends and two or three good female friends. Every time when there is a birthday they communicate with each other and send presents to each other. My daughter also invites her friends to come to our home for her birthday. There are normally a few times like this each term when they gather together. She won't take her homework with her to these parties. We just want her to play only, play happily with her friends and talk about the things they like.

I: That's great!

P: In this way my daughter's English has improved a lot. They talk about different topics rather than just the things that the teachers have shown them. They talk about the things they are interested in. She is very happy to have these friends and I think that this is very good. Whenever I see a Chinese parent, I would suggest that it would be great if they let their child communicate with local children. Because it is not easy for minority ethnic people to live here it is so important to let our children to be able to get on well with the local people.

I: Do you think your child has any difficulties in Irish primary school? If there is any, which aspects do you think need to be improved most?

P: Her teacher told me in a parent-teacher meeting that my daughter has one weakness, which is that she wants everything to be perfect. She wants everything to be good in the class. No matter what contest she is in, she wants to win the prize. Her teacher said her strongest point is also her weakest point. She has no problem with any learning in school.

However, because she wants to be good so much she gives herself too much pressure. Sometimes we need to reduce her stress.

I: (Laughter) Really?

P: Yes. On the other hand, our way of education might have some problems too. We can't get rid of the way of learning that we had when we were in China. Both my husband and myself are the kind of people who study very hard. I learned music by myself, but I think that I went in the wrong direction. I study very hard, when I study. I don't care about anything that is happening around me. No pain no gain. I think how much effort you put into the work is how much you will gain. So our this kind of thinking might unconsciously gives the child pressure. I don't mean to give her this pressure, but she takes the pressure herself from my words.

I: Is it because of the parents' expectation?

P: Yes.

I: Because the parents' expectation is quite high she thinks she has to be good.

P: That's right! She always asks me, "Mum, what was it like when you were young?" I said that when I was young, I studied very well. From primary school to secondary school, I was always the 1st in the exams among all the students in the same year.

I: Wow. You are great!

P: I sing very well too. In the end, I studied music. I went to Shanghai Conservatory of Music. My Gaokao score was 300 to 400 score higher than my classmates at that time.

I: Wow!

P: Then she said, "Mum, you are so great!" She admires me very much. Then she said, "I want to be like you too! Can you teach me how to study so well?" Then I tell her the way how to study well. The learning methods I taught her are very necessary in China, so she used these learning methods and studies very well in Ireland too. Sometimes, I tell her, "XX, just do your best. It is also very important to be happy". Last time, she told me that someone in her class did a little better in a class test and so she must work harder the next time. Sometime she didn't feel balanced in her mind if someone does better than her. I think this is not very good for her. (Laughter)

I: Does XX have language support teacher in her primary school now?

P: When she started school, she was four years old at the time and there was an English support teacher. However, after half a year, the teacher left. I asked the teacher that why she stopped helping with her English, as I know that foreign children have the right to have a language support teacher. She told me, “Your daughter doesn’t need me anymore.” I said, “Really? However, I’m not very confident about my daughter’s English. Is it possible that you continue to teach her?” Then she told me that the children in her class were the ones who really needed help. If the child doesn’t have language support anymore, then she can participate with the normal class, which was great. So she told me not to worry and told me there would be no problem with my daughter catching up with the others.

In the half year that she had the language support teacher she went to see the teacher half an hour per week, then it change to half an hour every two weeks. Little by little, the teacher didn’t think she needed any language support. XX, it seems, is that kind of child who absorbs knowledge very fast and has a very positive learning attitude.

I: I know about her positive learning attitude. She writes her Chinese characters very neat every time. She is the same in the exam. She was the only student who got 100% in the final exam in my class last time.

P: Yes. I think no matter whatever she does, she takes it very seriously. For example, when she was with the English support teacher, once she asked me why she was not like other Irish children and had to come to this kind of English class. I told her the English teacher could help her to be better. Then she said, “I will be like them (Irish children) soon.” She was very young at that time, because she knew she was not the same as her other classmates, and she needed to go to a different classroom. She told me that the things she learned in the special English class is not the same as the one her other Irish classmates were learning. She told me that whenever she was in the English class that she would miss the things that the Irish children were learning and the homework that they had. Then she would have to find time to catch up. So sometimes, she said to me, “I will be good in the future.”

I: I see, she is aware of.....

P: Yes, she is very well aware of the changes around her. She is a very outgoing child, but she is aware of any tiny differences between her and others.

I: Children normally like to be the same as others.

P: Yes, she wants to be the same as others. She also has a strong desire of showing herself. Through her effort, she likes to show the things that she is good at to others. No matter if it is in the class test or in mathematics class, she always tries to answer teachers’ questions first. She often wins bread from school and brings it back. (Laughter)

I: (Laughter)

P: I asked her with surprise, “Why do you bring a bag of bread back from school?” She said her mathematics teacher asked a question in class, she raised her hand first and answered the question right, so she got a bag of bread! (Laughter) I said, “You are great!” Maybe the teacher asked a slightly more difficult question, for encouraging students, who can answer this question, who will get this bag of bread. (Laughter)

It’s quite funny. I like her learning attitude and she always tries her best to study. So I don’t think there is anything I need to worry about her in primary school.

I: In your opinion is Chinese culture important for your child? How do you normally teach your child the Chinese language at home?

P:

I: Does she go to Chinese school every weekend?

P: Yes, she goes to Chinese school every weekend. Chinese culture of course is very important. But the Chinese school is not enough, we also hope that she can see different things through the Chinese festivals, such as dragon dance during Chinese New Year. We use the Internet to show her lots of things as well, for example the things people do during the Dragon Boat Festival. There is no Chinese festival atmosphere here (in Ireland) at all. Although we don’t like to eat Zong Zi (Zong Zi is the festival food for Dragon Boat Festival), but we must buy Zong Zi every Dragon Boat Festival, because we want her to know about this festival. We also tell her the story about the Dragon Boat Festival. There are so many festivals in China and I tell her about them, and she knows that these festivals are very different from Irish festivals. We are going back to China on 30th Jun this year and she is so looking forward to the trip. She told me, “Mum, I want to go to China to have a look so much!” She really has this desire. I told her that the children in China are studying so hard in a very competitive environment, so sometimes she ask me, “Mum, if I want to stay in China this time, will you stay with me?” I said, “I can’t answer your question now, as I don’t know what the situation is like once we get there.”

I: Does she go to China very often?

P: Before she was four she was in China twice or three times each year, as I didn’t have a job at the time and I only had one child. However, I have two children now, so I go back China less often. My younger daughter is two years old at the moment. It is too tiring to bring them back until my youngest is a bit older. When XX was back in China last time, she got sick and stayed in a hospital for a few days, so I go back less now. She hasn’t gone back to China since two years ago. We hope she can study in this kind of relaxed and enjoyable

environment in Ireland. However, I also remind her very often, “Don’t forget that we are from China. We have our own Chinese educational ways, you cannot be totally relaxed. Mum wants to add a bit of extra Chinese things into your education. It might be better for you to combine both Irish and Chinese education, so you cannot be over relaxed, but I don’t want you to be over stressed, like the children in China either. Staying in the middle of the two kinds of education is the best. Mum wants to add more things above what you learn in your school, what do you think about it?” She said, “No problem.”

I often praise the students in China. They grow up in an environment that is full of pressure, and achieve so much all over the world. She really admires them, and she wants to study with the children in China.

I: I see. How do you compare the teaching styles between Irish teachers and Chinese teachers?

P: I think in Ireland the teachers’ emphasis is on whether the child is interested in something. They very seldom let children feel unhappy in school. Even if the child didn’t do well in school, most of the time, the teacher would use encouragement so that the child can have more confidence. It seems that there is more love involved. The teachers feel it is very normal that some children didn’t achieve what they expected. I think this is very good. I like their teaching style very much.

I: How about teachers in China?

P: In China ... In general, I think there is more forced learning. Sometimes the students have to master knowledge that is not that necessary. Teachers normally only appreciate the students who obtain the higher marks in exams. If the students exam results are not that good, teachers could feel that they were dragged down by these students. Teacher’s salaries might be effected by the exam results in China. So the teachers attitude can change suddenly if you don’t study well. I think sometimes the teachers also force students to learn.

Of course there are also a lot of good things too. The Chinese teachers know the things which they are teaching so well the children master the knowledge very well and very deep too. I think if you ask an Irish teacher to teach in the Chinese way, s/he can’t do it, s/he might think, “Oh, I cannot be a teacher like that!” (Laughter) So Irish and Chinese teacher cannot be replaced with each other. If you give the teaching job in China to an Irish teacher, s/he can’t do it; vice versa, if you let a Chinese teacher to teach in Ireland, it is also very difficult. I am a good example. I was a teacher in China and when I came to Ireland to teach I still couldn’t forget the teaching style I had when I was in China. So the Irish children could not accept me at first because I was too strict. Our principle would say to me, “Relax! Do it slowly. To teach the same thing, it might take you one year in China, but in Ireland, we can use two years, even three years is fine.” (Laughter)

I: (Laughter) How long did you teach in China before?

P: I have taught for more than ten years in China. I started to teach when I was 17 years old. I graduated in a Normal University (Normal University is a university specially for training teachers in China). I was a dance teacher before. Then I went to Shanghai University of Music and stayed there doing research on vocal music for five years. I went back to teaching afterwards. Nowadays, vocal music is still my major research area, but I am abroad now.... (Sigh) There are lots of things that I'm not very satisfied with actually. I also teach here but the students are very limited. So sometimes I feel like that I don't have any achievement. (Laughter)

I: So you think that the Irish children could not accept the Chinese teaching styles you used?

P: They would not accept it at all. You need to ask their opinion. You can't just give them whatever you want. For example, when they practice to stretch their legs, their level of bearing pain is very different to the children in China. If the children in China feel pain, they can bear the pain. However, the children in Ireland, even there is only a little bit of pain, they would start to complain, "Oh, sorry, sorry, I can't do that! I'm so tired!" They need to shout it out, they are not able to bear the pain and overcome the difficulty. Without a good foundation, how can they achieve much? Therefore, when they dance, the level is not good at all. Vocal music class is a bit better. Because the students only use their throats. This class is a bit better than the dance class. I learned Chinese folk music and I need to change it into English and add more soprano singing so that it can be a bit more suitable. Language is the thing I need to overcome. I need to improve myself.

I: You have done very well already. I used to watch your students dance before. I saw it in National Concert Hall during this Chinese New Year. They have done very well.

P: (Sigh) Not very good actually. After so many years, they only dance like that. If it were in China, the students only need one year to reach that level. (Laugh)

I: The other thing is that Chinese teachers normally only pick the students who dance well to perform. However, in Ireland, no matter how the students dance, well or not, all students have to get onto the stage.

P: All the students in our school, no matter how well or how bad they dance, as long as you belong to our school, we would give you a space on the stage. We must take care of everyone's mood here, we cannot let them feel bad about themselves. We need to take very good care of the children's psychological development. This aspect is quite good.

I: How do you compare your expectations of your child in Ireland and China?

P: Not the same. In China, due to the Chinese education and examination system, the parents' expectations match the Chinese system. Parents may push their children a lot. In Ireland, children have more freedom, and parents tend to just direct their children. When children are studying here (in Ireland), they could just learn the things they like. However, in China, you have to survive in the society so you must study well. It seems that the influence of money in China is bigger. (Laughter) I mean you must study well to have a good job in the future and earn enough money. I think that in China people's attitude to money is quite different to the one of people have in Ireland. In Ireland, no matter whether or not you have money, you can enjoy life, appreciate the environment around you and pay more attention to just living but in China, people just work and work. Every day is so busy that people have forgotten the about their standard of life and have little awareness of enjoying life.

I think my expectations for my child is a bit lower in Ireland. If you want to survive in Ireland and you get 80% or 90% in exams that is pretty good but in China, you would expect your child to get 100%. The child must get 100%, then the parents can stop worrying, only if this is the case can the child get a good job and have a good life in the future. Here is very different.

I: I think one of the reasons might be that China has such a large population, so pressure on people is much heavier than in Ireland.

P: Yes, yes. I don't know what other parents think, but I think that I can let my children choose their road themselves in Ireland but if I were in China I would need to arrange a lot of things for them.

I: In your opinion, does the social class of the family effect the parents' expectation in China?

P: I think it would. As a social phenomenon, it would. To us, it won't. My husband was from countryside. Normally, for the people from rural area, their vision of world is a bit narrower. People from urban areas look at things differently.

However, from an academic perspective, I don't think social class would affect the parents' expectation (in China). People can get what they want through their effort. People from lower social class, such as children from rural areas, they study with much more effort, as this is the only way which they can get out of their previous low social class. I actually really admire this kind of down to earth spirit. I think children from urban areas are more vain. Because the parents with higher social class might arrange lots of things for their children, so their children sometimes take short cuts. Children from rural areas normally fully devote themselves into study, step by step, work very hard, and finally gain the things they want. I really admire these kind of people.

I: How about in Ireland? Do you think the social class effect parents' expectations?

P: I think that the situation in Ireland is like this: normally people send their children to national schools, but the children from well-off families often will go the private schools. Of course the parents' expectation are different. Although some of these children are not very talented and may not be good in the future even still they go to a private school. I think parents from the higher social classes, such as doctors or lawyers, they would certainly have higher expectations for their child. This is very natural and normal and difficult to change too.

I: If your children were to go back to Chinese schools in the future, do you think that your children could get used to the Chinese educational system? What would be their greatest difficulty?

P: Um ... I think it would be still all right for my child to go there now, as she is only seven years old at the moment. There is still time for the child to go to a Chinese primary school before 1st class. After the 1st year, it can be quite difficult. Of course, the child can still go to the Chinese school, but s/he won't be happy as s/he is behind other children and can't catch up with them in the academic area. The two kinds of education systems are different so the requirements from the students is different too. I think that the 1st class in Ireland is same level as the pre-school class in China. The child needs to spend a lot of time to catch up. Then s/he will feel very tired, study will become a pressure rather than an interest. If the child has to go back to China in the future, the parents must give their children extra work above the Irish curriculum. Otherwise if you only depend on the Irish education and suddenly let your child go to a Chinese primary school this transition will be very difficult. This change is huge. Sometimes I'm thinking that because the Chinese primary education can build a very solid foundation for giving a child a special experience I would like to send her to China to try the education system there for a while. I'm not saying that she has to stay there forever or to do the Chinese leaving cert. We would just want her to give it a try, so when she comes back Ireland she would feel that she is so lucky to be in Irish schools. (Laughter) When you study in Ireland, the competition is not strong at all, so you can have a very good result, and have a good life. However, I also worry if this move is necessary, or if it will affect my child's English. This is the problem that gives me bad headaches recently. We want to send my daughter to a Chinese school from 30th June to 30th August. If afterwards, my daughter says that she wants to stay then I will stay in China with her for one year.

I: Wow, you are a great mother.

P: She can come back Ireland before she goes to the 3rd class. However, I'm not sure about her English. As children read a lot in Irish schools. Children read lots of books they like outside of the school curriculum. In China, children don't have much time to read the things they like. I really worry about her writing skills, although she can speak English, and can catch up with the class, but because she is short of one year study of Irish culture now I really have a headache. She is still very young and she might say that she would like to stay in China because of her interests but I am wondering if my support is good for her future.

I: It is a tough decision. May I ask the reasons that you send your child to the weekend Chinese school?

P: I think that I try to give her an experience to study Chinese with her peers. It is very important. She can get praise from her teacher and she can also gain the happiness of study. This is the key point. To me, I think I can teach her well, but it is a bit boring if she just studies by herself at home. If she has classmates, she can see that everybody is studying Chinese, and she has her own teacher, then she would listen to the teacher's words. So her interests of studying Chinese will stay. I don't expect that my child absorbs a lot of knowledge in Chinese school, I just hope that she can keep her enthusiasm. That's very important.

I: Does your child have Religious Education in her Irish primary school? What do you think of Religious Education?

P: Yes. Her school is a Catholic school. Our whole family had been baptised in a Catholic church.

I: Really?

P: Because there is prayer time every morning in my child's school. One day, she asked me, "Mum, do you believe in God?" I said, "Do you?" She said, "I do believe, God will bless me, God can give me more strength." Then I said, "Mum is kind of believing in God too, but I need more study." So for her, I went to have the weekly Bible study with a sister for a year. So did my husband. He studies one year too. Our whole family got baptized in June this year. I think it is good to have a religion for our children. It is easier when they meet any difficulties in the future. I think I should do whatever brings her happiness. Sometimes, she is not happy with something, she would communicate with God. Because mother normally gives the child a very realistic answer, but when she communicates with God, she communicates with God spiritually in her own way. Once I told her that she needed to overcome her weakness, she said, "Dear God, please give me strength. Can I overcome my weakness? Can I promise you?" I think it is quite good. This country is a Catholic country. This is its culture. We need to integrate ourselves into this kind of religious culture. There is only a small amount of religious culture in China, so we didn't have the chance to learn religion. Now we are in Ireland, I think it is better to have religion. It is much better to have religion. It helps us to manage our marriage as well. Whenever we had argument, we would say that, stop arguing, God will measure who is right. God will tell us what to do. This is our new life in Ireland. We have a religion now.

I: I think religion is quite important all right. How do you normally communicate with your child's school teachers?

P: Normally it is through talking with the teacher face to face. If I have any concern, I

would ask the teacher when I collect my child, and I could communicate with her for ten or fifteen minutes. If my child had any problem in school, I would talk with the teacher. I also ask how my child behaves in the class. There is parent-teacher meeting every year, we make good use of that time. (Laughter) Although my child always come back and tells me what happened in school, we would like to hear her teacher's comments on her so we can know better. There are lots of opportunities to communicate with the teacher.

I: What do you think of the level of communication between you and the teacher now?

P: Quite good. It is very good. If we don't communicate, I would think there is no problem. Sometimes when she met a difficulty, she felt a bit upset. As children do not only study knowledge from textbook in school, they also learn how to be with other people. Which child is her best friend, or which child said something that hurt her, we can know it through the teacher. Sometimes my child would tell me herself as well, for example, some child made her quite upset. Then we would let the teacher know. The teacher would know then and if it happened again she can tell the child who said the inappropriate thing not to do that again, and tell him/her to say sorry, etc. I think communication between parents and the teacher is very necessary. Our child is a girl, so it is important to communicate with the teacher to know if her spirit gets hurt or whether she hurts other children. In that case, we need to correct her mistake as well. I can't watch all her behaviour in school every day, her teacher is the person who knows her behaviour in school best.

I: What are the questions that you are most interested in parent-teacher meeting?

P: Firstly, I would ask how is her study in each subject and the teacher would tell me how she did. Normally the teacher's evaluation is very positive. Then the teacher asked me one question once, "Why do Chinese children always study more than other children?" (Laughter) Because my child can do the mathematics that has not been taught yet. For example, sometimes when she is interested, I let her recite the multiplication table, although multiplication has not been taught yet in her class. She knows the relationship between addition and multiplication. So when her teacher was teaching addition with the same number once, she immediately realised that she could do it by using multiplication. Then she raised her hand and wrote the result by using multiplication on blackboard. The teachers said, "I haven't taught you that yet!" (Laughter)

I: (Laughter) How many Chinese children in her class?

P: She is the only really Chinese child. There are two other girls who are from Malaysia.

I: Are there a lot of Chinese children in her school?

P: There are not many Chinese children in her year. There are only two Chinese children in

total. There are different numbers of Chinese children in different classes. It depends on the population of Chinese in the area. I think every school has a few Chinese children. I think for Chinese children, mathematics should be their strongest subject. However, normally Chinese children's drawing and spelling are not as good as the local children. As I know this I put a lot of effort into this area. I encourage her to read. Reading is one of her interests now because there are so many stories in the book and she hugely enjoys this. I also encourage her to draw and she likes to draw very much. She won a prize in a drawing competition among two thousand children who took part. She drew a swan.

I: Did she? Wow!

P: Yes. Calligraphy is the same. Her teacher picked her to take part in an Irish calligraphy competition. Her English writing is very beautiful. She was the only one who attended this competition in her year.

I: Wow, her Chinese writing is also very beautiful.

P: That is because from a very young age, I get her to practice to write. I told her to write slowly and carefully. This is not just about finishing the task. It is all about attitude. Once she has this attitude formed she doesn't need me to say anything. If she sees it is not that good she must rub it off and write it again. I said, "It's fine, let it be." No, she had to rub it off. She feels that she must rub it off, if she didn't, she would feel very uncomfortable. She is looking for perfection. So this way of looking for perfection is a kind of weakness in her as well.

I: Did her teacher teach any other Chinese children before?

P: I think she did. It seems that there are Chinese children in each year. The teacher changes every year. They are not like China where teachers teach from 1st year to the 5th year. She has a different group of children each year. Maybe she has had different experiences with other Chinese children as every child is different. Parents' situation, attitude, and the integration with this society all affect their children. The result is different too.

I: Yes. If there were a primary school that teaches both the Irish and Chinese curriculums would you be interested to send your child there?

P: I think I would. However, I think there should be a very good arrangement with these two curricula. If you add one more curriculum, how do you assess them? How do you assess the Chinese curriculum? Or you just add Chinese one more modern language? Of course it can be added to the Irish curriculum but it is important to make the time right. It is quite difficult to balance the two curricula. However, they do need more time in school. My child finish school at 13:30 now, they would need more time to have two curricula. Of course I

would love to see a school that has both the Irish and Chinese curriculum. The educational department would support it as well. Double curricula should not make it more difficult for the child to go to college. It is great to have two languages. I really hope this kind of school exists and as long as the time is well balanced into the curricula I would certainly support it.

I: What advice would you give to other parents to help their children to integrate into Irish primary schools more?

P: I think that meeting local people is quite important. You need to bring your child to the local park to meet different friends. Friends don't have to come from your child's class. Children also need to have some activity to communicate with each other in the class. You also need to hold parties for your child and your child can invite their friends so they can communicate rather than just stay at home and not have any connections with outside. Having parties should not only be for celebrating birthdays but also be used for the building of relationships. This cannot be taught in school.

The other thing is if you want the children to communicate with each other the parents need to communicate first. If the parents don't know you they won't feel secure to let their children to go to your place. So when you are collecting your child and waiting outside you need to chat with the other parents. I think in general Irish parents are very friendly. They could even chat with you first. For example, if your child is good at something, they would praise that how good your child is in that field and so on. I also would praise their children. So we try to encourage each other. So parents do need to communicate. They would then know how is this child's parents and how is this child, which gives a good foundation of trust.

I: I see, thanks. Do you have any suggestions for Irish primary schools?

P: ...

I: Or you are quite happy with Irish primary school?

P: I think as a Chinese parent my feeling is that the curriculum is far too easy before the 1st class. Once they get to primary school the amount of knowledge added suddenly is difficult. I don't think some children can adjust to it well.

I: Do you mean that Junior Infant and Senior Infant are too easy, right?

P: Yes, the 1st year is also very easy. Once they get to 2nd, 3rd and 4th classes they suddenly get a lot more work. They should need to use one hour to finish their homework. However they only need ten minutes to do it. I have asked some other parents and they say so. They

say their children have lots of homework in later years. I was really worried that why it is so easy now? Only one page that just takes her ten minutes. So I think they could make the earlier years a bit more difficult so it would be easy to children to adjust. Maybe they put too much emphasis on children's play. They think the early years are still their play time.

I: Thank you very much for your help to do this interview.

P: I'm very glad to do it!

Appendix H

Sample child interview

Interview with T1 Child 1

I: Hello!

C: Hello!

I: How old are you this year?

C: I'm nine years old.

I: Which school year are you in?

C: I'm in the 3rd class.

I: Have you ever had any experiences in a Chinese primary school?

C: Yes, I did.

I: How many years were you in the Chinese school?

C: Three years.

I: Was it preschool class, 1st class and 2nd class?

C: Yes.

I: Compare the Chinese primary school and the Irish primary school, which one do you prefer?

C: Irish primary school.

I: Why?

C: Because Irish teachers aren't as strict as Chinese teachers. Irish school life is much easier. There is also less homework and teachers treat you better as well.

I: I see. Is there any similarities between Chinese primary school and Irish primary school?

C: The similarity between my Chinese school and Irish school is that there is nothing on playground when you play there.

I: (Laughter) Okay. Any differences?

C: The difference is that in my Irish school we use an electronic blackboard. We just used a normal blackboard in the Chinese school.

I: Electronic blackboard? Wow, sounds cool.

The Child's Mum: What he is talking about is a projector.

I: Ah, all right. What do you think of the teaching methods your Chinese and Irish teachers use in the class? Which one do you prefer?

C: I prefer Irish teachers. For example, when we learn the multiplication table of number 9, my Irish teacher would show us how to do it on our finger (showing the researcher how to do 9's multiplication on his fingers) She would find some easy ways to help us to remember.

I: I see, they would find some easy ways to help you. How about your Chinese teachers?

C: My Chinese teacher just let us to remember it by heart.

I: What do you think of your English? Can you understand what your teacher says?

C: Yes.

I: How much can you understand approximately?

C: I can understand it all.

I: Wow, that's great! Do you have any English language support teacher in your school?

C: Yes, I have one.

I: What does your teacher teach you normally?

C: She teaches me English.

I: Can you be more specific?

C: For example, she teaches me to read and write.

I: I see. Do you have friends in your Irish school?

C: Yes, I have a lot of friends.

I: Lots of friends, great! Is it easy or difficult to make friends here?

C: Easy! As long as you say something to them, they will chat with you.

I: What kind of topics do you talk about with your friends normally?

C: We talk about football, for example, who scored in a match.

I: So you talk about sports together. Do you participate in any sports with your friends in school?

C: Yes.

I: Are you happy in Irish primary school?

C: Very happy!

I: Why?

C: Because there is less homework in Irish school, teachers are so gentle, and classmates are very friendly, not violent, you know.

I: (Laughter) Do you mean children in Chinese school are violent?

C: Yes.

I: What violent things do they do normally?

C: For example, some child can put a worm in your schoolbag, or throw your schoolbag into the bin, and so on. Sometimes, someone can put chilli in your water and if you drink

that your throat would suffer a lot.

I: That sounds pretty bad all right...

Which subject is your best in the school?

C: Mathematics.

I: Have you learned all the things in China before or do you just think it is easy to handle?

C: First of all, I have learned lots of things in China before. Secondly, I can improve myself here. For example, I was not very good at multiplication of 9 and 10 before, but I have improved myself now.

I: What kind of things are you learning in your Irish school now?

C: I'm learning division now.

I: Have you ever learned division in China before?

C: I didn't learn division in China, but I learned division at home before.

I: I see. Can you tell me how do your Chinese and Irish teachers teach you multiplication?

C: In China my teacher just gave us a multiplication table and let us to learn it by heart. If you can't recite it then the teacher would give out to you and punish you by making you stand in the classroom. The Irish teacher only gives you a small bit each day and she won't let you to learn the whole multiplication table in one day.

I: So you learn the table little by little.

C: Yes, if you don't know how to do it, the teacher will also explain it to you and show you how to do it.

I: Does your teacher use any teaching materials to help you understand it, such as beads?

C: Yes, she uses some squares which are made out of beads. The beads are tied together. For example, 30×5 , you can take out three ten beads bars, and have five groups of these.

I: I see. Is your primary school a Montessori school, or a normal national school?

C: A national school. XXX National Boy's School.

I: I see, where is it?

The child's Mum: It is in XXX.

I: Which subject do you like the most?

C: I like English the most.

I: Why?

C: Because the pronunciation of English is very easy, words such as "triangle", you can just read it out "tri-an-gle" even if you had never learnt it before.

I: I see, so you like English the most. Which subject you like the least?

C: Irish.

I: Why?

C: There are fadas in Irish. Lots of the words just don't make any sense and it is very easy to spell it wrong.

I: Do you have religious education in your school?

C: Yes.

I: What do you think of it?

C: We learn lots of stories in our religion class.

I: What do you think of these stories?

C: It teaches us how to be a nice person.

I: Do you believe these stories?

C: I'm not sure, but it teaches us to be good.

I: How do you think of your parents' expectation for you compare to your Irish friends' parents' expectation?

C: They are different.

I: How they are different?

C: I feel...they are like..... for example, when the Irish children finish their homework, their parents don't even check it, they would let the teacher check it the next day. The Chinese parents would check your homework and give you some more difficult exercises themselves afterwards. Anyway, they just want you to be better than what you are now.

I: So they expect more than the Irish parents?

C: Yes.

I: Which kind of parents do you prefer then?

C: The Chinese parents. Because the Irish parents are too easy with their children and they will forget what they had learned in school.

I: In your mind, what is a good child? In other words, what is the standard for a good child?

C: Firstly you don't hit people, secondly you don't say bad words, thirdly you listen to your teacher's words, fourthly, you should never be punished or be made to stand in the class, fifthly, nobody has ever reported you are a bad child to the teacher, sixthly, you have lots of friends, seventhly, your writing should be beautiful, eighthly, your writing should be neat, ninthly, you should be good in every aspect.

I: How do you compare a Chinese child's standard of a good child to an Irish child's standard?

C: They are different.

I: How they are different?

C: In China, as long as you study well, then you are a good child. In Ireland, you need to be nice to people, such as courtesy and so on.

I: I see.

Does your teacher ever talked about any Chinese culture in your class?

C: Yes, she had talked about Chinese culture before. Sometimes she would give us some handouts and teach the children how to write Chinese numbers.

I: Did you help your classmates to write them?

C: Yes, I did.

I: Great, thank you very much for doing this interview with me.

C: You are welcome!

Appendix I

Sample Chinese principal interview

Interview with Chinese Principal 1

I: Hi, XX, I'm Liu Jia from DCU. I'm doing research in the School of Education Studies of DCU. My research topic is Integrating Chinese Children into Irish Primary Schools. First of all, thank you very much for taking the time to do this interview with me today. Thanks.

Firstly, can you introduce the XXX (your Chinese school) briefly? How does the XXX help the Chinese children in Ireland?

P: Our Chinese XXX school was established in 2004.

I: 2004? So it has been established for a long time.

P: Yes. The reason that we founded this school is because we wanted to give a platform to Chinese children to show their talent. Long ago, I was the vice-principal of the Chinese school of the Chinese Society of Ireland (CSI).

I: The vice-principal of the Chinese school of the Chinese Society of Ireland(CSI)?

P: Yes, 18 years. We had always taught the children music and dance, but it was only a small part of the teaching at that time. I'm an active person and I like to see our children move around. According to my 18 years of experience it seems that children didn't like to come to school. They came only because their parents wanted them to come. Are there any good ideas to make children want to come themselves?

I: Yes.

P: So my partners and I ... XX and XX, two partners ... XX was the Art teacher in the same Chinese school as me. We all had a dream. Our children had done performances for many years at that time but the standard was not very high. We felt that we needed to do something in 2004. Then I left the Chinese Society of Ireland and started our Chinese XXX school in 2004. This is the reason why we started this school. I think that children can learn more culture through music, dance, painting and calligraphy. They also like it.

I: That's right! They are interested in these subjects.

P: So from summer 2004 we started summer courses to teach Chinese Kung Fu, dance, arts, paper cutting, singing ... and the Chinese language.

I: Chinese language as well? Wow, that's a lot things!

P: How can you sing Chinese songs without knowing the language? (Laughter) So the songs we taught are like, *Counting Ducklings*, *Good Morning* and so on. They all like it very much!

I: Do you also teach them to paint?

P: That's right.

I: That's great!

P: We invited different teachers to teach different courses.

I: Were all these courses held during summer holidays?

P: Yes, they were all held in summer holidays. We held it three times and it was very successful!

The other reason that helped us to found our Chinese XXX school was because of the Indonesia tsunami, if you still remember it. We felt we must do something for them. We gathered all the children and had a parade on Henry Street at that time. It was very successful and we collected approximate 8000 euro and gave it to the Red Cross. From then on our children felt a great sense of achievement.

Our XXX is a non-profit school. We have an aim each year. The first few years, we aimed to help the children with cleft lips in China. After that, do you remember there was a Special Olympic in Shanghai in 2007?

I: Yes, I do remember.

P: We did a performance to collect money for the athletes. Lots of Irish athletes had to pay themselves to go to the Special Olympic in Shanghai. Then we helped lots of Irish athletes to collect money, it was very successful! Because they needed 5000 euro per person, they could not go if they did not have 5000 euro.

I: Is that right? That's so expensive!

P: As they must pay for their own expenses there and the money for the expenses of the athletes. So every volunteer needs to pay.

Then Sichuan earthquakes happened in China in 2008...

I: Yes, the earthquake in 2008.

P: So we are always busy. We had never been relaxed for a single day since we started the school. (Laughter)

Our school is the smallest one among all the Chinese schools in Ireland but the number of our activities is the largest. We have about 20 different performances each year.

I: Yes, I can see that the aim of the performances is to collect money for different causes...

P: Not only for collecting money also we were invited to the Irish local celebrations lots of times. How can you integrate if you don't participate in Irish activities? Integration needs participation, no matter whether you are good or not! (Laughter)

I: (Laughter) Yes, participation is very important.

P: So our hope for the children in our school is that they can not only dance, we don't expect them to be the professional dancers when they grow up, but to find their talent and confidence. For instance, we danced in front of the Irish president in National Concert Hall, so what? Confidence is not born automatically, but needs to be cultivated. So, one of our aims is to cultivate the children's confidence. The other aim is to have our children integrated into the local Irish culture and to integrate both Irish and Chinese culture together. These are our main aims.

I: I have seen your school children's performance on Chinese New Year in the National Concert Hall. It was great!

P: Our standard cannot compare with the standard of the children in the Little Red Flower troop¹ from China as our teaching time is only two hours per week.

I: Well they are a very professional art troop.

P: Their... their teacher's teaching style is very different from the Irish teachers. To be honest, I have lived in Ireland for many years and I can see that the standard of the Chinese teachers who come from China is very high, but the Chinese children in Ireland cannot accept their teaching methods.

I: Is it right? How do these Chinese teachers teach normally?

¹Little Red Flower Art Troop is a Chinese children professional art troop from Nan Jing, China. They were invited by the Confucius Institute to come to Ireland and celebrate Chinese New Year in 2011.

P: Their expectation is very high. They always think that you must finish whatever you are suppose to do. Only good students can perform at the front row and the students who are not very good are rarely looked after by the teacher. Even now I still feel that all the Chinese teachers from China are all like this. They only concentrate on the good children and don't care about the not very good ones. This is totally the opposite of the Irish teaching ideology.

I: Yes, yes!

P: In Ireland, you must participate, everything is good and you will be respected as long as you participate.

I: Yes. I noticed there were three tiny kids from your school in the New Year performance. They were so cute.

P: The most important thing is they participated. They are so young, and just started learning. So they couldn't perform anything complicated but if you don't let them participate then they won't have much interest in the performances in the future. The other thing is that Chinese people care about "face", if you are not invited, you won't walk onto the stage yourself! (Laughter)

I: (Laughter) That's right.

P: So they must participate, everyone should know their own importance. Therefore, our school . . . we also get lots of advice, like why we don't just get the best children to perform so that we have a better quality but that also means the not so good ones cannot join in. We often have this kind of argument in our school. I said that we can not do that! No matter whether the child is good or bad she has to be on the stage. If you always think she is not good then she will lose interest and will not like to participate anymore.

I: That's totally true.

P: So in our school either all the children go to perform all together or none of us go. (Laughter)

I: Yes, I think this is great. As when we watched XXX school performance a Chinese teacher who just came from China sat beside me. She asked very curiously why the school lets such small children go on the stage. I told her that that's the Irish way to do the performance. (Laughter)

P: Once you really understand this then you would feel it is completely right. Many of our teachers who just come from China don't agree with that. They certainly put the children

who perform the best in the middle of the front row.

I: Yes, or only let the best children perform.

P: Yes. However, I feel it is unfair. Ireland is very different from China. China has a large population so you try to be the best all the time. People are very competitive. Of course, we know that it is good to be the best, but not everyone can be the best. Ireland has a small population, so it has more opportunities. You don't need to be at the top as long as you can do things and can devote yourself to them, then you will be fine. This is what it is like in Ireland. (Laughter)

At the moment our school is very welcomed by the Chinese Society of Ireland. They support us a lot. I think we have gained some achievement. (Pointing to a photo frame on the wall) See, this is the award we got in Dublin. We have more on that side. We had got lots of awards. So we are the Chinese school which gets the most awards of all the Chinese schools.

I: Who gave these awards to your school?

P: Dublin City Council.

I: I see.

P: Not only them but also different places, for example, we had two awards from Bray Town Council. We also got an award in Kildare.

I: Yes, I was there when the children in your school performed in Kildare.

P: We were also invited by Northern Ireland as they don't have a school like us there.

I: I think your XXX school is the first of this kind of Chinese school in Ireland.

P: I'm quite busy this year, I will be in China for about three to four months this year, so I don't have many arrangements in Ireland this year. However, we had already invited some Chinese artists come to Ireland and let our children perform with them. This is very important. Our children are not very good, but at least they had performed with the first class Chinese artists! (Laughter)

I: (Laughter) They also performed in front of the Irish president.

P: Yes. We were also on the same stage with the Little Red Flower art troop. (Laughter) I think this can give our children a sense of honor, as they would feel great to perform with all these first class artists. This also unconsciously teaches the children to love China. There is no use if you tell the children to love China. Because they were born in Ireland it is natural that they would love Ireland. How can you teach them to love China? You need to let them do something which they feel honorable about. This is very important. Maybe I had spoke too much, you still have lots of questions. . . (Laughter)

I: That's no problem! (Laughter) Then how many students does your school have at the moment?

P: Approximately 30 children. Many of them came to our school from a very young age. We can't have the more advanced class at the moment, so normally they leave our school at about 15 years of age.

I: Are you familiar with Irish primary schools?

P: I know it very well. I do lots of talks about China in Irish primary schools each year. I'm always invited to do so in different schools.

I: Is that right?

P: Yes, talks about Chinese history, culture, dance, music, religion, calligraphy, and so on.

I: Wow, I really should had interviewed you earlier!

P: Not only primary schools, I also go to secondary schools. They also invite me to do talks. However most of the schools are not in city centre, such as the schools in Lucan, Blanchardstown, Wicklow, etc. I can't go if it is too far as it is all volunteer work! (Laughter) I also went to Cork, but it did take a long time, so I can't go every time the principal asks me.

I: It is too far.

P: There is an orphans association in Cork. They often invite me to do some cultural introduction.

Therefore, I know Irish primary schools very well. They normally don't have many students in one class. The reason I go to do the talks is because that racism grows from the young age. If they don't know you when they are young, they feel that you don't belong to their group from a young age, then it is a waste of time if you only tell them after 12 years or

18 years. So from 2003, I live in Bray and I did an anti-racism programme with the Bray Garda. I went to every primary school (in Bray) and talked about why our Chinese people come to Ireland and why our Chinese is like this and why the Irish is like that, and so on. They are all very young children, so I told them in a Mum's voice that there are lots of Irish who also moved abroad and would they like to see those Irish people bullied? People abroad might not know what Irish people are like. Our Chinese people are the same, we don't like to be bullied. They work very hard. We need to tell the children when they are young they also feel very grateful to know that what the thinking and culture is like from the other countries. They are very happy and very willing to learn. So the atmosphere of learning Chinese is very good in Bray.

I: You are the leader of it! (Laughter)

P: As our school is the first.

I: Yes, the Loreto College Bray has a Confucius Classroom now.

P: Our South Ireland Association has a Chinese language school and we have a class every Saturday.

I: Do they have class in Loreto Bray?

P: No, we are in the Bray School Project.

I: I see, I remember.

P: In my opinion, we need to train children from a very young age, it would be late once we wait until the children get to 13 or 14 years old. Of course it is still ok if they want to learn, but they need to put in a bit more effort.

I: Normally was it you who volunteered to do the talk in these primary schools or did the principals invite you?

P: They invited me. They have meeting together sometimes, so they hear about me from other principals.

I: Is it because the principal may try to teach a different culture in the school or is it because there are a few Chinese children in the school?

P: Yes. I'm especially busy during Chinese new year period. They want to know what do Chinese people do for the Chinese new year and what is Chinese culture like. Lots of

invitations, I'm so busy each year! (Laughter)

I: What do you think of the integration of the Chinese children into Irish primary schools?

P: When you talk about Chinese children, you need to say which Chinese child. There are children who were born in Ireland, children who just came from China, students who came to Ireland when they are 15 years old, and the students who came to Ireland just after finishing college in China, they are all different. They face lots of problems in the classroom. Most of the parents of these children think their children are quite smart, but they don't see all the obstacles. They think the obstacles are just language and so that the children don't understand. Normally parents would think it is the language problem. However, actually, it is not only the problem of language, the thinking and behaviour are also all different. The child's mind is kind of fixed when they are about six or seven years old. They have formed their fundamental worldview. The parents can't just drag their children from China to Ireland but they had to do so because of the reality of life. So lots of them have difficulties when they came to Ireland. Their biggest problems are language and a different worldview that includes different values and beliefs, etc.. However, the Chinese children who were born in Ireland, they study in Montessori schools from a very young age and they don't have so many problems. In general, I think Irish people like Chinese people, they don't have much negative thought about Chinese. The situation is probably a bit different for African children.

Some Chinese parents don't send their children to Montessori school as they think that the children just go there to play and do nothing else. So this is because that the Chinese parents have a very different expectation.

I: That's right!

P: Why do our children's lives have to be that hard? They are not in China anyway! So I think it is not necessary. You must let your children speak with others, as if you don't have a good English environment at home, then you need to supply a good language environment outside of your home. So let them play outside together.

The other thing is that most Chinese only have one child. The child is spoiled like a little prince or a little princess at home. Normally there are more than one child in an Irish family. So the Chinese children might have some anti-cooperation behaviour sometimes, such as saying like, "this is mine, they are all mine!" Chinese children like to say this a lot! Mum is mine, Dad is mine, everything is mine! They don't like to share. So I told lots of young Mums that they must let their children play with other children and learn to share and care for others. The children must have this awareness otherwise it is not the language problem, but a thinking problem.

I think the Chinese parents in Ireland hesitate a lot. They don't know whether they should

stay in Ireland or not. They feel very puzzled, if they stay in Ireland, they feel that their children won't learn much at schools. If they go back to China, then the children can not catch up with others in Chinese schools at all.

I: Yes, a very embarrassing position. (Laughter)

P: So they have lots of hesitations, they don't know what they should do. However, in my opinion, to be honest, in China, only if a student is seriously good in each level, then s/he can get into Qinghua University or Beijing University. Imagine how much sweat and blood they have to pay for that and how many dreams and interests they have to give up! However, after all that hard work your child finally gets their degree in China, once they come to Ireland they probably only get into a second class university in Ireland. Then why don't you just let your child stay in Ireland and it would be much easier for them to get into a first class university if s/he had his primary and secondary education here and why should you make your child's life so hard in China? (Laughter)

I: (Laughter)

P: So I can't say that which one is better than the other. I think the Western people...for example, my expectation for my own children's Chinese level is that they can read and write, then that's ok. Of course I like them to be better, but I won't force them. However, I think their learning methods are very creative and it is because of the creative teaching methods. For instance, this pen, if you give the pen to a Chinese child, they will draw the pen exactly like this but if you give it to a Western child they can draw it in very different ways. The Chinese can't do this, they are not very creative. It is not because they don't think, it is because the traditional learning method is that you learn things one step by one step, very conservative and very rigorous. For obeying this rule, they forgot their imagination.

We encourage innovation nowadays, but how can we innovate without an idea? So the Chinese children are a bit weak in this aspect. Their parents ask them to learn Chinese, also expect their mathematics to be a certain level and so on. The parents have lots of unseen expectations. We were talking about the "tiger mother" recently. Do you know about "tiger mother"?

I: "Tiger mother"? I seem have heard it from somewhere.

P: We asked each other that whether I am or you are a "tiger mother". I said I am. (Laughter) Maybe half...

I: Can you explain a bit more about "tiger mother"?

P: Ok. It is about a Chinese girl who was born in America. She graduated from the Yale University. She wrote a book which tells how her parents raised her and how she bring up her children to a road of success. She said a “tiger mother” would never accept any grade except A, right?

I: Okay.

P: The other thing is that child must learn music. It would be good if the child can learn two or even three music instruments, which would always include piano and violin. So they must know how to play these basic music instruments. The other one is that the child can't join in the school activities, such as dance, ski, etc. “Tiger mother” parents don't like these, they don't encourage their children to learn those. Other things like parties and sleepovers, none of these are permitted. (Laughter)

I: (Laughter) This is the typical Chinese parents' thinking.

P: Yes, very traditional thinking. Because the parents grew up like this so they expect their children to do the same. Only if the parents who have the high expectation to themselves would have the high expectation to their kids. We have a tradition in China for example, a father beats up the son, it is very normal. You will be beaten up by your father if you don't listen. (Laughter)

I: (Laughter) I think this is the influence from Confucius².

P: Yes, it is a tradition. However, the people who were born in 1970's and 1980's don't like to be beaten up, so they don't beat up their children. Especially in Ireland, it is illegal to beat children here.

The young Chinese parents love their children very much and they give their children the best food and the best education which they can afford. This is the Chinese way of loving children. However, Western parents are different, the way they love their children is to respect their choices, privacy, living rights and freedom, etc. These are very different concepts!

I: That's true.

P: So if the parents don't integrate into the Irish society, then it is very difficult for the children to integrate. No matter how good their academy result is, there is no use. As I'm in Ireland for 30 years, I can see that our Chinese children are excellent and their academic

²In Confucius thinking, the minister should obey the king, the wife should obey the husband, and the son should obey the father. This is considered as a very backward thinking by Chinese people in China nowadays, but some of the influence is still there.

result is very good.

I: Do you mean the children who came from China?

P: No, the Chinese children who were born in Ireland. However, even their results are very good but we haven't had an outstanding Chinese person in the upper class in Ireland. There isn't a single one. However, we do have a few bad ones. Why? Can you tell me the reason?

I: Um...

P: Because we didn't really integrate into the Irish society! If we don't integrate well, how can we work well with others? However, there are some changes in recent five years.

I: Is that right? Then do you have any good suggestions to help the Chinese children to integrate?

P: First thing is to respect the Irish culture and don't judge it negatively and don't always tell your child that Irish language is useless. Lots of parents do so. They don't respect the Irish culture themselves but they ask their children to love Ireland! Is it only to love the Irish passport? That is not right! This kind of thinking that you give to the children is wrong. To love Ireland, you need to know its culture, you need to learn its language, and support all their activities. I think this is the basic duty of a citizen. The reason that people love Ireland shouldn't be only because it is handier to travel but also you need to love their culture. Some people's thinking is so strange, I really don't agree with them.

I: I know.

P: If Ireland is so bad, then you can go back to China. Why you still stay here if Ireland is so bad? There are reasons. It is because Ireland actually has lots of lovely sides. So the parents need to tell their children about these lovely sides. I think it is quite difficult to be a Chinese parent here. We need to leave the good aspects of Chinese culture to our child but at the same time we can't ignore the Irish culture. The parents need to learn for themselves as well. For example, I'm not Irish, how did I learn? I taught myself. It is not possible that you would understand everything by talking to a random Irish person. You need to read books to know more about it. The most important thing is to participate in their activities. If you don't participate you will never know their culture.

I: Sports would be a good one.

P: Yes, anything. Music! As Ireland is an island of music. Irish music and dance culture is very rich. You see, the whole of Great Britain, none of their dance is well-known. Who

doesn't know about the Irish dance? There are always river dance performances in America. Ireland has some things that China dose not. It is easier for young children to integrate, they can speak English well after they are in Ireland for three or four years. However, if the parents don't integrate into this society, then the children would feel isolated too. So the parents need to encourage the children go out to play with the local children. When the children are learning Irish culture, the parents also need to make sure the children learn Chinese culture too. It is not difficult to be a child but it is difficult to be a parent. (Laughter)

I: I agree. What do you think of the level of Chinese children's English?

P: For the children that were born in Ireland, there is no problem with their English at all. If the children only came to Ireland when they were over 10 years old, then there might be some difficulties, but if they make an effort to learn English, it should be fine. There is a Chinese boy who lives near me he came to Ireland when he was 13 years old. He can get grade A in every subject except English. Because he makes an effort to learn it himself and he is fine with the study in Ireland. If a 15 or 16 years old Chinese student came to Ireland with bad English, then they probably experience more problems.

I: What do you think of these children's Chinese level?

P: That's depends. If both of the parents are Chinese, then the child should have no problem with listening and speaking Chinese but reading and writing is a different story. A lot of Chinese parents would send their children to Chinese weekend schools. They don't expect their Chinese to be as good as the level the children in China have, but they at least need to know how to write. I know that lots of Chinese parents would bring their children back to China during the summer holiday if they could. No matter if the children attend any class in China at least they will have a good language environment. I brought my daughter back to China to learn dance last year. When she came back she started to speak Mandarin. (Laughter) It is a new thing for me as I only speak Cantonese so I can't speak Mandarin well. However I speak English to her at home most of the time but I try to speak more Cantonese. So there are three languages that are spoken in our home now, English, Cantonese and Mandarin. (Laughter)

I: How do you compare the teaching methods of Chinese and Irish teachers?

P: Very different. If you ask a Chinese teacher to teach in an Irish school they would have difficulty in managing it; and vice versa, an Irish teacher would have difficulty teaching in a Chinese school as well. Compare to Chinese school, the learning atmosphere in Irish schools is full of freedom, students tend to learn things according to their interests.

I: You were talking about the anti-racism program earlier, what is that about?

P: That anti-racism program was organized by the Bray Garda station. We started to feel racial discrimination around 2000. Sometimes when you pass a group of children they would start to say rude things to you, some of them could shout, "Go back to China!" So there was a lot of this kind of naive racial discrimination started at that time. So we had a meeting to discuss that if we could introduce more things about China to the children. Not only China was introduced, but also Africa, India and Middle East. So people from different ethnic groups all worked with Bray Garda station and went to different schools to introduce different cultures each year. I talked about Chinese culture to the children. I would ask the children, "Have you noticed that we look different? Do you know why we look different? That is because we come from different places in the world. We are living in the same place now and we need to live happily with each other". Some children may not know our culture so I told them about it and what we were doing in Ireland. I also told them about our religion and there are lots of Catholics in China as well. When we were doing this in the schools at that time there were not many Chinese children born in Ireland yet. So there were very few Chinese children in Irish primary school in 2000. There were also very few Chinese children in Irish primary school before 2005.

I: Are there many Chinese children who came from China at that time?

P: Not many. There were a lot of Chinese children that came to Ireland in 2007. The reason for that is because in that year a lot of Chinese people had been in Ireland for five years and had got their stamp 4 visa. Once they got the stamp 4, their wives and children could also come to Ireland. There were some problems appearing in Irish secondary schools that year as well. Well, it depends on which area the school was in. If it was an area that has a large population of foreigners, the teachers would feel the pressure. Most of the Irish teachers were from a traditional teacher training college that was specially designed to train teachers for Irish students. Once the teacher started to work they suddenly found out that the reality was that there were eight students from Africa, two were from Asia and two were from Middle East in the class. It could be very difficult for the teacher. They probably will perhaps have headache as well.

We used had a meeting in the St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra. Lots of Irish teachers complained that there were too many foreigners in their class and they did not speak English. The teachers were trained to teach student through English but the students do not understand English, so the teachers have to work very hard and feel very tired. They even had to do extra work with the students after school hours. The parents couldn't help much with their children most of the time.

I: Were these teachers from secondary school?

P: Both secondary school and primary school teachers. In the meeting there were teachers from different areas of Dublin so they have different opinions on this. For the teachers who haven't faced to the situation that there were twenty foreigners in one class, they felt it was not such a big deal. From the year 2000, the price of the property in Ireland was

continuously rising so most of the new immigrants were living and buying houses in the South West or North West part of Dublin, such as the Blanchardstown, Tallaght and Clonsilla, etc. I went to the schools in these areas before and the situation was not good. There were too many foreign children in the school and the teachers really had to work very hard. The young teachers seemed still to have some passion but the older teachers seemed had run out of energy and didn't care too much any more. If you can't learn, well then it is your own problem, not the teacher's problem. Some teachers really didn't care much anymore because it was out of the teachers' control, not because they did not want to help the students. Some children came from China and they couldn't catch up with English. Sometimes they were laughed at. However, some Chinese children are very bossy as well, they feel everything is theirs. Some teachers felt that some of the Chinese children have some psychological problems and they send them to see counsellors in social welfare.

I: Do you think the Chinese children in Ireland have a sense of belonging?

P: No. Not only children but also adults, don't have the sense of belonging. Really, about sense of belonging, maybe what I say isn't quite right, but I always have a feeling that the Chinese immigrants who just came to Ireland five or six years ago don't have a sense of belonging at all. No matter if the person is a PhD or a cleaner, it is all the same. Even if they have citizenship they don't love this country they only talk about the negative parts of Ireland. Sometimes after I hear what they said about Ireland I think it was wrong. If Ireland is so bad than why are you still staying in Ireland? If you choose this place to live, you need to love this place. I don't agree that some parents make their children feel that they are here just to earn money and that the children can stay wherever they want in the future. However, Irish people themselves would run out of the country if the economy is not good. (Laughter) Ireland has always been an emigrant country until 1990's. So for Irish people themselves, their way of thinking is to run away if the Irish economy is not good.

So the children showed lots of interest during the anti-racism program and they asked lots of questions. Once they knew about you then they won't feel there is much differences between you and them. That's an improvement.

I: What's the name for this program? Is it a project?

P: No, it was just an intercultural process of the Garda station.

I: Are you still doing it now?

P: Yes, I am. However the time is not fixed as we need to have the principal's approval first. I think it is very good because it is the best time to plant the intercultural concept into the children's mind when they are still very young. We can't wait to when the children get older and then tell them that you can't say this or that. They can't accept it truly when they are grown up.

I: How do you compare Chinese and Irish parents? How do you compare their expectation to their children?

P: They are really different. To be honest, Ireland has a very small population, so their level of competitiveness can't compare with the one Chinese people have at all. The most important thing for Irish is to participate, as long as you participate, it is not that important whether you win. Chinese people are different, as long as they participate, they would aim to get the first. If they can't get the first, they would still aim to be in the top few. My greatest experience was the Special Olympics in Ireland in 2003. Some Chinese athletes with disabilities came to Ireland as well. Everyone of them aimed to get a medal. If I don't remember wrong, they have 35 athletes in total and got 42 metals.

I: Forty-two metals? Wow!

P: Yes, because one person can get a few metals. The Chinese soccer team got second place but normally they always get the first place. I was the team leader of the Chinese interpreting group. When I brought them to the stage to get their silver medal everyone of them was very upset. I remember one of the African team got number seven and they beat the drum to celebrate their achievement and shouted, "We will be back again!" Bung bung bung bung, "We will be back again!" Even we lost, so what? We can be back again. It seems that Spanish team got the first at the time and Chinese team got the second. Everyone of the Chinese team looked so frustrated. I asked why and they said that they didn't get the first so none of them were happy. I said to them, even the Chinese national football team who has no disability can't get in the first a few places in any of the games, you guys have done so much better and you should feel happy having achieved so much. Look at the other teams, even if they got number seven, how happy they were? Cheer up! Go to get our metal happily! They cooperated with me after they heard my words and so they pretended that they were happy on the stage, but they were not, I know that. (Laughter) Even the people with disability would always aim to get the first place, no need to say about other people in China.

I have been in Ireland for a long time and so I don't think it's too important to get the first place but to participate. I have formed this kind of thinking now, no matter I'm good or bad, I participate anyway.

I think this is the main difference between Irish and Chinese parents. I can also tell you about my personal experience. My expectation to my children is like the one "tiger mother" has. I won't allow them to get grade B.

I: Really? So strict?

P: I won't say that you can't get B and so on, but if the children get B, then I must let the children tell me why they got B and what they don't understand. If they can get 100%,

why they only get 98%? They need to tell me the reason. Is it because that they didn't pay enough attention and lost that 2% or they didn't understand? If they still didn't understand, I would help them to understand. I would let them know let them know the reason of losing score and help them. If they lost score because of their carelessness, I would let them know that carelessness is a very big weakness. I think the Irish school normally does not request too much from students so how can they not get 100% then? If they don't understand something from a lower grade then the things they don't understand will pile up when they get to the higher grade and what can they do then? I treated them like this when they were very young, so when they got into secondary school, they already know my expectation well, so I didn't say much when they were in secondary school. Both of my children call me "tiger mother". As I came from Hong Kong, and it is very competitive in Hong Kong, so the parents' expectation normally is very high. I normally use encouragement to let them to get grade A rather than say something not nice or beat them up. I'd never hit my children. Some Irish parents asked me, "Your children are great, how do you educate them at home?" I told them my experience and then they said, "Oh, no, you can't do that!" (Laughter) Irish parents like their children to grow up in a happy atmosphere and learn whatever they like. If they didn't do well in one thing then they can change to learn another thing. The Irish parents won't tie their children with the textbooks, so they have a greater ability of creativity.

I: Lots of Chinese parents seem to think that children must learn a music instrument, don't they?

P: My children learned musical instruments when they were young but it was not because I asked them to learn but because they wanted to learn for themselves. There are twenty children in my son's class and all of his classmates were learning piano. Then he wanted to learn himself.

I: Yes, I remember that the school your children go to is a very good school.

P: Yes, children in that school have greater pressure than the normal school. Everyone is learning piano, how can you not learn?

I: Wow, what's this school's name?

P: It is a private school in Bray, St. XXX school.

I: St. XXX school. It must be a very good school.

P: It is a very good school indeed. The only thing is that it is a bit expensive, but I like the studying atmosphere in that school.

I: Is it both primary and secondary schools?

P: Yes. It has a Montessori school, primary school and secondary school. I think the ethos of the school is very good. From a very young age my kids just love to go to this school. My daughter always asks me during summer holiday, "Mummy, when can I go back to school?" She would ask me everyday during the holiday. Therefore I had to arrange something for her to do every summer holiday. That's the only way to let them forget about having classes in school. So I think it is not easy for a school to attract children like that.

I: I see. The school tries to cultivate the children's interest to learn.

P: Yes. Not only my children but other children love the school as well. I have an Irish friend and she has a boy and she said her son hates school. There are lots of children who hate school. I have gone to lots of other schools to see. I think there are some differences between these schools and St. Jerry's. There are too many children in other schools and there are more than 30 children in one class. There are only about 20 children in my children's school. It is not only class size that's the problem but also there are lots of children who don't know much English in the class, such as children from Eastern Europe, Africa, China, Philippines and so on. Sometimes there are too many foreigners in one class and the teacher just teaches as usual and of course the smart children still learn a lot, but for the children who don't want to learn or don't understand, then they can just play.

I: Do your children have language support teachers in their class?

P: Yes, yes. It is English support teachers to help Irish students.

I: I thought English support teachers are mainly there to help foreign students.

P: There were very few foreign students in the school my children went to.

I: Do you think their social class would effect the parents' expectation to their children? How do you compare Irish and Chinese parents on this?

P: Absolutely. I didn't feel that when the children were young there was that much difference. I found out this when my children were doing their leaving cert. The Irish national schools are free, but why not all the children are in the free national school? Why do some people pay more to get into the private schools? That's because lots of rich people actually are professional and they knows which school is good. So they rather pay more to let their children to get into these kinds of schools. If I didn't remember it wrong, 60% of students in good universities in Ireland are from these private schools. So you see that the quality of the schools is different. Some national schools are very good too, but it depends which area it is in. The parents who send their children to private schools are very concerned about

their children, if their children don't study well, they would come to school immediately. The teacher would review themselves immediately as well. If you complain in a national school, you might need to wait a long time to get your answer. If the child is very smart, you don't need to send them to a very expensive school in order to go to a good university. However, it would be better if you can send them to a good school. I might be different from other Chinese parents since I have been in Ireland for a long time. No matter where you are from you have the accent from that area. If you are in upper class society a lot, you will find it is very difficult to find a person from the Ballymun area. Once you open your mouth it is very easy to tell where you are from. So it is very important to decide which area you should send your child to.

I: Do you think whether the social class effects the Chinese parents' expectation?

P: I think no matter what class Chinese parents are in, most of them would encourage their children to study very hard as this is the only way for children to be outstanding in the future. Most of Chinese people believe that education is the way to change your life. The only thing is there are lots of Chinese people in Ireland, but there are very few in the upper social class. It doesn't mean Chinese people don't have money. Some Chinese people certainly have money, but they are still different from the upper class people in Ireland. According to my experience, lots of educated Chinese young people don't like to stay in Ireland. Lots of children had gone back to Hong Kong. Once they have gone back to Hong Kong they don't like to come back anymore.

I: What's the reason for that in your opinion?

P: Because there are not many opportunities for them. I think once you get to a certain position in your work that racial discrimination still exists. It is not very easy to analyse this kind of racial discrimination. Therefore lots of Chinese people who had grown up in Ireland would go back China after they work for a while in Ireland. They have lots of opportunity to get promoted to a high position in China and one their advantages is that they speak fluent English. Therefore it is difficult for them to come back Ireland. I used to ask our previous principal to organize a student reunion before. However all of my grown up Chinese students had left Ireland and we couldn't find a single one of them. Well there would be a few people who stayed if they have to help with their parents' restaurants or take aways. However, all our older Chinese students had left Ireland.

I: How old are your students?

P: I have been in Ireland for many years, so our Chinese school has over 20 years history. Our first group of students are in their 30s' now. We couldn't find any of our first year students anymore in Ireland. (Laughter)

I: That's very interesting.

P: I used to chat with them on Internet. They told me that they don't have much opportunity in Ireland. They certainly don't have the language barrier but they just can't get to high positions. One of the reasons might be the different culture. Most Irish people like to socialise with each other in pubs. However, if you don't like to drink with the others then you might have a problem with socializing. Lots of Chinese people can't bear these kinds of drinking habits.

I: In your opinion, what kind of child is the "ideal child" in Chinese parents' mind? What is the "ideal child" in Irish parents' mind?

P: Irish parents normally don't expect too much from their children as long as their children are happy. Their children can do whatever they like as long as it doesn't damage the children's health. The Irish parents just hope their children to be healthy and happy and that's enough for the parents. Chinese parents are very different. I think one of the reasons for that is because Chinese people don't have the concept of social welfare in their mind. Chinese people don't like to depend on the pension from the government. Lots of old Chinese people have moved back to Hong Kong already. Especially for those who came to Ireland when they were between 50 and 80 years old. These Chinese people have all gone back to Hong Kong. It is very difficult to find old age Chinese people in Ireland. They all go back to China when they get older. They brought all their saving back to China to buy property.

I think Chinese parents normally interfere with the children's life more than the parents from other countries. If the children eat well, whether they had brushed their teeth, if they put on their pajamas, the parents just interfere with everything. I think that Chinese parents expect a lot from their children as they think that high expectations can make their children better. This is an unchangeable fact. The Chinese parents who grew up in Ireland wouldn't have this kind of thinking, their expectation is different from Chinese parents who grow up in China. As this is where they grew up, of course they would expect their children to be the same. I'm in Ireland for a long time now and I don't think I expect my children to do much, but my children still say that my expectation is too high. (Laughter)

I: In your opinion, what subject would be the one which Chinese children have the most advantages?

P: It must be mathematics. I tell you why, it is not because that Chinese people are cleverer, it is because of the parents' high expectation from a very young age. Of course I'm not saying every Chinese parent has high expectation, I am just saying that most of the Chinese parents would. If a Chinese child says that $2+2=3$, I believe most of the Chinese parents would be scared by the child's answer and get very nervous. They would tell the children, "2+2=4, you must remember it!" In Ireland, most of the Irish parents wouldn't be that shocked, they just tell the child the right answer. So the Chinese and Irish parents have different reactions to their children's wrong answer and have different expectation too.

I never think that Chinese children are very clever because their mathematics is good, that's not the reason, the true reason is the Chinese parents' high expectation toward their children's mathematics. Lots of Chinese parent would give their children coins to play with and teach them to calculate when they are still quite young. They would ask their children, if you have one euro, you bought a 75 cent chocolate bar, how much change you should get back? I saw some parents even give their children a bag of coins to let the children count. (Laughter)

I: Really? (Laughter)

P: Yes. So, some of Chinese children are very sensitive with the numbers from a very young age. Therefore, a lot of Chinese children are first in their mathematic here. However, Chinese children are not very good at project work. Because Irish children start to do projects from an early age. Their project topic could be on planets or on a country. Chinese parents very seldom did projects when they were at school, so they don't help much with their children's project work.

I: What do you think of the religious education in the Irish primary schools? What is the effect of this on Chinese children?

P: I think young children would just follow their parents' belief. If the parents won't believe, then the children won't believe. However, the children might influence their parents when they get older. Myself is a good example, one of my children always wanted to be a Catholic. He wanted to be a Catholic when he was in primary school. However, at that time, I thought he was too young to decide his religion. He has religious activity in his school everyday and he believes in God very faithfully. He talked this with me a lot of times but I never thought it was important. My younger child grows up then and she says she wanted to be a Catholic too. Then I started to consider this seriously. Because myself isn't a Catholic, I didn't know what I should do. I told one of my Irish good friends about this and she said that she would introduce my children to the church. Then I went there to study as well.

I: You went to study yourself?

P: Yes, because only if I know it well then can I let my children join in. Then it turned out that I'm a Catholic myself now.

I: Really? You are a great mother! (Laughter)

P: All our family is Catholic now. My mum was Catholic when I was young but she does not believe anymore. I did not believe it before but I always liked the atmosphere in the church, it is very peaceful and the singing is so beautiful. However I liked it but I had never truly understood it before, my children led me to be a Catholic. I still think children's

religious belief is influenced by their parents' belief.

I: In your opinion, can religion effect the integration of the Chinese children into Irish society?

P: Yes. It (religion) can affect integration a lot. Since 8/9 of Irish population is Catholic, there are a lot of ceremonies in Irish primary schools, such as communion and confirmation. If a child doesn't attend these kinds of ceremonies then this child might be seen as different. Therefore the children's religion can affect the integration to some degree. When I first came to Ireland in 1979, lots of places and shops didn't open on Saturday and Sunday, people just go to church during weekend. I wasn't Catholic at that time but I go to church every weekend, because all my friends are in the church every weekend. All my college friends are all very faithful and they went to church several times a day. At that time, there were two places that you could have friends in Ireland, one is in the church and the other is the pub. I don't go to pub much, but my good friends were all very faithful Catholics.

I: Do you think if gender can effect the integration of Chinese children into Irish schools?

P: I think it does. I think it is easier for girls. Compared to Irish girls, Chinese girls' personalities are normally more gentle and easy-going. They won't object to someone very strongly. There are so many Chinese girls who get married to Irish guys but there are not many Chinese boys who marry Irish girls. I saw a Chinese guy who married an Irish girl, but this Irish girl is very different from other Irish girls, she is very gentle and obedient, Chinese guys like this kind of girl. I think Chinese girls are more likely to adapt different culture.

I: You have a boy and a girl in your family, so I think it might be easier for you to see the difference.

P: I think that boys' communication skills are different to girls. The level of integration can be different too.

No matter what gender this person has their communication skill is the main item that affects integration. I have a boy and a girl in my family, but I also saw boys from other families, and I think boys communication skills are not as good as girls and their ways of communication are different from the ones that girls have. Not only are Chinese boys are like this but also Irish boys. They are similar. They don't communicate their feelings as easy as girls.

I: In your opinion, is there anything the Irish primary schools and the Irish government can do to help these Chinese children integrate better?

P: Actually the Irish government and schools have been working on this for a long time. To help these new comers, the Irish schools provide extra English language help. However I don't think that this is only a problem of language, they need to work more on the parents too. As some Chinese parents don't know much English then they can't communicate with the teachers and other parents. There were lots of activities to involve parents in the school, but some parents just don't attend any of these activities. If the parents don't try to integrate then the children may have more problems with integration. Communication between the parents is very important. The difference is not that obvious when the children are still young but once the children get older and get into secondary school more problems will appear. As once the children grow older they are less likely to tell everything to their parents. Other parents may give you lots of information. If you don't talk to the other parents then you may loose lots of information. So the situation sometimes is that both parents are busy and they don't attend the parent-teacher meetings. It is better now, because the school requests that the parents go but I know there are still lots of Chinese parents that don't go to the meetings. In my children's school I was the only Chinese parent who went to the parent-teacher meetings, other Chinese parents just didn't go. They always have different excuses, such as I can't speak English, I can't drive and so on.

I: Do you think there is anything that you think is important but that I haven't mentioned?

P: There are so many elements that can affect the level of the children's integration. The other thing that one needs to be aware of is that some children may have a disability, but they are happy in Irish schools. Because children with disabilities are taken very good care of in Ireland. Their lives are quite good in Ireland. I met some Chinese children with disabilities in my work in Ireland. Once they got into the Irish school the school arranged lots of nice things for them. So the children with disabilities are taken very good care of in Irish schools, sometimes it is beyond our imagination.

The biggest integration issue is the need to overcome cultural differences. Culture is not only about what we eat, how we celebrate Chinese festivals and how we speak Chinese, but about the different worldviews. Worldview is formed from an early age and Chinese worldview is quite different from the Western worldview.

I: We are influenced by Confucius thinking.

P: Yes. The Chinese persons mind has an invisible shackle. This shackle is with the Chinese people when they are a young age. Foreign people don't have this. Western people like to surround the question then answer and Chinese people like to attack the question. They are very different. The Irish people can answer the question from different angles and they might not give you a certain fixed answer. Chinese people are always looking for a right answer. Chinese people believe everything has a right answer and if there is no such a fixed right answer, Chinese people can feel very insecure. Their ways of thinking are very different.

So the culture difference not only appears in language, festivals and food. Eating certain kind of food is only a habit, people from every country have their own eating habit, for example, if your mum feeds you banana everyday, you would get used to eat banana. If someone then gives you an apple, you would think that it is a strange thing to eat.

Chinese people are always looking for a certain right answer, as they grow up in an uncertain environment, even if you study well, it doesn't mean you will definitely find a good job. What should I do if I graduate from university? After they find a job, then for the people who still don't have girlfriend or boyfriend would start to worry about getting married too late, girls would worry about having a child before they get too old to have one. Chinese people worry a lot. Western people worry less on these kinds of things, especially the Irish. Irish people tend to enjoy life more and they can leave their work and go to travel around for a long period if they want to. The reason for this is because that Irish society has a good social welfare and people feel secure to do so. Of course they can learn through travelling. Their aim in life is not only to work or to get a high position in work. I have lots of Irish friends who did a Masters degree with me. After they finished their degree they didn't want to find a job, they just went to do some volunteer work. Even if they can't find a job, they don't care too much, as the social welfare is good here. They still go to do their volunteer work. There are a lot of people like this in Ireland. Many Chinese people would think that how can people go to do volunteer work if they get no pay? This kind of thinking is not right. Doing volunteer work can help people's thinking in all kind of aspects. It is a great thing to do volunteer work. So I often send both of my children to do volunteer work. At first, they didn't like to do it and they don't understand why people doing this if there is no pay. Little by little, they started to like doing volunteer work and they started to find volunteer work themselves now. I think the parents' behavior does really affect children a lot. To be honest, we are not living in a very poor area. We don't need to worry about food at all. Maybe the university fees are a bit expensive for Chinese students, but once they start to work, the money they earn would be more than enough to feed themselves. Then people started to want this and that, and become greedy. It would be nice if everyone can take 3 hours to do volunteer work every week. It will be very meaningful for everyone. So I invoke every Chinese person in Ireland should do some volunteer work.

I: I know that you have done lots of volunteer work.

P: Yes. I have done volunteer work for 20 years now. I worked in an information center. I also volunteered to teach in our Chinese school.

I: The Chinese school that was established by Chinese Society of Ireland, right?

P: Yes. Our Chinese Society of Ireland was very small at the time. If any Chinese people have any big troubles in Ireland we were there to help. For example, an old Chinese woman stayed in hospital, we just cooked Chinese food for her everyday and we were the translator for her. If any old man or woman has any problem, they would call me, I just go to help them out.

I: Wow, you are great!! Thank you very much for doing this interview with me.

P: You are very welcome. Hope I helped you.

I: You had given me great help indeed! Thank you very much again.

Appendix J

Sample Chinese educational scholar interview

Interview with Chinese Educational Scholar

I: Hello, Dr. XX. My name is Jia Liu. I'm doing a research thesis on the integration of Chinese children into Irish primary schools at the moment. First of all, thank you very much for finding the time and doing this interview with me. Could you introduce yourself briefly firstly?

ES: I've been in Ireland for about twenty years now.

I: Wow, it is a long time.

ES: I came to Northern Ireland in 1991. I came to do my PhD at that time. I didn't bring my child, I came here myself. I did some PhD courses at first and then I went back China to do my fieldwork in 1993 and came back in 1994. I brought my child here at that time.

I: Was your child in a Chinese primary school before you brought him here?

ES: Yes. We brought him to the UK when he finished his second year (in a Chinese primary school). I continued my PhD, but because he came, I didn't have as much time working on my PhD as before.

I: It was not easy.

ES: I still have my funding but I also need to look after him. I also had a part time job later. So I only finished my PhD thesis in 1997. After I graduated it was difficult to find a full-time job because I needed to look after my child and my home. My husband was not at home very often because of work reasons. Then I had a part-time job. It was teaching Chinese language, Chinese contemporary society and Chinese culture in the XXX University Belfast. I also taught Chinese classes in the library at the time.

We came to Dublin in 2006. We were planning to have a Chinese language and cultural center in XXX University Belfast before. However, the XXX University, in my opinion, it had not seen the importance of Chinese studies at that time, so the University didn't like the idea much. Then we decided to move to Southern Ireland to continue our careers. When we came there was no XXX Institute at that time and there was only a Chinese Research Center. After half a year our XXX Institute got approved. So we taught Chinese language, culture, society, and many more subjects.

I: So are you one of the XXX Institute directors?

ES: No, I'm the deputy institute director. Dr. XX is the institute director. To be honest, I didn't like to be the director, as I'm not interested in administration at all. I would be only interested in research work, for example, to lead a team to do a project, to write a textbook, and so on. I'm also interested in teaching, for instance, my research concentrated on Chinese religions before. My PhD thesis was in this area and I'm going to do some further research on it.

I: I see.

ES: I just had a contract with a publisher recently. My book has published in China in 2005 so I always wanted to publish an English version. However, I'm so busy at the moment, so it is hard to find time to finish it. . . .

I: I know you always have so much work to do. Could I ask you how much you know about Irish primary schools?

ES: I don't know anything about Irish primary schools. However, as my son came to UK when he was seven and a half years old, he went to a British primary school, secondary school and university, so I know about British schools.

I: All right. Have you noticed any similarities and differences between the British and Chinese primary school?

ES: Wow, there are so much to say about this topic! (Laughter)

I: That's great, you can tell me all the things you have noticed.

ES: First of all, the primary school here is very humanistic. When he came back home on his first day in the primary school here, he told me the school was so good! I asked him why, he said he could go to the bathroom whenever he likes! He had to wait until the class is over when he was in a Chinese school. Although it is such a small detail, it affects the child a lot. He felt more relaxed instead of nervous in the class.

I also found the teachers here are very humanistic as well. His teacher treated him like he was her grandson. She helped him to get his schoolbag ready after school everyday.

I: Really?

ES: Yes. For example, she sometimes said to him, "XX, you don't need to bring back this book today, it is so heavy. You only need this one tonight." So she had left such a deep impression upon him. He kept a pencil that was given by this teacher. Actually it was a

very normal pencil, there are just some Christmas tree leaves on it. However, he felt it was such a precious thing to keep, that because he respects that teacher so much.

I think he has compared the kind and friendly attitude of this teacher with his previous teacher in China. He used to be in the primary school in the XXX University of China. It is a very good primary school, you know it too. The reason he can get into that school was because both my husband and myself were working for XXX University of China. That teacher was very mean to him. I can kind of understand the teacher, because she wanted every child to be excellent, but he was just in the first year of the school, what did he know about? XX is also a very independent child from a very young age, he is like me on this. I'm a person that if you force me to go right, I will go left. So his teacher was not happy with him at all, he still remembers how that teacher punished him, Laughed at him in front of all the class. The teacher used this kind of method to deal with the student who didn't listen to her. Compared to his previous teacher his new teacher here was so kind and nice to him from the deep heart so he was very touched.

The other thing is that I feel that the British school respects your privacy very much. The school would never hold the group parents meetings or put all the students' exam results on the wall. I think the Irish school should be the same on this.

I: Yes, it is.

ES: I think the teacher knew how to make the child like XX integrate. She came up with lots of ideas. She let XX teach Chinese in the class. Neither did XX or I realized what the teacher's real purpose was. So he came back and said that he thought the class Chinese one day. He taught them how to write one (Chinese character is “一”), all the students felt it was very easy to write; then he taught them how to write two (Chinese character is “二”), all the class thought it was easy to write too; then he wrote three (Chinese character is “三”), all the students thought now they know how to write Chinese numbers—just add it on! However, when he wrote four (Chinese character is “四”), everyone went silent. Then he taught the rest of the numbers, all the class felt that actually it was not an easy job to study Chinese. The teacher had helped XX to gain the respect and understanding of all the class through this activity. Although the other children's English is very good, they don't know any Chinese. This child doesn't understand much English, but his Chinese is very good. Chinese is so complicated, are you able to write it? So he unconsciously corrected the behavior of looking down him because he couldn't speak much English. On the other hand, XX has more confidence. I can speak one language, which you cannot speak. So the teacher used a very good way to help him integrate into the class. So I think he was very happy in his primary school. He compared the two kinds of schools himself and he didn't want to go back (to a Chinese primary school) anymore. (Laughter)

The other thing is that the school here emphasize the children's creative thinking. I found this out when I saw him do his first project. I asked him what project he would do, he said the teacher asked him to choose a country in Europe. I was thinking, how could a seven or

eight years old child do a project? He actually finished it in the end! He used ten pages, of course, not much words on each page. He chose Greece. The name of the country is one page, the population is one page, the map is one page and so on, so ten pages all together. Although there are only a few pages, he did it himself! He found all the information himself! For instance, the normal exercise in primary school geography is to fill in the blanks, the child needs to learn the numbers or facts by heart. However, this is the work he did by his own creative thinking, which is very different. To talk a bit more, from my experience that he goes to secondary school and university, I can see the advantage very clearly. To be honest, I was very worried about him when he was in the primary school at first. He learned so little in school, and play after school everyday and didn't have much homework at all. So I worried about him so much. Whether he should do some extra homework? I have lots of exercise books which I brought from China. He told me he wouldn't do it, "Nobody does it in my class," he said to me. He said he already get "A" in the tests, so he didn't need to do it. Then I told him you could get "A+" if you do it. He said even the students who got "A+" in his class didn't do extra homework either. "I also have lots of 'A+', so I don't need to do it," he added. So I was not very happy every time when I saw he was playing outside. I always wanted to pull him back home. Although sometime he listened to me and did some extra homework, but very little indeed. Later, I found that the teacher stopped teaching after the two digits multiplication, and started division. I was so surprised. I asked him, "Have you finished learning multiplication already?" He said, "Our teacher said that if you know how to do two digits multiplication, then you know the three digits, four digits and five digits. We don't need to waste that time." I was like "What?" (Laughter) You know once the number get bigger, it can be a bit more complicated. Then he told me the teacher said they could use calculators in lots of circumstances in the future. I can see that learning is very much related to practical using, it is one of the characteristics in their education. This is one of the differences from the Chinese primary school. Division was the same, they stopped just after they learned two digits division. I was writing my PhD thesis at the time, so I didn't have much time to ask him to do more work.

Once he got into secondary school, I felt that the teacher really encouraged the children's creativity. You know the GCSE?

I: Yeah, I do.

ES: One of his biology homeworks was that the teacher gave topics, then the students chose one and wrote about it. That homework result would be counted as 15% to 20% of the final exam result. However, XX didn't choose any of these five topics, he had his own idea. He searched a lot of resources, worked for a whole week, and wrote one paper. The teacher called me afterwards, and said that he couldn't give him any mark on that. He said XX chose a very different topic. He told me that to be honest he didn't know much on the area that he had written about. It is very easy to understand, the knowledge of a secondary school biology teacher can be limited. It can be very natural he wasn't familiar with a random field that a student wrote on. I was thinking at the time, "Oh, no! XX must get a zero mark this time, otherwise how come the teacher call me? He must call me to explain why he gives him a zero." It has no doubt that XX will get a zero if he was in this kind of situation in a

Chinese primary or a secondary school. Because if you don't write on the given topic, of course you will get a zero! The teacher said that he had talked about this with XX today, and he wasn't very happy. I said I noticed that he didn't talk when he got home today. The teacher said that he didn't say much to XX, he just want him to give him the reference, so that he want to study the things XX had written about. Then I will give him a mark.

I: Wow, his teacher was so nice!!

ES: Yes, he was! I told XX that he should really appreciate his teacher's kindness, because he would definitely get a zero if he were in a Chinese school. It is absolutely not allowed to write on whatever topic you like if the teacher had already given the topic in Chinese schools. So XX gave his teacher the reference, the teacher gave him something like a B or a B+. I think it was very good of the teacher. Through this, I noticed that the primary and secondary school education here encourages student's creativity, but they do not emphasize on learning the knowledge by heart, or the calculation of large numbers, like three digits number, four digits number and five digits, etc..

I: Yeah, students in Chinese primary schools even need to calculate the nine or ten digits numbers in Mathematics.

ES: So the educational idea is very different. I wasn't quite sure about the education here at that time. I only saw the benefit of it when XX got his Cambridge interview. I was really worried about this interview, although I know XX can get "A"s in all his exams. The interview is different, people can be asked questions from outside of his textbook, you know. I was very worried, so I told him to prepare well. He said he won't prepare anything and continued to play with his video game. I was speechless. Then he asked me, "What should I prepare? How do you know what you should prepare for? I have learned the things I should know, and I just go there and say whatever I know is fine."

After his interview, he called me. The interview had formal and informal two parts. He told me about everything. After I heard his description, I said, "It's over! There was no hope at all."

I: (Laughter)

ES: XX then told me, "I feel very confident. If there were not too many excellent students, I will definitely get it!" I was thinking where did he his confidence from? He could not be that optimistic. Then I said, "You didn't answer well in your last big question." The interviewer had him a question about genetics, for instance, the father carries a certain gene, the mother carries a certain gene, then the child has a certain disease, this disease is caused by what kind of genetic change, and so on. He didn't understand the question well, and gave a totally different answer and he talked about it for ten minutes without any stop. There were three people there at the time, one is a professor, one it seems was a lecturer and

the other one is doing all the recordings. The professor asked him this question and didn't stop him when he was giving the different answer, he let him say whatever he wanted to say. When XX finished the answer, the professor said whether he could use a different aspect to think about it. XX still didn't realize he was answering a different question. He talked about it for another five minutes according to his original thinking. The professor still didn't stop him. When he finished, the professor said very nicely that the question he asked was such and such, then he just realized what the question was really about. Then he thought about it, he didn't learn about that. Then he said, "No. I can't answer that." Then the professor said, "How about this, I give you some hints and you can try again." XX told me his one cup of coffee had done its job at the time, he was already getting sleepy. His brain already stopped working when the professor offered to give him some hints. Then he said again, "No. I can't answer that." The professor said, "It's fine, no problem."

According to my Chinese style educational thinking, well, because this question is the most important question in that interview, the previous questions are all small questions. They started with small questions, then medium questions, then a big question, which was the biggest question. I said to him that because he didn't get the biggest question, of course he wouldn't pass. He was quite happy at first, then became quite frustrated after he listened to my words. Then we came back.

After he got the offer from Cambridge, you know, normally there was a dinner to welcome all the new students. It was such a coincidence that the professor was just sitting beside him! Then the professor told him about their principals to get students. They didn't care how much knowledge the students can answer, or whether the answer is right or wrong, these are all not important. They only look for one thing— potential. Although he didn't answer the question well, he was talking about his own thing with great passion for fifteen minutes. He had talked about the things he was interested, the things outside of the textbook, and he explained them well. So they think he's got potential.

This kind of thinking can be traced back to the primary school. Children from a very young age are encouraged to create their own thing. The other thing I remember is that he got quite upset after his last day in his primary school. I saw he was quite sad and I went to his side and tried to comfort him a bit. "What did your teacher say to you on your last day?" I asked. He said the teacher was very nice, she sent them to the gate of the school, everyone was really upset. That teacher actually was a new teacher to them, but they still have a very strong feeling for her. Then I ask whether the teacher say anything when you are leaving, he said that his teacher did send them a sentence in the end. I was really interested, I thought it must be a great wisdom from a famous person. He said, "the teacher told us not to listen to our parents' words, not to listen to our teachers' words, but listen to myself. Because the teacher can be wrong, and the parents can be wrong too. " I was like, "Ah? What? Did your teacher say this to you?" (Laughter)

I: (Laughter)

ES: That can't be true, I was thinking that at the time. He said that my teacher was right, we should listen to ourselves. I found this way of thinking really worked when he chose his secondary school afterwards. I brought him to some schools on their open days, I told him that he should choose this school or that school because he got all "A"s in his exams. He said, "Mum, I got these 'A's myself, so should I choose my school myself?" So he thinks my idea only can be used as a reference, but the decision should be made by himself. The school he chose was the second best at the time, the one I chose was the best, and it was a mixed gender school. The one he chose was a boy's school. He was just attracted by the games in that school. Wow, they had the things like. . . you know the thing that you paint all the small figures?

I: Yes, I know.

ES: They had a huge game room. It was so fancy! So that was what he really got attracted by. I told him that he couldn't choose a school only because of a nice game room. Although eventually he went to the school we wanted him to go to, he chose it not because he wanted to listen to our opinion, he just found out that it was better to have girls in the school. It could be very boring without girls.

I: I see. (Laughter)

ES: From his primary school, his teacher never told him to follow or listen to others. I used to have a Chinese friend who worked in Chinese embassy. My friend knew that XX had got into Cambridge so she called me to ask for tips her son. XX was really impressed by how strong this boy's CV was, for example he used to get some prizes for mathematics the Olympiad contest and so many other prizes as well. So he certainly has lot of knowledge, he is clearly a very good student in China. He also got some prize for the physics Olympiad contest. He started to get all sort of prizes when he was in primary school. So he is a typically good student in China. We all think that he would have no problem as he had such a high profile. On the other hand, he applied Cambridge from Ireland, so he should be all right. However, he went to Cambridge for an interview twice, both were failed both times. He went there the first time and he failed. Then he didn't want to give up and tried again, and failed again. Then XX helped him to analyze, he asked about what his interview was like. Once the boy told him about his interview, XX said his interview would fail for certain. I asked him why, he said whenever the interviewer asked him a question, then he started to think, he tried to think how to give the most correct and the most perfect answer. XX said this kind of thinking would fail for certain as the time was really short and there was not time to think much. The only way to do it is that answer immediately after you heard the question and don't try to look for a perfect answer or a correct answer. You just need to say whatever you know. One way that the interviewers find whether you have potential is to see whether you can say much about the topic. If you don't say anything then how do the interviewers know what you are doing there? For example, if you thought for about three minutes, the interviewer won't know whether you know it or whether you have the ability to answer the question. Then they might skip that question if you think for too

long. The Chinese education always encourage the children to find the right and the perfect answer from primary school, the disadvantage can be seen when they grow up. This is one of the big differences between Chinese and Western primary school education. Chinese education is to train the student to follow other people's idea from a young age. I think the Chinese educational authority should really reflect on this and to think why are there very few Chinese people that win some big prizes, such as Nobel Prize.

Children are given lots of time to play here. It looks like a waste of time, I was thinking of this at that time. How busy a primary school student in China is!

XX just liked to do Lego when he finished school everyday. All my friends or relatives like to send him Lego, he had a big pile of Lego at home. He watches TV for half an hour after he gets home everyday, he never did homework first. He said that the homework was very easy and that it can be finished in five minutes, so he never did his homework first. Then he just dived into his Lego pile. I was so angry whenever I saw this. Afterwards, he started to like the piano. He said to me, "Mum, you can't tell me what I should learn. No parents should tell their children what they should learn in Western schools. If I like it, then I learn it; if I don't like it, then I won't learn." I had to agree with him. I was planning to let him to learn this and that, you know, the Chinese parents always want their children to learn this and that. His way of thinking had been affected by his classmates. He said, "Mum, you can not force me to learn something!" So he showed interests in piano when he was in the first year of secondary school. I actually didn't expect much from him about the piano. However, I only realized that his skill of assembling Lego and playing piano had played a very important role in his future science study. Why is that? All of those practiced his hand skills.

X

He had lots of career dreams when he was in secondary school and it changes every year, such as a history lecturer, a computer programmer, a philosopher, and so on. It changed all the time anyway. I only noticed that he was interested in biology when he was in fifth grade. So I send him to one of my friend's laboratory in China during one of the Summer holiday. There were three cadets in the lab at the time, XX was a secondary school student, one was a student in second year of college, and another one was a PhD student. So they did work together in the lab. In the end, the director of the lab said that XX had the most skillful hands. He said XX could do the experiments very well although he had never done it before. His hands had a very good sense of coordination ability. Then I realized that might because he had lot of time to play Lego when he was young. The aim of the primary school here is to let children fulfill their potential through play. I also found his love of Lego helped him to assemble computer when he got to secondary school. He just took apart the computer, then put all the parts back together from time to time. He did the same to my computer, his aunt's computer and also his classmates' computer. So I think the play in young age really helped him in the later life. I think one of the maladies of Chinese education is that all children's playtime that can stimulate children's potential was killed. After that special

period, the children's psychological status have changed.

Therefore, from a superficial level, I would like to thank the Western education that he didn't need to wear glasses after all those school years. He also had a great playful childhood. From a deeper level, it is a good lesson for the Chinese educators like us to learn. Your PhD topic is on integration, on how can Chinese children integrate into Irish primary school better. I think this kind of school environment is very good for integration. First of all, most of the Chinese children like the Irish primary schools. It is very seldom to see that Chinese children have a strong contradictive feeling with the schools here.

On the other hand, if you say there is no problem at all, that is not true either. There are still lots of cultural differences between Chinese and the Western children. My son had two good friends when he was in the primary school. They always came to our home to play and eat together. They also stayed in each other's homes overnight. At that time, there was no Chinese in his class, only himself. He was also very young at the time and he didn't have a strong sense of identity at the time. So they played together for a few years and I didn't feel there was any isolation between him and the local children. He integrated very naturally. He also benefited from... we should thank the Summer school from the church. Actually, it was our neighbor suggested me to send XX to the church school, because she has a child as well, so the two children can go there together. Then we went. XX didn't want to go at first, but he tried to be a good child, Mum asked him to go, then he would try to go. Actually he was not that interested at all. The church was very good at organizing different activities, such as camps and clubs, there were always some activities were on. It was normally on Sunday, they had Bible study during the morning, then activities in the afternoon. They also have different clubs on a week day evening. They always took all the children out to play when Summer came. At that time, XX never told me anything about the effect of the Church school. After he got to secondary school, we had move home, the people from the church encouraged us to go to the church continuously. Our home was very far from the church and the people said they could collect XX for church themselves and they were very happy to do so. However XX didn't take their kindness, just refused to go. I felt so embarrassed when he refused people from the church so directly. He said, "Mum, church has done its job to transform me. I don't need to go anymore." (Laughter) I was so surprised! He told me, "In my primary school, I was a Chinese boy, I entered a totally different environment. Although I had some good friends, like Mathew and so on, we are still different in culture. The Church had helped me to transform from a Chinese boy to an English boy." I could see that he grow older and he knew how to express himself. His secondary school teacher called him a "thinker". He has lots of thoughts. So if you have change, you should interview him. You might get more from him. There was another PhD student who had interviewed him before, twice actually. Because he has lots of thing to say, not like some children who don't know what to say. He said the church helped him through all kind of ways, learning Bible is only one of them. At first he asked me whether I believe in God when he came back from church. As my research was on religion, I wasn't sure how to answer him. I said, "Half and half." He said, "That's not right, Mum. You should decide whether you believe or you don't. If you believe you will go to the heaven, if you don't believe you will go to the hell. If you only believe in half, where are you going in the

future?” I said, “You don’t need to worry about your Mum, honey!”

I: (Laughter)

ES: He really believed in God at that time. He told me that he was very serious, I had to say in the end, “Ok, ok, let me think about it.” However, he didn’t believe it anymore after he got into secondary school. He said the effect of Bible studies in the church to him only lasted a period, but the effect of the culture and the integration is more beneficial to his growth. As there were so many children in the church, except our neighbor’s child, they were all English children. They played, ate, drank and camped together. He stayed there for P4, P5, P6 and P7, four years.

I: Sorry, what is P4, P5...?

ES: They are the number of years in British primary school.

I: I see.

ES: So he stayed in both the normally primary school and the church Summer school for four years, he had benefited from the church Summer school a lot. It helped him to integrate from different aspects. Otherwise, there were only a few hours in the school everyday. Once he came back home, we ate Chinese dishes and spoke Chinese. His father never ever ate Western dishes, this was his so-called “the love of China”.

I: (Laughter)

ES: So all the education we gave him was typical Chinese education. Actually through the children’s learning, the Chinese parents’ mind is changing from time to time as well. I actually have a few published articles, which might be helpful to you.

I: That’s great!

ES: They are about how I educated my child and how my child educated me. I can copy them to you later.

I: That’s fantastic.

ES: My feeling is that if there was a little “foreigner” at home, then you can’t go absolutely Chinese. He was like a bridge, we were affected by the Western culture a lot through him.

However, once he got into secondary school, although he had lots of integration in primary school and the church Summer school, he was very much aware of his Chinese identity. He has a problem now too, as he doesn't know what kind of girlfriend he should look for. (Laughter) He said if he did look for a Chinese girl, he is not typical Chinese himself; if he did look for an English girl, then he is very Chinese compared to her. He said he just stood in the middle, didn't belong to any side, he just felt a bit lost. He knows that his Mum would actually prefer a Chinese girl. (Laughter) He feels it is a bit difficult to be with a Chinese girl who had spent most of her time in China.

So your research is on integration. My feeling is that there is no problem with his integration into the primary school, teachers were great, he had friends, and he also had the help from the church. I don't think he had any psychological difficulty in primary school. However, once he got into secondary school, I didn't see he had any very close friends. Once he got into university, because people is saying that Cambridge is a college for upper-middle class families. So our family background is not included in that zone. It is not only about the how high the salary is, it is a mixture of things, cultural background, social background and thinking form. So his best friends in Cambridge are all come from Singapore, or Malaysia, these countries, but not British students. After he started his Masters, he seems passed that stage. That's also because he was the only foreigner in a big house, all other people he shared the house with were British. He got on very well with them. He didn't have any feeling of isolation at all with them, they played, ate and drank together. I asked him, "Do you feel you are a Chinese among them?" He said, "No." I asked him again, "Do you feel they are people from your native country?" He said, "Yes." So when he was doing his PhD in Edinburgh, these British boys all went from Nottingham to visit him. They are very good friends, sometimes they chose a weekend, then everybody went back Nottingham to gather around. Then I can see his primary school education really worked well. If you compare him with a Chinese boy who only come here to do the A level, or GCSE, they will be totally different. His four years in primary school had really worked. His was in this kind of environment in his childhood, although he felt he was a Chinese when he got older. Maybe other people would see him as a Chinese as well. It is easy for an adolescence child to feel to be isolated, but after this special stage, his experience from his childhood would play its role. He had Chinese friends who came from the first year and the third year of secondary school, he is very different from them. Therefore, the experience in primary school played a very important role.

I: Yes, primary school is very important, as the child's way of thinking is formed at that age.

ES: Yes. Sorry, I have talked too much.

I: It's fine. In your opinion, whether the Chinese language and culture important to the Chinese children in Britain and Ireland?

ES: I think it is very important. If a child is ethnic Chinese, of course they should know the

Chinese language and culture. However, XX's Chinese isn't that good. That was because we used to have a wrong thinking. If he needs to go to a good secondary school and a good university then he should have excellent English. So we didn't draw much attention to his Chinese study. He went to a Chinese school to learn Chinese when he was in secondary school, but he wasn't that interested. He is kind of half illiterate in Chinese. He can speak and listen, that's no problem. His reading is not very good, his writing is worse, unless he writes on his computer. His reading and listening improves whenever he communicate with us, the trips to China certainly would help him as well. We always had lots of parties for Chinese people so he would be in trouble if he can't speak any Chinese. At least he is ethnic Chinese so the Chinese language is very important to him. When he was in China, he had a few Chinese girlfriends, which certainly helped his Chinese too.

I: (Laughter)

ES: The other reason is because all these Chinese girls could not speak fluent English, so he had to speak Chinese.

I: Did he feel any gap between himself and his Chinese girlfriends?

ES: Well, I have said that the culture is very important. If he doesn't know any Chinese culture, he would feel quite isolated at home. I saw lots of Chinese children here, they don't eat Chinese food, can not accept their parents. I think this would affect their family a lot. Chinese economy has grown stronger and stronger nowadays, Chinese culture had a lot of meaning in the world today. If a child only has a Chinese face, but don't know any Chinese culture, or even feel against Chinese culture, I don't think it is right. As my job is to teach Chinese culture, XX always came over to see what I was doing, he got affected in this way too. For instance, once I was preparing my lecture, he asked me what I was preparing for, I said, "Chinese Tea". Then I showed him the video of the Chinese tea without any attention. Who would know that he made himself some Chinese tea the second day!

I: Really?

ES: Yes, he still drinks Chinese tea now. I'm a bit different from other Chinese parents. As I'm a Chinese culture and language lecturer, he has learned lots of things from me unconsciously. He actually likes Chinese culture but he doesn't like Chinese society. He has Western values which is different from the ones of some people in China nowadays. When we talked about some of the society phenomenons in China he couldn't accept it. He hates corruptions especially.

I: In your opinion, how does Confucianism influence Chinese education? Would the children in Ireland be effected by Confucianism?

ES: Let's be more specific, such as filial piety. I influenced XX unconsciously. I often take my mother from China to our home in UK or Ireland. She had come to our home four times so far. None of my Chinese friends' parents come as often as my mother and she is very well known in our area. We lived together for a long time and got on really well. All of this affected XX a lot. He knows that children need to take good care of their parents. This is one important part of Confucianism. He took the filial piety for granted and he isn't the same as his Western friends in this. His friends are like... Okay, my parents are really old and sick, I have to do something now, maybe I go to their house to visit them, and so on. XX knows how to treat his parents well. I often teach him about it as well. I used to tell him, "Everyone has a day of getting old. When I get old, I would like to live somewhere where is close to your house. We won't share the same roof with you, it might not be that convenient, but we won't stay too far from you, so we can take care of each other easily. So when you have a child, we can help you to raise your child." Oh, yes, he really doesn't like the fact that some of Chinese young couples just let their parents raise their children, he thinks it is not fair at all. However, he can accept that the parents may give a hand when the young couple are busy or if the child is sick. So he can accept all of these. The way of how we live really affected him a lot. I think his evaluation on himself is right. He is just half and half, he stands between the two cultures. He of course would get affected by Confucianism.

I: If both of the parents are Chinese, would he be affected by Chinese culture more.

ES: Yes. Another aspect of Confucianism is respect. We educate him to respect elderlies from a very young age. When his friends came, they sit on the sofa with arms crossed on their chest and called me "XX" (the mother's first name)¹! (Laughter)

I: (Laughter) Yes, I can understand.

ES: However, XX always uses respective titles like "uncle" or "aunt" to my friends.

I did a research about Chinese students in Ireland before. The Chinese students in our research are aged between 20-25. One of my research results was that these students were all deeply influenced by Confucianism. Although they were born after 1980's and stayed in Ireland for a long time, it is very obvious to see the impact of Confucianism in their thinking.

I: In what kind of aspects? I mean, what kind of questions have you asked?

ES: For example, the tuition fee issue. It was hard to hear that any of the students took the fact that their parents paid their tuition fee for granted. They all felt very appreciative and really wanted to pay back their parents. In my research, over 90% of the students tried to

¹It is very rude to call older people their names in China. The respective titles should always be used.

pay back their parents by using different ways, such as buying an apartment for their parents in China after they found a proper job, or bringing their parents to Ireland to live with them, all kind of ways. In this 90% of students, some of them had done it, some had done half of it, and some are still trying. They very much appreciated what their parents had done for them. The Western culture is opposite. Compare to the Chinese parents, the parents here normally don't give so much to their children, the children also don't pay back their parents much. I think the two cultures are very different.

I: I see.

ES: We also did research on ideological beliefs. Ideological beliefs are one of the important parts of our research at that time. In this aspect, I think that Chinese just don't believe in god in their deep heart. How much effort the churches here have paid to persuade Chinese people to be their development of object? However, for the most of the students in our research, even for the students whose parents believe in god, they don't like to be baptized. Except for the students who can get some benefits from the church, for example the church can provide them cheaper students accommodation or some other support, etc. This is one part of Confucianism as well. As Confucianism itself is not a religion. Confucius used to say, "Staying away from god and ghost while showing them respect." In my opinion, a very basic ideology of Confucianism is pragmatism. When people respect a god, they must have some requests from the god. There are lots of Chinese idioms to reflect the people's attitude to god and their pragmatism, such as, "Suddenly hold Buddha's foot when you find yourself is in trouble" (this is the literal translation. It means that someone seeks for help in the last minutes) and "One never goes to temple for no reason." What is the reason behind that? China was an agriculture society, pragmatism plays an important role in an agriculture society. The only thing people can rely on is their own hard work. They don't have so much irrational frenzy and the irrational belief in religion. If you go to countryside in China nowadays, you can still see this phenomenon. If we say that the people in countryside believe in a god, but they very seldom go to any temple to worship, unlike the Western believers, they go to church every week. However, if you say that these people don't believe in any god, they all worship god whenever they are ill or have some disaster. So this is the typical basic Chinese attitude to the supernatural world. This attitude in China is so deep-rooted. For instance the (Chinese) people in the church we went to, most of them are aged from 20 to 25 years old, there are also some older ones and no matter how many years they had stayed in the church, how much the church tried to influence them, they just don't believe in God, which is so deep-rooted in their mind. Of course people may attend different activities in the church, they may even pray, but they normally do that when they want something, for example when their children are going to do the leaving cert or someone who is close to them has cancer, and so on. This is the typical Confucian attitude to the supernatural world.

During my research, lots of students showed me their amulet, which their parents gave them when they left China, such as a jade amulet hanging on the neck. They actually do have these kind things, but when I asked them whether they truly believe in it, they all told me that they kind of believe in half and half. That's means when they have any difficulties

or disasters, they would believe in it, otherwise they won't. From this, you can see the influence of Confucianism. I started that research when I was still in Northern Ireland and because there was no funding for this research so I just traveled to Southern Ireland to do this. I always intend to write something on this, but I haven't got the time so far.

I: Do you still have the report you were talking about last time?

ES: Yes, I have the report about this, although the emphasis was not on this area.

I: Could I photocopy it later please?

ES: You don't need to do it, I can send you a copy of the full report.

I: That's great!

ES: So you can see that no matter how many years Chinese people have stayed abroad, the influence is still there, including the filial piety and lots of other aspects. Oh, there is also the habit of saving money. Chinese people very seldom spend all their money. They always save some. (Laughter) Even if there is social welfare and pension, but they don't believe in that.

I: It always feels safer if you have saved some money. (Laughter)

ES: Yes.

I: According to your research and teaching experience, how do you compare the teaching style of the Chinese and Irish teachers? Can you give some specific examples please? How about the students' learning style?

ES: You know that we are doing the NCCA Chinese Unit for Transition Year project now. At first, the people from NCCA told me that they hope to localize the teaching materials and use Irish teachers to teach Chinese. I was thinking how it could be possible? It has to be taught by Chinese teachers in the Chinese way. So I thought it was a bit impossible at the time. Actually I have learned a lot from leading this NCCA project. I heard of how teachers teach here from my child but his comments were all scattered and didn't give a complete coverage. After such a long time working on all the teaching Power Points (for the Transition Year students), when we showed the Power Points to the local teachers happily, the local teachers tried to be polite not to overthrow them all, but still changed them fundamentally. Until then, I just realized how different between the Irish and the Chinese teaching style. No matter how much we used our imagination, the power points we made were still teacher-centered, not student-centered. This is my deepest impression on this.

They (the Irish teachers) have completely brought the students to the class, and students are the main part of the lesson. The teachers' aim is not to teach them many things, but to. . . . from my experience with my son, XX, the students normally were continuously thinking of problems rather than just listening to what the teacher says. So I think there is a huge difference between the two kinds of teaching concepts. Compare the Power Points we have now to the ones we had before, although the amount of knowledge is reduced, reduced a lot actually, the content is generally the same, the teaching concept and methodology have totally changed.

I: Can you give a specific example please? For example, for the same topic "Chinese Economy", how would a Chinese teacher and an Irish teacher teach differently?

ES: Let me think about it. . . . for example, we never had used any "Brain storming" exercises that like the Irish teacher had used, we had never thought these kind of methods before. You know as the leader of the project, I sometimes heard the complaint from our teachers that the students started to throw paper planes after ten minutes of lecture, talked too much in the class, and it was difficult to keep the students' concentration and so on. One of the Irish principals used to tell us that for the teenagers we need to keep them all on board, can't lose their attention, always get them involved and so on. I agree with what he said, I didn't think much at the time but now I understand it better than ever. For instance, in the "Beijing Opera mask" session, I thought the Power Point slides we had made were already very nice. You know that we had used lots of colourful pictures, showed the video of *Mask Changing*, and we also used different technology to create the Beijing Opera mask game in the slides. I thought it was very fancy already. The Irish teachers offered more ideas. One of the teachers said we could give students a white paper only with the outline of the Beijing Opera mask, let the students color the mask according to what they have just learned that different colors represents different personalities. I think that this is a very good idea! The students might feel it a bit confusing among the different colored masks. However, once they colour the mask in, they will never forget it in their life! It is a great idea indeed! I was really inspired by it, and suggested that the students could even answer the simple questions in Chinese. When the students watch the *Mask Changing* video, if they don't pay much attention, they even won't notice the face has changed. I suggested that we could let the students to count how many times the actor's masks changed and give the final answer in Chinese, not in English. So they have to think back about the Chinese number they had learned before. The masks has changed twenty-two times, they have learned that in Chinese. One of our Chinese teachers said that I was so great to have such a good idea. I said that it was not because I was great, I just got inspired by the Irish teachers. (Laughter) I just followed their ways of thinking. Before we would think some Beijing Opera mask pictures would attract enough students' interests. We didn't think of the video, the Chinese counting exercise of the video, and the colouring papers.

I: Yeah, just to listen to the teacher is fine. (Laughter)

ES: Yes, I was inspired a lot from that.

I: What do you think of the attitude of the Chinese parents and the British parents towards their children's education?

ES: They are different. XX used to have a good friend. His friend is that kind of child who doesn't like to study much. He has a brother, and I thought his brother is as same as him. Once I was chatting about this with XX. XX told me his friend's brother studies very well. Then I wondered why their mother only cared about one child's study but not the other one. If I were their mother, I would take care of them both and have both of them study well. Once this friend was playing in our home and his mother came to collect him. We were chatting together. I asked his mother, I was just curious, I said that I heard your oldest son studies very well. His mum said, "Wow, my oldest son is so good at study. He sits there and is super diligent with what he is doing. He was born to study. He likes computing, so I encourage him to do so." Then I asked very carefully, "How about. . . your second son. . . ." She said, "This one, just likes to play. He never sits still. I won't let him sit there anymore. I just let him buy the newspapers everyday." Her son collected and delivered newspapers everyday after school at that time so that he could get some pocket money. She said he liked to do that. If I were their mum, if the younger child didn't study well, I will push him hard, and the older child should help him to study as well. How could he waste his time and delivery newspapers outside? There is not even enough time for him to catch up! I told his mum there would be a test in school the next day. His mum said, "Look, he is playing with XX and he doesn't look worried at all." Then his mum asked about XX, I said XX had already finished the revision. His mum said she would put him to sleep after he got home. I was like, "What? Sleep? There will be an exam tomorrow!" Her mum said, "Oh, well, he gets whatever mark he can get. If the child is keen to study, it is good; if he doesn't like to study, it is fine." I was thinking, oh, dear, she is totally the opposite to me! How could she be like that? Afterwards, I found that neither of the parents of XX's other friends, such as Emmitt and Mathew's parents, were like me. I was the only person who was worrying about XX's study day and night. His friends' parents were all very relaxed. They were also not trying to go to the best schools. XX's two best friends both had religious backgrounds. Catholic is the main religion in our area. Like XX, both Emmitt and Mathew got lots of "A"s in their exams, but neither of them went to the best secondary school that I had talked about. I felt quite puzzled, I asked XX why the two boys didn't choose the best school. XX said that their parents had never encouraged them to go there. I was chatting with their parents when they came to collect their kids. One of the parents said, "The school which he will go to is great! Firstly, it is very close to our home; secondly, it has the same religion as the one he has; and thirdly. . . ." Bla bla. . . So I can see that they don't care so much like us (the Chinese parents) about whether their children go to the best school and whether they go to Oxford or Cambridge. Their way of thinking is totally different from us.

I: How do you compare the Chinese and the Western parents' expectation for their children's academic work?

ES: For this one, I have to say that Chinese people were influenced by Confucianism a lot.

Chinese people believe that “*officialdom is the natural outlet for good scholars*”². This actually leads the direction of education the wrong way. So the child must go to university, and they must go to a well-known university. To be honest, I found the people that live here (in UK and Ireland) are very happy. Even for the people who don’t have good jobs don’t seem to worry about whether their social class is low, they still enjoy their annual holiday very much, and they still feel they have their own life. Their lives seem fine. It would be such a big thing in China if you don’t have a decent job. It is not only about your economic situation, but also about the family pride. In this respect, I think that Chinese people are so deeply influenced by Confucianism. Because of this, parents and teachers can actually give children lots of pressure.

I often call myself the “liberal and open-minded mother”, but in my deep heart, I still want my son to go to Cambridge, although I told him that I would also be happy if he doesn’t go to Cambridge. Yes, I truly want him to go there. However, his friends parents really seem not to care too much about which university their children will go to. Of course, there are parents who care here, like the parents from upper-middle class.

I: Do you think the social class influences the parents’ expectation in UK and Ireland?

ES: Yes, social classes do affect the parents’ expectation a lot. However, the majority of parents here don’t care so much about whether the child goes to a famous university like the Chinese parents do. For example, XXX University Belfast always has a very good source of students. It has no pressure of lack of students. Why is this? Because the students there (in Belfast) would immediately write down XXX University’s name as their first choice without any hesitation although it is not such a high-profile university. It is only one of the ten traditional universities in UK. XXX University never worries about the source of students each year.

I: Maybe because it is close to their home.

ES: Not just because it is close to home, they just don’t seem to have the desire to go to the best universities. I have an example, a British parent, Prof. XX, he is sharing the same apartment building with us now. He was the Associate Dean of School of Law in XXX. He was like us, moved to Ireland from Belfast, so we are sharing the same apartment building now. He has two children, the younger one is still in the primary school, the older one is about the same age as XX. I think as parents, he and his wife are just totally opposite from me and my husband. Because he is a professor himself you know, working in a university. So what can go wrong with his children? Of course his children should go to the best universities! No, his child just went to the XXX University Belfast. He studied a Bachelor degree on Biology and only got a 2.2 in the final exam, not very good. Then they asked him what kind of job he would like, he told his parents that he wanted to be a policeman! If he was my son, even he got a 2.2 in the exam, I won’t agree that he goes to work as a

²This is a famous Confucius saying.

policeman. However, his parents said that it was fine, you could go to apply. They really sent him there. They said that this job position was quite difficult to get, very competitive. The interview lasted one whole day. They were seriously waiting for the result. If this happened to me, secretly I would be so happy.

I: (Laughter)

ES: (Laughter) If it was my son, I think it is the best that he couldn't get it. But they waited so seriously at home. In the end, he didn't get the job. I asked, "Then what is the next step?" They said it would be ok as long as he finds a job. Then he went to a beverage company to taste the different beverages as he studies biology. Actually it is a very low skilled job. He tried different beverages and checked the quality of them, etc. Both of the parents were quite happy with it. After one year, the child didn't want to work there anymore and he wanted to do a Master degree. His parents were like, "Oh, you will spend our money if you do so." Chinese parents would never ever think like that! Not even joke about it! Just never think that way!

I: Yes, Chinese parents would be very happy even they need to borrow money for their children's education.

ES: Of course! I never had thought they asked their child a half serious and half joke question like that. Do you still need us to pay it for you? Because you have worked then you don't need us to pay for it. The Chinese parents are very different from the Western parents in this. So after his Master degree, he went to look for a job. However, the economic crisis happened and it was difficult to find a job, then he started his PhD. The other day, Prof. XX seriously talked about his son's tuition with me. He said, look, three years PhD, how much college fees and how much he needs to live and so on. I was thinking, oh, my god, if it were my son who wants to do a PhD, I would give away all I have for that. They are just so different from Chinese parents. His second child is still in the primary school now. I asked what he likes to study, Prof. XX said he likes mathematics. That is great! You know in Chinese parents' mind, if a child is good at mathematics, which means he is a child full of potential. Just like the famous Chinese slogan in 80s', '*you will have no difficulties in your future once you learn mathematics, physics and chemistry well*'. However, his father didn't care much about it. He said that he could study whatever he likes in the future. I said I heard from his mother that he was very suitable for a lawyer as he is very good at verbal things. Lawyer is a very good job in Western people's eye, so I thought his father should be a bit proud. His father was like, "Umm. . . no." He said that he doesn't care so much. So this is one of the differences between Western parents and Chinese parents.

Another difference is how much freedom they give to their children. I think XX didn't have as much freedom compared to what his classmates had. I gave him lots of limitations. Compared to other Chinese parents, I think I'm already a very open-minded mother; but compared to the local parents here, they are still much more open-minded than me. Such as, the girlfriend issue. When he was 15 years old, one day he told me that one of the girls

in his class cried today. I asked why she cried. He said because she had a vaccine. “Was the injection very painful”, I asked. He said, of course not, she cried was because she couldn’t have sex with her boyfriend for one week after having the vaccine.

I: Ah? (Laughter)

ES: I was like how could she even talk about this in the class? XX said both of her parents knew about it. Why don’t her parents stop her? XX said how could the parents stop her having sex? It is normal to have a boyfriend and have sex. They couldn’t do anything about it. I said, “What? How could they do nothing about it!” He told me that it was normal for boys and girls holding hands together in the school the principal, teachers and parents never said anything about it.

I: If it happened in a Chinese secondary school they would be stopped immediately. (Laughter)

ES: I heard some complaint from one of my Chinese friends another day. Her son is in an Irish secondary school. Her son just had a girlfriend. Because it was near the final exam, so my friend didn’t want her son and the girl get too close, as it could distract him from studying. She said she just couldn’t believe that the girl’s mum and dad just sent their daughter to her home to meet her son in the evening! They just often send their daughter to her home after dinner around 8pm or 9pm. She said of course she couldn’t drive her out, but what kind of parents are they? She is your daughter! She is still a teenager! How can you do that?

XX told me his friends already had girlfriends in primary school. He said there were four or five couples in primary school. That is just totally nonsense! XX said that they were very serious about it. I told XX that he could not get the bad influence from them. XX said he won’t, but his friends all think it is a very natural thing. So the parents’ attitude to this is very different. I’m still a very traditional mum. My son said I always try to control him, but he is used to it now. He has accepted and taken it for granted now. He often chats with me about things like that a girl is chasing him or he likes a girl, and so on. He does tell me these things. I guess his friends normally won’t do that, they won’t talk so much to their parents. I think this is a bit different too.

I: You mean Western children tend not to chat with parents much, or.

ES: I mean the Western children normally won’t communicate with their parents like friends. They may tell their parents about the boyfriend or girlfriend, or they will stay in their girl/boyfriend’s place and so on, but not like. Because I took charge with XX a lot when he was young, so he is used to it now, so he tells me everything. He is old enough now, 24 years old. I knew a girl in his lab fancied him. He told me this girl asked him to go to a conference in America with her. I asked so many questions about this girl. He is

already 24 years old, I don't know why I still asked those questions. "Is this lady single or married?", "How many days are you going to stay in America?", "How many hotel rooms are you two going to book?" and "Is there any other people go with you two?"

I: (Laughter)

ES: He asked why I had so many questions. I said, "Of course I need to ask. Because if she is married, I won't let you to go with her". XX was not very happy about it at first, then he accepted. He told me, "if you don't like that I go to America with her, then I won't book the flight ticket". I don't think XX's friends can do that. Their parent's won't do that either. It was only me. I took charge with him when he was young, so he is used to it now. He even said to me, "Without your approval, Mum." I said, "Don't talk like I am the Queen! I'm not that bad!"

I: (Laughter)

ES: He said, "Without your approval, Mum, I won't have a serious relationship with a girl." The serious relationship is like marriage, you know. I replied him, "You only say so to please me." He said, "Really, look, I found it is difficult to go out with a girl whom you don't like." He showed me a few girls in China before, but to be honest, umm. . . the gap between these girls in China and him is too big. If my first impression with these girls was not that positive, he could feel the burden. So he said that to me, "Mum, don't worry, we are just normal friends, without your approval, I won't." I said, "Don't say that like I'm the Queen, it makes me sounds so autocratic!" He said, "But you are like that, Mum! Which one of my friends' parents is like you?" (Laughter)

I: (Laughter) You were talking about that British and Irish parents' expectation can be effected their social class just now. Then how about Chinese parents? Do you think their expectation to their children's academic work is affected by their social classes?

ES: I think Chinese parents' expectation is not affected by their social classes. I just read in the news this morning that a boy in China has a certain disease. His muscles are all shrivelled. He only has one finger, only the muscles in this one finger are still working. He passed the exams and got accepted by one university, because he can still use the computer to type. But look at his Dad, his Dad carried him on his back. There were a whole series of photos. He carried him on his back to get out of their home and get downstairs, then put him on the wheelchair. His classmates came to collect him, got him in a van, and drove him to the university. Once they arrived at the student dormitory, his Dad carried him from the wheelchair and then put him on the bed. I think the Dad can do nothing in these four years, just looks after his son beside him. It must be like that. Otherwise, the boy can not even look after himself, how can he deal with the life in university? His father is just a worker who delivers milk. I have seen too many of these kinds of things. What social classes? Actually, in China, the people from the bottom of the social class are the people who want

their children to go to universities the most. Because if you lived in countryside of China in ancient times, it was the only way to get out, to change your fate and to have honour and wealth. The agricultural society at that time had its limitations, so studying well and to be an official was the only way out of the fate of a farmer. Then you might ask, can I do business? Of course, you can. However the business man was the lowest social class in ancient China as it was the most insecure job of all. Not many Chinese parents encouraged their children to do business. Why? You can starve at any time, you can be starving to death at any time. So the most secure way to survive was to have piles and piles of grain in your store room at home.

I: (Laughter) Just like Chinese people's habit of saving money nowadays!

ES: Yes. So in old times, when Chinese people had some money, they would buy land. Buying land at that time is kind of the same concept as people buying gold and properties nowadays. In the agriculture society in ancient China, there were only two ways to live well. One was to be a good farmer, accumulate wealth as much as you could, then you became a landlord. The other way was to do the national exams, to get a higher and higher degree, then you could be an official in the city. Then you can be called "eating the emperor's grain". Even now, people from countryside are still saying thing like, "he has a good job in the government, he is eating the emperor's grain." So education is a very important step, through this ladder, people could climb higher in social class. The lower the people's social class is, the more they want to climb higher.

I was chatting with a few of my friends in Beijing last time. My friends were saying that Chinese parents are too close-minded. If the child goes to a vocational school or a technical school they find it easy to find a job. The job is steady and has good wages. However, the parents just want their children to go to universities, even if the wage is only 1000 yuan per month after they graduate. They just want the title of the bachelor degree. They also deeply believe that you will have a bright future as long as you get into a university. Only until recent years, lots of graduated students could not find a job for a long time, some people start to changed their idea very slowly. According to the data collected by the Ministry of Education of China recently, the enrollment of students has changed slightly. Maybe people start to see it is very difficult to get a job even for a student who has a good qualification. For example, I read the news, 150 bachelor degree holders, even including some Master degree holders, were competing for one "make-up artist for dead people position" in a funeral parlor. After reading so much of this kind of news people feel a bit frustrated. Therefore, forced by reality, unwillingly, parents start to let their children go to vocational schools and technical schools. Actually, China is short of this kind of talent. Deeply influenced by Confucianism, Chinese parents just don't like to send their children to these kind of schools. This is very different from Western countries. Most people in Western countries think it is fine once you have a job. They also don't value a person's academic title as much as Chinese people do. In their mind, if a bachelor degree is enough for you, then don't do a Master; if a Master is enough for you, then don't do a PhD. As long as your qualification is enough for you, then it is fine. All your qualifications are for your job. The situation in China is opposite. In Chinese people's mind, no matter what job I get in the future, I want to

have lots of qualifications first. Chinese people also believe that the higher the qualification you get, the better your job will be. Even if I'm over qualified for my job, I still want to do it. It is like this in China. Therefore, it is a big difference.

I: We have talked about the effect of social classes, what do you think of the effect of gender on the integration of Chinese students in local schools?

ES: I'm not quite sure about this, because I only have experience on boys. I don't know whether a girl can be different. So I don't know anything about this.

I: How do you feel about the religious classes in British and Irish schools? Do you think whether Chinese children should attend religious classes?

ES: Umm. The two boys in our home are different. My husband's child came here quite late. He only came since the first year of the secondary school. He didn't show any interest in religion. However, through XX's religious education in his primary school, I think the effect is positive. It gives him help for his lifetime. From the shallow point of view, the Bible is a beautiful book. It is full of literature and history. He can learn a lot of literature and history from it. It at least has a positive effect on his writing skills. Religion plays a very important role in Western culture, if a child doesn't know anything about their friend's religion, it can create lots of obstacles for integration. If all your friends have the same religious background, have religious influence from their family and the society, if you don't know anything about it, it will be very difficult to integrate with them. Vice versa, if you want to go to China, to understand Chinese culture and to make friends with Chinese people, then you need to know Confucianism. If you are in a Western country, then you need to know their religion well. From my point of view, I think religion education is very helpful for my son from all different aspects. It helps him to understand his friends, the Western culture, even the Western philosophy. He showed great interest in philosophy when he was in secondary school. Because most of the great philosophers' work involve some religion, such as Hegel and Kant's work. So from my point of view, I strongly agree that he has a religion education in school. However, my other son didn't like religious education at all. So children can have get different influences from religion.

I: Do you have any good suggestions on making Chinese children integrate better into Irish primary schools?

ES: From my experience on XX, I think it is great to go to the activities which the church had organized as it supplied a very natural opportunity for him to get in contact with the local children outside of school. Because the church advocated the idea that the people who from all over the world are all brothers and sisters, the local children were very friendly to the children from other ethnic backgrounds. This is very precious. Firstly, he learned the Bible, which is something he must learn, just like to study Confucianism. Secondly, he has more contacts with local children. XX is an adult now, but he still benefits from the good

integration when he was young age. He feel so close to all his British classmates now, there is no gap at all.

I also think the role of the teacher in the primary school is very important. XX's teacher in his primary school is called Mrs. Heart. Mrs. Heart had thought of all kind of ways to help XX to integrate with other children in the class. I have given you some examples earlier. As a role model, the teacher plays a very important part in this. If the teacher doesn't have a negative feeling with the child who is from a different cultural background and gives a very good model and thinks of different ways to help the child to integrate, the child should be fine. You know, because of the young age, children actually are easy to adapt to new things.

The school principal plays an important role as well. Once one boy called XX a name during the lunch time. This had been taken very seriously in the school. I'm really appreciated what the school had done for us. Firstly, the teacher asked the boy to stand up to apologize to XX, even the principal came. The principal told the boy what he had done wrong was very serious. So I think the administration of the school is also very important. If neither the teacher and the principal ha said nothing about it, then bullying could occur. Therefore, from my experience with XX, I think both the teacher and school principal are very important. A child actually is like a piece of white paper, they will go wherever you direct them.

I: I forgot to ask earlier, how is XX's English?

ES: He couldn't say much when he came first. The teacher first let a boy show him where the toilet was. He used lots of hand gestures when he just started school here. The teacher was very kind, the teacher was so important! The teacher gave him a special homework everyday and she taught him English separately. When I was collecting him once, I saw his teacher was talking to him individually at the front of the class, she wrote some words on his homework copy and told him how to copy very patiently. Maybe our experience isn't good for other parents, because I tried to speak English to him at that time. This might be wrong. My husband said that XX's Chinese would be a problem in the future if I insist on speaking English to him at home. However, because I was so worried about his English, I pushed him to speak English at home. The other thing.....is that the church was so important to him, he played with local children every Sunday.

I: Did the church teach Chinese as well?

ES: No, only English.

I: I see.

ES: However, XX's Chinese isn't that good.

I: Do you recommend the Chinese parents in Ireland send their children to Chinese schools during weekend?

ES: Yes, I think it very necessary. If there were a Chinese school at that time, we would have sent our children there. When the first Chinese school appeared, he was already quite old, 14 or 15 years old. He was not willing to study the children's stories with young kids at that time. So it was my job to teach him at home. His goal was to do the GCSE Chinese exam. Then he studied Chinese for a while and got an A+. He dropped it immediately after he passed his exam.

I have some suggestions with the weekend Chinese schools. The Chinese schools must have some connections with local schools. Why children don't like to study Chinese? The fact that Chinese is difficult to learn is only a small part of the reason, the main reason is because the school hired lots of parents as the school teachers. The parents may not know much educational methods, also not expert on pedagogy and just want to pass all the knowledge to the children. The teaching methods are very boring and not like the teachers in local schools at all. Lots of children feel like going to a Chinese school is like going to a jail. It may not be like this in your school but it was like that in the school in Belfast. The parents forced their children to get into the car and gave them lots of nice snacks and then drove them to the Chinese school.

I: (Laughter)

ES: Some children's words made the teachers speechless. They said this was not how teacher teaches in their primary school. So I think this is an aspect we need to pay lots of attention to. Therefore, I hope all our Chinese teachers should all attend our training program to see how Irish teachers make teaching materials, how they teach in the class and how they teach a foreign language. We shouldn't have our children feel there is a gap between a Chinese and an Irish teacher. It would be much easier if we use their local teaching methods to teach.

If we use the teaching materials that we just made for the Irish transition year students in any of the Chinese schools, I promise that the children will learn very fast for both language and culture. Although we made these teaching materials for Irish teachers to use, all kind of students will like it. For example, we used lots of Internet resources which can also be used by the parents in the Chinese school. The vivid Internet teaching resources can be much more efficient than the traditional way of teaching, such as reading after the teacher, and so on. Some parents thought that the children would be fine as long as they are in a Chinese school. This is actually not enough. The key is how they learn, how they learn efficiently and whether they have an interest in Chinese. So the first aim of a Chinese school is to let the children have an interest in Chinese, just like the idea of the transition year here. Once the children have an interest, then they can learn it themselves. A very important way to do this is to train all the teachers to treat Chinese education abroad as the formal education, rather than be satisfied as long as the children learn a few characters. As children here

don't have a good Chinese language environment the only good thing is that they can speak some Chinese if both of the parents are Chinese. For example, XX, he is not a good model here. His speaking and listening were all very good in the GCSE exam, but his reading and writing were very bad. So I think all the Chinese teachers should have formal training in our Confucius Institute. Once they have a good idea about teaching concepts and the methodology, then teaching and learning will be much easier. The other thing is that there is a computer in most our homes now, we have so much things on-line, so children can learn by themselves on-line. The on-line language games are so much fun! They can learn through playing. I think that is the main problem with the Chinese language schools now.

The other problem is that, well, I heard of this in a Chinese school in Belfast, a student learned Chinese for a long time, but they were not upgraded, and had not any certificate. Children had no feeling of achievement. Now our children may do the *Youth Chinese Test* (YCT) and then they will have more motivation to learn Chinese. If you want the children learn well the Chinese school must be formalized. The teachers need training, teaching should be connected with internationally recognized exams, the text books need to be chosen carefully and the textbook should be related to the exams, such as YCT, or GCSE Chinese exam. Otherwise, the children will have no aim in learning. Our Confucius Institute even can give free training to these teachers. Such as our training yesterday, it won't make much difference if we have ten more teachers we just need ten more portions of lunch, (Laughter) nothing else, just the same. They will be very different after the training. Once they saw XX's (an Irish secondary school teacher) demonstration on the *Chinese Economy*, they would know how to teach Chinese Economy in the future. XX's (a Chinese teacher) language lecture was also excellent and it would be impossible for children not to show interest on her lecture. Even all the principals and teachers there were smiling, children would certainly like that kind of teaching. Therefore, you can suggest them to come to our XXX Institute, we can give them training for free.

I: That's great! Thank you very much!

ES: That's fine.

I: Thank you so much for you to have this interview with me! I have benefitted a lot from you.

ES: No, no, you are too polite, you are welcome.

Appendix K

Sample Irish principal interview

Interview with Irish Principal 6

I: Hi, how are you? My name is Jia. I'm from the School of Education Studies, DCU. So, today, thank you so much for doing this interview with me. So firstly, would you like to briefly introduce your school?

P: Yes, the school is XXX Educate Together National School. We have 283 pupils enrolled.

I: Wow. Okay.

P: And ninety five percent of the students enrolled in our school have both parents who are non-Irish parents.

I: Oh okay.

P: So we have very few indigenous Irish children, with Irish parents. Now a lot of our children have been born in Ireland.

I: Oh, okay.

P: But they would have both parents who are non-Irish. So the vast majority of our children do not speak English as a first language. So we have six language support teachers in the school. We are in temporary premises at the moment. We are sharing the school with Adamstown Castle Educate Together, who are graduating outside today.

I: Oh, yes.

P: And our school has grown really quickly. We were set up as an emergency school in 2007. So we take children who couldn't get into their school in Lucan, who couldn't get in to their local school.

I: Oh, okay.

P: They couldn't get in to Catholic schools or Educate Together schools, because there was oversubscription.

I: Okay.

P: So the people then who ended up in our schools are the people ... most of them are new

to the country. Or they were not Catholic, so they difficulty getting in to the local schools.

I: Okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

P: So there was a special school set up to cater for those children. So we opened in 2007 with seventy children, and as I say, in September coming, we will have three hundred and twenty children. So we are one of the quickest developing schools in the country.

I: Yes, absolutely. Four times...

P: We have very few Irish children, which is a bit of a problem for us, because when we talk about integrating, our children aren't really integrating with Irish, they are integrating with people from all over the world.

I: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

P: So there is very few Irish children.

I: Oh, okay.

P: So that explains our school.

I: Okay. And do you have any Chinese children in your school?

P: We have eight Chinese children in the school.

I: Okay.

P: We have a brother and sister, that's one family, and we have a family of four, and then we have another family of one girl, and her sister is coming into the school in September.

I: Okay.

P: So four families actually.

I: Four families?

P: We've one individual boy as well.

I: All right.

P: We've four families.

I: Okay.

P: Yeah.

I: So plenty of Chinese children here.

P: Well, compared to other nationalities it is very small.

I: Ah, all right.

P: Because we would have a lot of Pakistani students, we would have a lot of Indian students. We've a lot of Eastern European students. So the Chinese contingent is actually very small for us, yes.

I: Oh, okay.

P: Eight pupils, four families.

I: And how well have they integrated do you think?

P: You see, it's very difficult to talk about integration in this school, in a way. Because, like, integrated into what? They have they integrated into the school culture very well. But in terms of integrating into Irish culture, it is very difficult for me to know.

I: Yeah, yeah.

P: Because, unless they are very involved in out-of-school activities, then I don't think they are integrating into Ireland. And I think the parents would find it easier if they were in a school with more Irish children, basically. We are in an unusual situation. But in terms of integrating into the school life, they have done very well. They have integrated very well.

I: Okay. And in your opinion, what are the most common difficulties in integrating, for non-Irish students?

P: Language.

I: Language? Okay.

P: Language, straight away for us, is the first barrier, because, as I say, the parents don't have English as a first language and it takes a long time for our children to become reasonably fluent. English is obviously the language of the school, but there are thirty two different languages represented with the children in the school. So for our children, it takes longer for them to learn English than if there was a small number of children from outside Ireland coming in to an Irish school. So language is the first barrier, I think, to integration.

I: Okay, yeah.

P: Particularly the lack of language with the parents. Because when they don't have comfort with English, they don't come to the school that often. You know, they don't integrate with us very much. They kind of keep away. And particularly in our school as well, because our children come to school by bus. We don't see our parents very often. So they don't ... There is a difficulty there with parental involvement. And I think if parents are involved in school life, they integrate really well. Because they meet other parents.

I: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

P: So there is a bit of a block there that we have to fight all the time. We have to work really hard to get our parents to come in, so that they can meet other parents, so that they can integrate. So I think that's ... The parents language and the children's language are both barriers to integration. Another thing that we find about integration is that a lot of our students don't join out of school activities.

I: Okay.

P: As much as Irish children do. So, like, most Irish children are involved in you know, maybe the GAA, or Irish dancing, or ballet, or music. Our children don't generally get involved in out-of-school activities. And, again, that's one of the big aims of our school, to encourage our children, or to give our children skills in school so that they feel confident enough to join a GAA club or an Irish dancing club, or a ballet club, or a music club. To try and give them ... or chess clubs ...

I: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

P: To give them ... We try to do a lot of that in school, and in school clubs after school, but again, unless they join outside clubs, they are not meeting Irish children, to integrate with Irish children.

I: That's a really good point. Yeah, actually.

P: Yeah. So that's one of our main aims, each year. To encourage our families and our children to get out there, and join outside things.

I: Absolutely.

P: So that it ... You know, research would prove that the more involved children are, not to talk about integration, but just in general terms of education, if they are involved in sports clubs, and tennis and chess, and all these sort of things, that all of that helps their general education as well.

I: Absolutely, yeah.

P: And I think if our parents don't encourage our children to do that, it isolates them more.

I: Yeah, yeah.

P: Yeah.

I: And I believe you have seen lot's of children from all different kinds of cultural backgrounds.

P: Yeah.

I: Do you think that they have similar difficulties or different?

P: They're different. Well, I'd say, because, well, say in terms of ... A lot of our Muslim families would be ... wouldn't culturally get involved in outside clubs. But I don't think the Chinese children have that barrier. I really don't think ... I think the Muslim children do a lot of learning of Arabic and stuff after school. But the Chinese children don't, so they are freer to do that. But with our Chinese families, the four families are very different. I can't say that they're sort of a homogeneous group.

I: Yeah, yeah.

P: They're very different, and they'd be very different socially as well, in terms of their social background, and I think that makes a difference.

I: It really depends on individuals, yeah?

P: It does, to a huge extent, and I'd have to say, like, if I could characterize the Pakistani group, they would be a much more homogeneous group than the Chinese that we have in the school. They'd be very different.

I: Yeah, yeah.

P: One thing that I would say about the Chinese parents would be that they allow their children to be ... they allow their children to go to school without any ... they don't contact the school much. The Chinese parents don't ...

I: They don't contact the school much?

P: They don't contact the school much. They kind of seem to put all their trust in the school.

I: Okay, yeah.

P: And they don't ask questions about the school. That would be one thing that I would have found with the Chinese. That they ... And I think that it's a bit stereotypical that they are ambitious for their children, but I think probably they are. But that comes out through the children rather than their contact with the school. They don't come to me to say that they'd like their children to be doing this or to be doing better or they want more study for their children, nothing like that. I think any of that, that happens, happens at home.

I: Okay.

P: Do you know my point?

I: Okay. So do you mean that Chinese parents give their children some work at home?

P: I think so. I think they do. I think ... yeah. They expect a lot from their children.

I: How did you find out, you know, their expectations?

P: Well, it's ... I know we have our oldest girl in the school, they only came last year ... she's a fantastic girl ... and her brother came to the school. They live quite a distance away. And this girl has health issues. She has cerebral palsy. So they have to get two buses to school, and there is a lot of walking involved as well. And I just don't think an Irish parent would ... you know.

I: Okay. Send their child? Yeah.

P: Like even when there was severe snow, these children came to school.

I: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

P: It was really, really difficult for them. And when a lot of other children who have cars and everything didn't turn up, these families turned up, or this family turned up, all the time. And it was extremely difficult and we would be very worried about them and we would be trying to arrange lifts for them home and that, but the parents seemed to say "Not at all, they can do it". You know?

I: Yeah.

P: As if ... Where as an Irish me as an Irish parent and our staff were kind of saying "Oh my God! How do they let that girl who struggles to walk, do these two long journeys?" And the girl is a fantastic girl, because I think she just does what is expected of her.

I: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

P: So I'd say that one of our parents is actually on our board of management. One of our Chinese parents is on our board of management.

I: Oh, right.

P: So, he does involve himself fully in the life of the school, as I say.

I: Okay. That's great.

P: Yeah.

I: And normally how does your school support the integration of the children from different cultural backgrounds? And how about Chinese children?

P: Yeah. Yeah. Well, you see we have to integrate everybody.

I: Yeah, absolutely.

P: It's quite different from another school where you are integrating a small number, ten percent or twenty percent.

I: Yeah.

P: We have ninety percent of children who need to be integrated.

I: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

P: And, what I was talking about earlier is what we try to do really well. Try to get them to get involved in outside clubs. Try to get the parents involved with us, so that the parents can meet each other. But both of those are struggles. No in terms of our school life, we're an Educate Together school, so we celebrate cultures. We celebrate all cultures, really. And certainly, at Chinese New Year, then, we would ... There is always a big Chinese New Year celebration in the school. And at that time, during that week, we would do a lot of work on China and, you know, Chinese life and geography and history of China. Things like that. Last week we had a Spanish week, for example. We have a Spanish teacher. So we would do that kind of work in terms of showing respect for other cultures.

I: Because ninety five percent of your children, actually, are not Irish?

P: We're not biased.

I: Very intercultural.

P: We're very intercultural. We do try. One of the things that is important to us is Seachtain na Gaelige. I'm not sure if you know Seachtain na Gailige. It's the Irish week. It's around St. Patrick's day.

I: Ah, okay.

P: So, because we have virtually no Irish children, we think it's the one thing that all the children have in common is that they live in Ireland. But during that week, we celebrate Ireland.

I: Yeah.

P: So like in Chinese New Year, when we celebrate China. So this is our big week for celebrating Ireland.

I: Yeah, absolutely.

P: And we teach Irish dancing and Irish songs, and we have a Ceili, which is a big Irish

dance. So, you know, it's not really integration as long as we don't have people to integrate with in our school community, except each other. You know, we integrate with each other, with all the different cultures, but I think it is unfortunate that we have so few Irish people.

I: Yeah. Yeah. And do you think all the children play together or kind of like, you know, the Indian children stay in their group, the Chinese children stay in their own group? Or ...

P: Yeah. It's hard to say, really. You find, basically, that when they are younger children, they tend to stay with their own crowd a little bit, because their parents kind of push them that way.

I: Ah okay.

P: But as they get to know each other better, like by senior children, they could be mixing with anybody. Everybody mixes with everybody. But I think their parents kind of say ...

I: Okay.

P: ... that Lithuanian boy knows Lithuanian, speak to him in the yard. You know? And they do, and they do.

I: Yeah. Yeah.

P: So there is a little bit of that, but not a lot of it. They do integrate. I'll tell you what happened. XX is our sixth class girl. The most fantastic girl, now. Okay, she's only with us in the school this year. The girl with cerebral palsy, who's from China. When she was leaving, a little, a brand new Chinese girl, who only came in to second class recently, was really, really upset at the graduation. And I thought somebody had stood on her or something, because she was sitting on the ground. But it was because XX was leaving. So XX must be really nice to her in the yard.

I: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

P: Because, like, she wasn't crying about any other of the sixth class kids.

I: Yeah.

P: She was just crying because the Chinese child who was leaving. And she was distraught. But I think there would be a bond, all right.

I: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

P: Between the children. But it is certainly not exclusive. They wouldn't only be playing with each other at all.

I: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay. That's really good. And just now you have mentioned that you have six language support teachers.

P: Support teachers? Yeah.

I: And normally how do they support the children's English? Because, I mean, there are so many children, you know, that need English support.

P: Right. So our school works differently again in this. What we do is we have five ... six ... language support teachers for the school. We keep one teacher in class at infants, so that we have small numbers in infants. So our infants classes are only around twenty. Nineteen or twenty in each. So one of the teachers is used that way, to keep the classes small. The other five then, there's two teams of two, and one extra. So the two teams of two go into junior infants every day for forty or fifty minutes, and then the same team will go into senior infants. So at that time, there will be three teachers in the class room. And because all the children are EAL children, they work in three groups in the class, on a topic or a theme.

I: Okay. So all of them do the language?

P: Everybody does the language support, yes. So there would be three teachers in the class at the one time, the class teacher plus the two EAL in junior infants. So there is an intensive language programme going on there.

I: Okay.

P: And then they go to senior infants. And then they go to first and second. And then up the school there is some ... we kind of withdraw children then, who are still struggling, or who are recently removed, or recently come to Ireland. We would withdraw them for intensive work. And then there would be some in class work as well. But a lot of our EAL work is in-class support. So they would work on things, not just language, but they would work, say, with them on geography or on maths or on art. So, like, they would come in to help with an art class. There would be three teachers doing the art class, and then they would all focus on the language of the art or the language of the maths lesson.

I: Oh, right. Okay.

P: And they would help in that way. Because, XXX then ... We would have a few children, like say XX and XX, who just came really recently from China. They would need some extra out of class support. But generally we try and get it in class as soon as possible. So that they are with their mates all the time. And also so that it is based on subjects as well as just topics like shopping, which are the usual language support material.

I: Absolutely. Okay. And what do you think of the expectations of parents of children from non-Irish backgrounds? Do you think the parents expectations are the same or are they different? Sorry, are the same for different nations.

P: I would think ... It's hard to tell, to be honest with you. I think, in my view so far, it's not so much. The expectations are high more depending on social class than on nationality.

I: Oh, okay.

P: That would be my view of it now.

I: Okay, yes.

P: I would see parents ... You know, parents from a higher socio-economic status expect more from the schools and expect higher standards. Whereas parents, no matter what their nationality is, who are from a lower socio-economic status don't seem to have ... Well they would be very worried about the English language aspect of things, that the children would get English language. That would be the big focus. But they wouldn't show to me, anyway, that they would have high expectations.

I: Okay. And, is it the same for Chinese parent's expectations as well, do you think?

P: Yeah. It's hard to know, because we don't see our parents often. They don't come in, you know.

I: Yeah, yeah.

P: I would say one thing about the Chinese. We would have ... I think one of your further questions is about this, but ... I can't remember what I was going to say... Something about we had the parents of the children in ... Oh, it's about their expectations of me, I found, were different. Like, we had to get an interpreter in to talk where the girl with cerebral palsy and her brother were going to go to school. They're too far from here, and they are going to secondary school, and I wanted to make sure that the girl got into a secondary school which is near home. Like, I would have felt that was really important. So we got the parent in and we got an interpreter in to go through everything. We had XX in with us, because we

wanted her to hear and to be part of the discussion. And the mother found that all, the way I dealt with her daughter, very casual or something. She would have expected a much more formal relationship between her children and the principal of the school.

I: Yeah, okay.

P: And, like, she said that in China the child would never sit down in the principal's office for example. Whereas we would have a much more ...

I: More friendly feeling?

P: More friendly, yeah. We would have a much more friendly relationship, and I have a great relationship with that girl. And the girl very much likes that. But I think the mother would have preferred a more ...

I: A very strict relationship?

P: More serious rather than strict, I think. A serious relationship, you know. I think she felt boundaries were a little bit lax.

I: Ah, all right.

P: Whereas, that's the way we want it. I wouldn't say they are lax at all. But she would see it as much different than the way a principal would relate with the children in China. And even from herself, from her own point of view, she said she would really nervous meeting a school principal. But, you know, she found us very warm here, which she appreciated.

I: Yeah, yeah. Absolutely.

P: But still, I think there was a little unease about it. You know?

I: All right. Okay, that's very interesting. And how is the communication managed between the school staff and the Chinese parents? So, normally do you have an interpreter? Or ...

P: We only have ... Well, we don't need it for most of the parents, for three of the families. The only family that actually needed it was this family that I am talking about. The other guy, who is on the board of management, sure his English is as good as mine. And the other family then, they have very reasonable English, so they're fine as well. So it's only this family. And our policy, we've so many different children with so many languages, our policy is that our notes all go out in English, basically, to the parents. For parents who have difficulty, if we are having a parent-teacher meeting that we have something very difficult to

say or something that needs a lot of explanation, like for a child with special needs to get a psychological report, anything like that, then we would get in an interpreter. An interpreter costs one hundred and twenty euro, so we have ninety five percent children, so we can't do it.

I: Absolutely.

P: So we have to prioritize. So if we have a meeting, like I wanted to talk about XX with cerebral palsy and where she should go to second level, and I wanted to suggest that the younger boy as well go to another school near him, though we don't want to lose him because we loved him, but just for their own well being. For that sort of a meeting we hired an interpreter. The interpreter comes for ... Like the meeting took probably forty minutes, but they come for a minimum of two hours.

I: Oh, right.

P: So if there is any other Chinese people that we want to talk to then we bring them in for that meeting as well, but usually it is kind of wasteful of our resources to bring in an interpreter.

I: Also, I think most of the parents can speak English as well.

P: The Chinese parents can. Yeah, yeah. Now other parents, you know, would have to struggle more. Some of our parents who speak Urdu or Arabic. But we have used parents to interpret for other parents, if the subject matter is not any way controversial, you know. So have sometimes sent out a note, and if it was a complicated note we would ask an Urdu parent to translate it, and then we would send them out to the Urdu parents. But, like, with anything confidential or anything pertaining to a particular child, we try to explain it as best we can in English and if we can't, then we get an interpreter.

I: Okay.

P: That's what we do there.

I: And do you have any good suggestions for non-Irish parents in order to help their children integrate better?

P: Well I think the first thing is the language. To learn English themselves, I think. Because the parents become desperately isolated. We've an awful lot of isolated parents here, who aren't mixing, and they can't mix, basically, until they learn the language. So we do offer English language lessons for parents.

I: In your school?

P: In the school. We do, here in the school.

I: Oh, very good.

P: And it is run in conjunction with Clondalkin Partnership, but we facilitate here. We recruit the parents, and there are volunteer people who teach parents English. But not a lot of people take it up. Even though it is offered and it is free.

I: Oh, it's even free? Okay.

P: It's free. But not as many people take it up as we would like. And, again, I think we have a lot of Muslim parents who, you know... Some of our Muslim parents, the women don't come out. Basically, they stay at home.

I: Ah, okay.

P: Now, we certainly have other Muslim parents who are fully involved, but some of them just don't. And I think they are isolated. And I think that if the parents are isolated in the community, well then their children are not going to be meeting other children of Irish people. They're not going to meet Irish children in this school, so I think for parents learning English themselves and getting their children involved in clubs outside. And every time we meet the parents we give them that message. Any time there is a public meeting, we give them that message. And we also talk to them about dual culture. To keep their own language going and to keep their children... You know, to be sure their children can read in their own language, as well as working in English. In a way, we say leave the English to us. Because we think for a lot of children, if the parents are trying to teach them English at home and they don't have English themselves it can be difficult. And the children who are learning to read in their first language are not being read to. We think parents should be reading books to their children in their own language, so that the children are getting to process normal levels of language. You know what I mean? And then we will teach the English. But then sometimes parents think that they are doing the right thing by not keeping up their own culture. We would talk about dual culture, you know, that they are both very important. And we would like children to be able to know their own language, if that's their language at home, but that they should be read to in it, and they should read in it as well as reading in English. We'd feel quite strongly about that.

I: And do you think that gender can affect the level of integration?

P: Girls integrate less than boys.

I: Really? Okay.

P: Yeah. Because, again this is a cultural thing, but I think, I'm not talking about Chinese children, I'm talking about Islamic children, the girls are expected to be at home looking after younger children and are helping at home. Whereas the boys are allowed get into sports clubs and things like that more. So even in our after school activities here in the school, we find that girls are less likely to get involved in anything that we do, and boys are more likely, because their parents are kind of happier for them to be involved, and girls are kind of expected to be at home.

I: Oh, right.

P: Which is not something we have in Ireland anymore. Like, we used to have that, but it's kind of changed.

I: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

P: But we would see that here.

I: Yeah. What are the main difficulties you face as a principal in trying to support integration within your school?

P: I think I've kind of covered that really.

I: Okay. Okay, yeah.

P: I think I have. The main difficulties are language and the fact that we have so few Irish children here. That's a huge difficulty. So, integration into what? Integrate into ... It's like a little bubble. It's like a little bubble of our own, where we're all newcomer people. And how to integrate. We do try to make sure we have interschool competition with other schools. That's kind of not real integration. To play basketball matches against a school where there is mostly Irish, that's fine, but that's not real integration either.

I: Yeah.

P: You know, it's kind of playing at it. But we do it. We do that.

I: And in your opinion, what is the subject at which Chinese children are usually best?

P: I don't know. Off the top of my head, I'd say maths, but I don't know. Like, I wouldn't

even be sure of that. So maybe the class teacher will be able to tell you better than that. I know ... I couldn't really tell you, to be honest. We have so few of them.

I: And are you familiar with education in China?

P: I'm not, no.

I: So do you ...

P: Except Suzuki music. Oh, that's Japanese! That's Japanese!

I: All right.

P: The music is Japanese, is it not? It's not Chinese?

I: Okay, sure. So do you think is there anything interesting that I have not mentioned there?

P: I was thinking about it. I think the interesting is that I can't say that there is one characteristic that the Chinese children bring to this school. Because I think they are all very individual. And I would think in other groups I would see a more homogeneous group. Whereas Chinese children that I have, I've only eight, but they are all completely different.

I: Really?

P: Completely different. And, well, the families are completely different. You know? But they are different in social class as well, and I would think that's important.

I: Okay, the different social class.

P: I think the different social class makes more difference in education than nationality. That's what I would think.

I: Okay, okay.

P: That's what I would have seen with all the different nationalities. Social class is the biggest factor for, say, academic success, I would say.

I: Okay.

P: So far, anyway. Okay?

I: Okay. Thank you so much for doing the interview with me.

P: You're very welcome.

I: Thank you very much. Thank you.

P: You're very welcome.

Appendix L

Sample Irish language support teacher interview

Interview with Language Support Teacher 1

I: Hi, my name is Jia Liu. I'm doing a PhD in Dublin City University. My PhD topic is on Integrating Chinese Children into Irish primary schools. So would you mind briefly introducing yourself?

T: Okay. I'm XX. I'm a teacher in XXX National School, XXX National School in Galway city. I have a post responsibility which is in intercultural education. I also do the administration work for English as an additional language support programme.

I: Fantastic. Do you think there are any specific difficulties encounter by these children? In your opinion, what is the most common difficulties in integration for non-Irish background students into Irish primary schools?

T: Well, the primary challenge for teachers is language obviously, because the primary language of instruction English, but also teaching Irish. So I would say language is the primary difficulty, the challenge children face and that teachers face within the class. But in addition to that is obviously there is culture difference, particularly school culture differences in terms of what the expectations are, maybe. Both between the Irish school and maybe their home country school, and also difference between discipline and behavior at home and at school, which are often culturally based. Obviously, then for our school, we would really support home language instruction, you know home language maintenance, really. So that's very challenging as well.

I: Okay, so you mean speak English at home?

T: No, no, their mother tongue.

I: Okay, the mother tongue.

T: The home language, so whatever the language is at home. They should maintain that, so that they don't lose it. So they have some sense of culturally who they are.

I: Absolutely. You were talking about the parents' expectations; do you think all the parents expectations are the same?

T: Certainly the difficulty is if the children have been educated in the home country, and in fact even if they haven't, everyone, well, the majority of people have been to school, so they kind of have an idea what kinds of things happen at school and the role of the teacher and the role of the principal; the interaction between the parents and the teacher; what's appropriate and what is not appropriate, you know, what the expectations are there.

That's often not the same in their home country as it is in Ireland. So those kind of cultural differences really come into play. A very common difficulty that teachers face is the way the discipline is handled at home can be very different than what is in the school. That's a challenge. Working within the context of our child protection laws, can sometimes be a challenge. I suppose that's the main, I would say, problem. But there are certainly as many opportunities for growth, and development, and exchange and learning for teachers and staff and the family. So we don't only focus on what the challenges are, what the difficulties are, but also where the opportunities are.

I: That's true. How many language support teachers are there in your school? Normally how do they help with the child's English?

T: At the moment this year, we have four English language support teachers. Last year we had six English language support teachers, and that cut was due to the changes in the budget basically. The allocation model that they used assign the number of teachers at each school changed. And with that then, our number fell. How the teachers are used is unique really to every school and every year. The department allocates the teachers, and then it is up to the school to decide how the teachers are used, in what way. We would have what we would call the intensive students, particular the intensive students who come in the higher classes, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class. Because most of them would have had home instruction, literacy, numeracy lessons at home. So they have the shortest amount of time to gain English language competence before they go to secondary school. So those intensive students, the majority time of they do get English instruction is in small group, in a withdrawal method. They are also supported within then the class, but then we would take children out in groups and sometimes individually as well, depending on the need. If the child who comes late in the year, in 5th or 6th class, and they are not able to do anything in the class, really the only thing they can do is come out. So sometimes they might come out for a large part of the day.

I: Do one-to-one lesson.

T: One-to-one lesson, but...no, they might join in other group as well. Just to hear as much English as possible, because obviously, you know the theories. I mean they would be submersed in the class. They would get no meaningful input. They don't understand anything that is going on, they are not picking out words, or they are not even getting the pattern of the language. So it is only when they come out in the small group that they can pick up things. But for the most part, several years ago, but certainly this year and coming year, the push from the Department is that those language support teachers should be used in the class. Let's say if there was work going on at different tables and each table are doing a different task, the language support teacher would be used as a capacity to make the ratio smaller for project or for shared work, or buddy work, or group work. So we use the curriculum that was given us by the Department of Education, which is Integrated Ireland Language and Training, and called "Up and Away". It has thirteen themes set out. What we find now that the challenge is, really, that we are kind of been told on two things, on

one hand we've been told to use these materials with the thirteen themes. But then on the other hand we're being told go into the class and help with what the class is actually doing. In other words, the class may be doing houses and homes, but the theme that you have in the English curriculum could be food. So those two gelling together requires an awful lot of planning with each class teacher. Because there are four of us, and there are 16 classes ... you know there are two junior infants, two senior infants. . . . that means that not every teacher has just one contact person. So each English support teacher is responsible for four classes. So that's a lot of planning. Any teacher may change, they may decide to change topic. You know I prefer change my mind, I don't want to do maybe transportation in the next two week, maybe something else. Then the language English language support teacher ... if we are going into the class is very difficult to plan before hand what you are going to do. So you are really reacting more than planning. So it's a little bit of a conflict. But obviously for beginners, and certainly for the intensive students, they would work through those themes, because they have to. You have to make sure that you have hit all of those areas. But certainly the very first thing would be to teach them school language, you know, the language to operate within the day: "open your book", "close your book", "line up, and you know.

I: So they have a specific curriculum for the non-Irish background students?

T: There is a specific curriculum. Like I said, it's very difficult to ... the curriculum is set up to teach English as a foreign language. If I went to China, and I went to an English school, it's set up in that way. It's set up in that way. We're going to do foods, and here are what the foods are called. The programme to me doesn't meet the needs of English as an additional language in a home country where English is spoken. There is quite a difference. And so buying commercially made programmes doesn't work. It's just not appropriate. Because we have English all around us we don't need to fabricate an environment. We have it here. At the end of the day, those children are in an English environment all day. What we have to do is make their learning meaningful. So often if we knew in advance what themes they were doing in the classroom then we would preteach them vocabulary. Certainly if they already understood the concept ... maybe it's a mathematical concept, fractions ... if they already understand the concept in their language, if they understand the concept of what fractions are, then it is quite easy to scaffold their new language onto their previous concept/understanding. But if they don't have that, and if they are withdrawn from the class to just be learning about colours, because we arbitrarily decided that colours is the theme this month, or whatever, then they are missing the fractions. Now they are missing the language but they are also missing the concepts. That becomes a problem then when we give children standardized testing. Even the children who have had several years of English language support still are performing poorly on the standardized tests, because at the time that concept of maths was taught, they didn't have the language to understand. So they didn't get the concept at the appropriate age. Do you understand?

I: Yes. That is a very good point, actually. What is the biggest challenge in being a language support teacher?

T: It's tough, you know. It's not easy. We have a lot of contact with families, with parents, and in terms of the children adjusting socially and the parents adjusting to their new country, there are a lot of challenges. We would have a lot of children who come from ... who live in the direct provision center for asylum-seekers, which is quite an unnatural home environment. It's like a hotel. They have shared meals and everything, a cafeteria. It's very unnatural. The mothers aren't allowed to cook for the children. It's difficult to get a routine at home if you are in one hotel room. That means that your sitting room, your kitchen, everything is in one room. And for the children it is very difficult to adjust to that. I suppose, as well as that, interacting with that many teachers, personalities come into it. Certain people work well together, other people maybe not so well. Some teachers don't want to have somebody constantly interrupting their classes. Interruption whether going to collect children or bring them back. In addition then the interruptions that take place when special needs children have to be taken out for their special lessons and brought back again. So it's difficult to quantify, but it's challenging. You can't ever plan something and see it through. It's very difficult to plan something and see it through because you are often asked to go out and substitute in another class room. Sometimes the children might be absent for big periods of time, if they go home to their home country and don't come back. Maybe one month or two and they don't come back. So, you know, there are lots of challenges but it's a very exciting job. I think most of the English teachers here really like it. They're enjoying it. It's different every day, you know.

I: That's great. What kind of assessment do you normally use for the children's English?

T: The programme, the Integrate Ireland Language and Training programme, created an assessment which is called the primary school assessment kit and that assessment is to measure the children's progress in listening, speaking, reading and writing. So that test would be given intermittently throughout their time in English, their two years. There are three sections of it, so they would have a placement test, to determine their level, up to the level B1. In our school we find that even though the children might have quite good conversational English their academic English takes a lot longer to develop. I'm sure you know the theories yourself. What we find is that children may be okay in the lower classes and then you really start to notice difficulties, even in 2nd to 6th class, where the concepts, let's say whether it's geography concepts or history or whatever, they just don't have enough language to explain the concept and to understand the concepts. You'll often find children struggling in the later years. And as well as that, another big issue is that they forget their native language. So when that happens, and parents with the best will in the world think that they are helping their children by speaking English to them at home, aren't but in fact it is the opposite that is true. Because their vocabulary is stunted at a certain age, in their native language, in terms of maybe not using an as expressive vocabulary as they could. Maybe their adjectives are "nice", "good", "bad". They don't develop a more rich vocabulary in their native language, and then as they are learning English they are just on so basic types of vocabulary too. So that really, in just the richness of language, they are just missing it in both languages because mom and dad have stopped talking to them in their native language at home. But we would always encourage them to continue.

I: Absolutely.

T: Obviously in the older classes it's a little bit difficult. The assessment then is each unit of work if you are following the Integrate Ireland Language and Training programme, "Up and Away". Each unit of work then has a list of competencies that go with it. So I can name all the colours, I can match the word for the colour with a picture of that colour. You know, those competencies are done in a checklist. Like I said, the challenge with that is if you are using that model, first of all it is a withdrawal only model that you are doing, if you are using that curriculum, secondly you are completely ignoring the fact that when they go back to the class they have just gotten all this vocabulary but the rest of the class is talking about something completely different. So that challenge is constant. In terms of assessment the children who are new ... everybody would take the standardised tests that we use which is the sigma T and the micro T. Other schools might use the Drumcondra, or whatever type standardized test they might use. You tend to find that children in the upper classes who come late in their primary school career to Ireland do very well in the mathematics and computational skills, but any more difficult things than that, you know, with word problems and more complex language based mathematics concepts and questions, then they have difficulties. And then obviously the other test is English. The amount of things that they have difficulty with, but in Ireland I don't think we really have an appropriate assessment plan for children. Particularly children ... A big issue we find is with children with special needs, who also have English as an additional language. And particularly those who are newly arrived and don't have English at all. It's very difficult to get them an appropriate assessment in terms of what support they need. You know, the national educational psychologist service, NEPS, are the people who do the psychological evaluation for children, and that's in English. So if you can't test a child in English, it's obviously difficult then to get a diagnosis. And without getting a diagnosis you can't then get them support that they need. So that's probably the most challenging thing that is really lacking in the department. Having those psychological evaluation in more languages than English is one. In fact if it is certain types of things, like autistic spectrum disorders, it doesn't really matter if they have English, or they don't have English, because they have an expressive language disorder anyway. But we do find that there are a large number of children arriving with some type of learning disorder that has to be addressed in school and it's a double challenge.

I: If, for example, a child has difficulties, would that affect them going to secondary school?

T: You mean if they don't know English?

I: Yes. If their English level is quite low.

T: I mean, in theory, no. In theory everybody has a right to go to secondary school. In practice, their choices might be limited. Not only are their choices limited because of their language, but also their choices are limited because of the enrollment policies. The Department of Education doesn't set an enrollment policy for schools. They allow each board of management to establish their own enrollment policy. Which means that they

might decide that they are going to prioritize children whose parents went to that school. And if they do that then it obviously excludes most ethnic minority children, whose parents didn't go to that school. And then they might prioritize siblings, so a newly arrived family can't go to their local school because since they have just arrived, the older sibling isn't enrolled. Then most schools operate a waiting list. And obviously if you are newly arrived ... They set their own priorities, but you know, if it is first come first served, that's fair in a sense but that means that there is a particular school in Galway that has a waiting list of 150 children for 30 places. So obviously children from ethnic minorities won't have been there since birth, and those children who are on that waiting list have registered when they are months old. Do you know, a few months old. So it is quite elitist in that sense. Certainly before the educational cuts and before the budget cuts there would have been schools that have more extra teachers in the area of English language support, but they would have had their numbers cut as well. So the support for English language in secondary school is very poor. The materials are there, but often times what happens is whatever teacher has a free period during that time would be the teacher who takes the English language support children. And so they could have up to 7 teachers in a day. Every hour, you know, or every 45 minutes, switching. There is very little continuity. And in terms of a programme, there is no lead teacher who sets the programme. Not in every case but in most cases. Which means certainly if I am a health teacher, a PE teacher, a maths teacher, a) I don't have any expertise in teaching English and b) I have all these other things that I have to do. So my priority isn't going to be setting a programme. So if they don't have a key person responsible for their English language support it often ends up being very disjointed. Now I know that there are secondary schools that are successful in doing that because they use their English language support teacher to set the programme for everybody else. Do you see what I am saying? They would set the work out, and then the child does it with whichever teacher is with them at the time.

I: Oh right.

T: Again it's not ideal. It is a big problem.

I: Okay. And what do you think of the communication between the teachers and the parents? I mean the class teachers. Do you think there should be more communication or something?

T: I think it is very difficult for teachers. Well, I can't speak for any school except this school. You know, you have a lot of communication with certain parents and almost no communication with other parents, and it is often the parents who don't come in and don't come to collect their children, and don't come to parent conferences who are the exact parents that you need to see.

I: Yes, yes, that's true.

T: And the ones that are really moving along and making good progress you do see. Cer-

tainly I think when parents are more involved in the school that children have a better experience. But that is not always the case. And certainly I think language, the barrier of not knowing English, that barrier, is definitely there with parents. An inability to communicate with the teacher, and as you know probably yourself, the child is used as a translator, or a friend, it's not appropriate really. If we look to other countries where multilingualism has been working for a long time, we can see that there must be a recognition and support for the home language. Both from the point of view of social identity for the children and the parents, but also recognizing that because the child's parents don't know English and can't communicate with the teacher in English, it doesn't mean that they don't know anything. They know a lot and they could be highly intelligent. The difficulty, I think, with teachers is probably, with parents who don't understand English, more practical in nature. I'll give you an example which you can use if you want to in your PhD. We have ... I won't name the nationality ... but we have two children from a Muslim country, who came to school and their first week here they were brought to mass at the church. Mom and dad have no English, at all, and the children had no English. They went down to mass and they took holy communion. And later on, as I investigated how that happened, I asked the teacher "Why did you take them to mass? Why did you let them go?". "Well the mom said it was okay". I said "No, no. She didn't understand what you were saying. She didn't understand what you were telling her and what question you were asking of her." If you say very quickly "Is it okay if I take the children to mass?", the mother who is just bringing her children for the first time to a new country will say "Oh yes, anything you want to do is fine. It's okay." It's an immigrant's mentality which I understand because I was an immigrant, but I don't think many teachers do. So the teacher's attitude was "Oh, the mother said it was fine." No, no, no, it's not fine. You know? It's really insulting to take someone to a different faith that they don't have. Obviously, it wasn't the ideal situation. That, sort of, rift often happens and it's through difficulty ... the language difficulty is the basis of the thing. But the structures have to be in place to understand that these things may arise, and a plan of what you are going to do. So now, often times, when those things happen, the children who don't go to mass come to extra English lessons, and they might play games or do something. Sometimes they would have to stay in the class if they are doing something within the class. You know, maybe they'll just colour while the other children are doing their religion lesson. But there has to be some plan of what you are going to do, because otherwise you have situations like that one arising.

I: Yeah.

T: And really understanding, I think, where the parents are coming from is very important, and the children obviously. Another example, I won't say which ethnic minority, but there is another group of people who in their own culture children are ranked from age four. You know, "You are first in the class, you are tenth in the class." And it is very important to be at the top of the class. What is examined is the product. You coloured a good picture, it's the most beautiful picture of all the pictures, so you get an A and your picture isn't so nice so you get a B. You know? Like this. Even from age four. And that parents will often do their children's homework or colouring. They will do it for the child, so that the child gets the best score.

I: Oh, right!

T: Okay? But that's a cultural thing. And we know, as teachers, that that child didn't actually do that. And we may think, why do they think we are so stupid that we didn't know? The child obviously didn't colour that. But it is because in that particular parents culture what was tested was the product.

I: Yes, absolutely.

T: Did you colour perfectly? A+. So that type of ... Part of my role is to buffer those cultural differences and to explain to the teacher that no, this is why the parents did the colouring. You and I both know the child didn't colour that but the parent is not trying to lie or cheat. They are trying to make sure that their child is doing well. So then we can sit down and explain to the parent in a way they understand, "Look, we are more interested in the process than the product. We won't judge your child badly if they don't colour well. Obviously if they do their best, that's what we want." So those types of cultural things happen and they have to be planned, and you have to have somebody like myself who takes a leadership role in intervening or setting the policy or whatever to address those types of differences in culture.

I: Absolutely, yes. And actually your conversation reminds me of my own culture because in Chinese primary schools we have all the exams and also those exams would be ranked. I mean, all the children would be ranked. So, do you know any Chinese children? Have you any Chinese students?

T: Not at this school, no. I worked in Japan for five years and they have a very structured system there.

I: Ah yes, because Japan is very similar to China.

T: They (China and Japan) are very similar and there is a real emphasis on passing the test and getting a perfect score and memorization. And I think Irish primary schools, maybe we did have that to a certain extent, but not the level of testing they have. We are more interested in the process and constant improvement.

I: That's a very good point.

T: Yes. As opposed to the product being perfect. And I suppose in terms of looking at the whole child's development, not just the academic side of things. You know, where we wouldn't encourage children to sit for four or five hours after school doing work. We don't think that it is good development for their social skills or their emotional development and other things too, you know. They need to go and play and they need to be outside and

have fun and there is more to life than just doing perfectly on every test. But obviously their whole educational system is set up to have this exam to go into the university, and particular universities. And it is very very structured and prioritized by who does the best on this exam. So their outcome, I suppose, is different. Where here parents ... I'm not saying no parents push their children, and maybe some push too much and some don't push enough ... but certainly there isn't that pressure for exams and that kind of thing (in Ireland). There is more here than I would have experienced myself in America, but to me this seems very pressurized. Secondary school in particular: the leaving cert and the junior cert seem very pressurized for teenagers. But those types of cultural differences I suppose, and understanding the educational system in other countries. Another example is in Poland they don't start proper school, you know primary school, until they are seven. So when we get children from Poland who are six, our teachers say "They don't know anything, they don't know any letters, they don't know how to write, they don't know any maths. What's going on? Were they just taught poorly? Was it that they themselves, the child, wasn't bright." But no, in fact it is just that they don't start primary school until they are seven.

I: That's true, yes.

T: So without that kind of knowledge, it can be difficult for teachers to know, really, what the story is with different children. I mean there is loads of different examples. I'm just giving you a few examples. So those types of things. I think, it's different here and in an urban setting we have a high percentage of ethnic minorities. The issue really comes to play when you go to medium sized schools in more rural settings that might have an influx of ethnic minorities for whatever reason. Maybe a factory has opened, whatever. And really you are talking about a very traditional structure, with all of this new information which the teachers can't assimilate quickly. And certainly, it's a challenge for the teachers in any school, but in particular for schools where there is a very large influx. There is a school in Arann Mor, a primary school in Arann Mor that had no ethnic minorities at all, and then suddenly they had a hundred. And they don't know how to approach it from a curricular point of view, language point of view, dealing with parents. They don't have a policy from the department, they have to make their own policy. What do you do about interpretation? What do you do about translation services? The parents not being able to fillout enrollment forms. I mean, it's just endless. And the Department of Education, while they have given a lot of documents to schools, and you could pick up ways to do things, the department doesn't get involved in making enrollment policies or these things. It leaves it to the teachers within a school and the board of management to do that work. So really it is starting from scratch in many cases for schools, and it can be overwhelming. So I would like to see a regional person who would advise schools on how to approach things, and help them with policy development, help them with interacting with parents, cultural training, these kinds of things. There is a small amount of that being done by the Primary Professional Development Service, but again, their budget has been cut. And it is possible in some of their cases, you know, they may have been trained to do that, but they may not have done it themselves. Maybe they come from a really homogeneous Irish school but they are put in the position of being the trainor. They go into a very large urban school with a high number of ethnic minorities. They've got all the manuals, and they have studied up, but

they haven't actually done it themselves. So we are really lacking that core of experience. So it's a challenge for a lot of schools. This school, I think, is wonderful. The teachers are really clued in and keyed in and they know what is going on.

I: You are really good as well.

T: But there is not a lot of schools that have that. Well, very few, that have that. And that expertise takes some years to develop. That kind of experiential learning is not easy to get over night.

I: Do you have any good suggestions for the teachers in other schools or for the parents even?

T: I do think that the documents that the department, through the NCCA which is the National Council for Curriculum Assessment, their intercultural guidelines are very good. The INTO, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, that's a union for primary school teachers. Their intercultural guidelines are very good. The department's website has, through their PPDS, their Primary Professional Development Service, very good documents. And I would say those resources, and I could name 25 good resources. But if you are starting off, you don't even know where to look and how to start, and it just seems so overwhelming. Do I start at the policy level and then trickle down to the practical things, or do I just ... what ends up happening is that you are often just putting out fires. So I didn't know that I would need translation and interpretation services and now I have the parent conferences, so I will quickly call up an interpreter and see what should I do, and can they come. But it is often just reacting and reacting instead of planning what your strategy is going to be. And each school then, regionally, has to do that themselves. So instead of saying, "Right, we have a list here in the Galway Educational Centre, which is an existing structure, of translators in the following languages, or interpreters in the following languages, please contact us." Then you don't have people looking in the yellow pages, in between trying to teach lessons, finding someone who can translate this, maybe psychological evaluation from another country in another language. So I think from that point of view the department really needs to have a little bit more joined-up thinking. Now I know that the documents are there, but often times in schools it is so overwhelming and unless you have an appointed person who is paid extra money to do those things outside of school hours, they don't get done. So the NCCA cultural guidelines were distributed in 2005 to every teacher. And I guarantee you that if you walked around most schools, you would be hard pressed to find one, and if you did it would never have been opened. Because you can't just hand someone a book and say "There you go, do that." It just doesn't work. They have to visit schools where it is being done, reflecting on how it is going to be done in their school, what ideas would work, which wouldn't work. So I would say that the suggestion for teachers is really to ... I think the main part there, I would say to teachers in schools that are just newly having an influx of children from other backgrounds, definitely do prioritize the English language, but realise that it takes time to learn English and we have to be very aware that you cannot cram more information into a child's brain each day than they have time to assimilate. It's not just a

matter of memorizing a whole load of things, because they are not using it. So yes, we have to teach language in a very discrete way, but also providing a lot of opportunities to practice the language. So I would say, don't be afraid to ask for help, don't be afraid to ring another school and say could you help me. Because I get calls like that all the time, and I am happy to help. What worries me is the people who don't ring and then the child sits down at the back of the class with the work book, and then at the end of the year doesn't have the English because the teacher is very busy. And you know, I think there are ways to work around it. Teachers need to know what is out there in terms of support and to utilise it, and to use the Primary Professional Development Service. That's what they are there for. Ring them and say "I can't do this. Come and help me." And they have to, that's their role, to come and help you. And they will do, they're excellent. But unless you know who to ring and how to ask for help and what help you need. In terms of what I would say to parents is to get involved in school. Don't stay away because you don't know English.

I: Yes.

T: And try to take advantage of what is offered. We have English lessons here at school, and Irish lessons and computer lessons, so take advantage of what is at the school and try to meet people. And don't stick to people who are from the same language group as you. You know, I find that a lot, and I can understand why, but that parents tend to stick with people from their own background. They don't branch out and meet other people, so obviously their own English development suffers and at the end of the day you have to model English learning for your kids. If the parents don't make an effort to learn English it's not really benefiting the child. At the end of the day it doesn't really matter how old or how you are, you are living in Ireland and have to learn English. And obviously supporting the home language. But parents need to show the child that, look, I'm doing it to, I'm learning as well. Sometimes parents opt out of that, they just don't want to participate in learning English. And it can cause a lot of problems. The child then is used as a translator for doctor's appointments and different things, so I say to the parents, get involved in school and try to learn English. Those would be the two things.

I: And one more thing. You were saying that there is a curriculum for English. Where can we find this curriculum?

T: Yes, the curriculum itself is called "Up and Away". I'm not even sure if the books are in publication anymore but if you go to the PPDS website, <http://www.ppds.ie>, that they would have it. And underneath the ppds.ie there is an EAL link, for English as an Additional Language link, and I'm not sure if you can download the whole book or not. I'm not sure. We just ... we got sent them. But that group, the group that made that curriculum the Integrate Ireland Language and Training is closed, it's finished. So, as far as I know, they are not publishing the new ones. But as I said, the curriculum itself has its own inherent flaws. Because that curriculum assumes ... you could take that curriculum and move to Korea and open a business, an English school, and use it.

I: Yes, I see.

T: It doesn't really acknowledge the fact that other things are going on in the class. The model that I would really be looking at, and I am learning about it myself, is called sheltered immersion. It's nickname is FIOP, and it is sheltered immersion. And in that model you are basically within a class focusing on the language needs that are related to whatever is being taught at the time. But it requires a massive amount of planning with the class teacher, which we don't have built into our schedule and timetable here in Irish schools, so that is a big problem. But that really is the way forward in the sense that that is the best practice in this area. We're kind of here, and we have a long way to go before we get there, but we are moving forward, you know. The expertise is out there, if you go regionally you will find experts in this area. But often times they work in their own little school and everything that they have learned in the past eight or ten years really stays within their school. There is not a lot of opportunity for them to exchange that. There is the English Language Support Teachers Association, ELSTA. They have a website as well, <http://www.elsta.ie>, and that is the English language support network, kind of. They would have monthly meetings in Dublin. I did open a branch here in Galway, last year or the year before, but people didn't come, because it is in the evenings and voluntary. You know, teachers just ... They didn't want to spend Tuesday night going to these meeting. The numbers went down, and I just eventually didn't do it any more. There is support out there, but it is not easy to find for teachers sometimes.

I: Okay, thanks a million for that. Thank you very much.

Appendix M

Sample Irish class teacher interview

Interview with Class Teacher 4

I: Hello, my name is Jia, and I'm from the School of Education Studies, DCU. So today ... Well, my research topic is about integrating Chinese children into Irish primary schools. Thank you so much for doing this interview with me.

T: No problem.

I: So, would you like to introduce yourself briefly.

T: Yeah. My name is XX, and I am a primary school teacher, and I've been teaching for almost seven years now. And I have had experience of teaching children with English as a second language. I've done two years actually. So I have some experience.

I: Ah, okay. Fantastic.

T: And I am currently teaching first class. And I have a child in first class who is from China, and started off in the school in Junior Infants, so he has ... He started in his Junior Infants. So, would you like me to...

I: Okay, yeah, sure. Do you know, you know, was this child born in Ireland or they moved here.

T: I'm actually ... I think his younger brother was, but I'm not sure if he was born in Ireland.

I: Okay.

T: I don't think he was, but he started school in Ireland.

I: Ah, okay. And how well do you think do Chinese children integrate into the class?

T: Well, I've only experience of this particular family. Although I've taught for two years I didn't actually have any Chinese children. So this is my first time having a child from China in my class. The boy in question and his younger brother are quite shy in their nature anyway. For a long time it took them a while to integrate, but now I've seen this boy, who I have in my class, I've seen him from Junior Infants. So each year he's getting better and he's integrating more. And even in First Class, even at the start of the year he was quite quiet and a little bit withdrawn but now because we are coming towards the end of the year he's come out of himself so much more.

I: Oh, okay.

T: And I find then, at times, when there is school holidays, when he's not in school, it takes a little while to settle in after the break.

I: Ah okay.

T: But, like, he integrates well. But I think he will improve the longer he's in school.

I: And when he first came to the school, what did you think of his English? Do you think he can understand everything?

T: No, when he came he didn't have any English. No English at all. And in Junior Infants he didn't really speak very much. He didn't have much English and then in Senior Infants I had him, in Senior Infants. So I had him last year, because I was the EAL teacher. So, he spoke a little bit, but it would be in bursts. Like, if he was interested in something, at times he would speak some Chinese along with English. But now in First Class, this is his third year in the school, he has improved quite a lot, in particular in the last term, in the last couple of months. So I think he was taking a lot of it in, and he was afraid to make mistakes and he was afraid to just to come out. Unless he was very animated about something. But, yeah, he's doing really well now.

I: Okay. Are both of his parents Chinese?

T: Yeah, both are Chinese.

I: Ah, okay.

T: Yeah, they're both Chinese. Dad has quite a good level of English, but Mom doesn't really and she struggles a little bit. So for his homework and a few different things she mightn't be able to understand what to do. So that can be an issue at times. But in general he's a very good worker, a very hard worker, very eager to do his work, but at times can get quite frustrated when he language barrier is there, so it's quite tricky. I'm sure come down to that.

I: Yeah, yeah. So, you know, what do you think the main difficulty is for the child?

T: You were just saying... just to go back to his integration. He's good on the yard and at play time he will join in with the boys at the games, but if I ask him to work with another child solely, if it's just paired work or it's group work, he withdraws completely. Unless it's mathematics, which is his strongest subject.

I: Really? Ah, okay.

T: So he finds it quite hard socially to work with someone on a particular subject. So that would probably be his biggest problem at the moment.

I: Okay.

T: And sometimes he knows what to do, he just is quite shy, he doesn't like confrontation. He doesn't like to be the centre of attention. So I think that might be part of it as well. So it's a mixture of not having the phrases, the social phrases, to work with someone a little bit, but then part of it being he's a little bit shy as well. So that's probably what my biggest concern would be.

I: Yeah, yeah. That's true. So how well is his English level at the moment do you think?

T: When you say level, are you comparing ... Beginning, intermediate...

I: Well, compared to the other Irish students. What level do you think he can communicate with his class mates? Or how well they can communicate?

T: Yeah, he can communicate, but I wouldn't say extremely well. He can communicate well. He's definitely improving at the moment. At the start of the year he wasn't communicating very well. And I'd say, probably next year he'll be able to communicate a lot better. But at the moment he is still struggling a little bit. So he's kind of in the middle. Intermediate, maybe.

I: So what is the biggest challenge in being a class teacher with children from different nationalities?

T: Well, one of the biggest challenges I have is when I'm giving instructions, and the vocabulary might not be there, so he might not understand. So say for example we were doing a science experiment, he might not be able to understand what the names of things are. So straight away he wouldn't be able to access it. So, it's his access to the curriculum. Vocabulary, and then, I guess, in English. So, like just in science, that's across the curriculum. You know ... SESE, which I'm not sure if you are aware of that, it brings in science, history and geography. So, I suppose he doesn't have the background knowledge the other children have and the vocabulary. And then with his English writing, then, sentence structure or just ... He finds that still quite tricky. But, as I've said, like, he has improved a lot especially with his English. Like his reading has come along a lot. His spellings have come along a lot. So because he is quite a bright boy he gets on with it until something that goes over his head, that he doesn't have the language for. So, anything that involves new language.

I: Okay. And are there any other students from other nationalities?

T: There are, there are. But the other child ... the other two children ... One child left. He was from India. I have a child from Romania and the child from Romania has quite a good level, a very good level, of English. So, it doesn't...

I: So do you think it is that particular child or it is because of his culture that it is easier to learn English? What do you think?

T: That's a really tricky question to answer because, first of all, he's the only Romanian child that I've ever taught.

I: Ah, okay. Yeah.

T: And I don't know what the Romanian language, to be honest, is like. If it's easier ... I know there's a big difference. Like Chinese to English is quite tricky. I am aware of that. And the other boy is extremely bright, so it's hard to know with all that.

I: Yeah, yeah.

T: But then this child is extremely bright too. So it could be, it could be. And it's actually something very interesting. I wouldn't say definitely not, anyway.

I: Okay. Yeah sure.

T: Because especially with his sentence structure, even though he might have some words, he finds it very hard to put it ... like, written I'm talking about ... he's getting much better orally, but to put it in the right order. So that then probably is linked in to his own language. I'm not sure if you found that in your other studies, maybe.

I: Yeah, because actually during the weekend we also have the Chinese language school. And we have that issue as well.

T: Yeah. He goes to that. Yeah, actually.

I: Every Saturday, you know, and, I mean, they will come to our school just to study Chinese language.

T: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

I: Actually, lots of children are complaining that, you know, we have school seven days a week.

T: I know. Seven really? No, it's not. It's six, is it?

I: Normally we have Chinese class on Saturday but they would have something, kind of like music or something, on Sunday.

T: Oh, I see. Okay. They could never get a break.

I: I'm not quite sure about this child.

T: He does go to Chinese.

I: I only know he comes to our language school, but I don't know, you know, whether he goes to other classes.

T: It's quite interesting. He, at the moment, probably because he is getting very tired because we're near the end of the year, but he has complained quite a lot recently about being tired.

I: Really? Okay.

T: Yeah, so it's probably something to do the work for the little guy.

I: Yeah, yeah. Okay. So what do you think about the Chinese parents' expectations compared to that of the Irish parents?

T: As I said before, I only have experience of this particular family, but I had taught abroad and, like, I have taught children from China and the expectation has been quite high, and they are very eager to study. But in this particular case, not as much. And that's probably because the English isn't there to question me or to ask me. But, you know, he's always in school and his mum is always ... he always has his homework done. So he's doing everything, as much as possible, but I guess to be able to access questions, it's a little bit harder on them.

I: And do you think easy to communicate with his mum?

T: No. It can be quite tricky but her English is improving also. Last year it was quite hard to communicate with her, but her English is getting better too.

I: Oh, right.

T: Which is great.

I: Yeah.

T: And I've communicated a lot with her, at parent-teacher meetings, and the child's dad has quite good English, so that was helpful.

I: He would normally come?

T: Yeah, he would come to the parent-teacher meetings. But it would be mum that I would be chatting to.

I: Oh, okay. And do you think that the Chinese parents normally like to be involved in the school activities?

T: Not in particular. But that could well be because ... yeah, maybe ... I would say they are quite shy. Well, this particular family are quite shy. I know the boy I have and his brother are quite shy, and the mum seems quite shy too. But that could just be a personality thing more so than thitself.

I: Yeah. So, what is the strongest subject of this child?

T: Mathematics.

I: Mathematics, okay.

T: He's an extremely capable mathematician, and loves mathematics.

I: Okay.

T: It's brilliant, because it's something that he's really, really good at and excels in and is really happy when he does his work.

I: Really? Okay.

T: Yeah. So, it's fantastic. And the weakest, I guess, is story writing, creative writing. But that's because ...

I: English?

T: Yeah. His English, yeah.

I: Yeah.

T: He has a good scientific mind. And, yeah, as I said, like he's quite bright so he will pick up information, and pick up vocabulary, but actually getting the grammar correct is quite tricky.

I: Yeah. Actually, I'm wondering, you know, why his mathematics is so good. Because, I know for lots of children if they went to a Chinese primary in China, they do lots of exercises, whatever, you know, but it seems he hasn't gone to a Chinese primary in China. Is it just because he likes mathematics? Or his parents maybe?

T: It could be a mixture, it's hard to know. He could be very, very good at mathematics. When language is not needed, he's very good at number work. Extremely quick at adding and subtracting in his head. But then when it comes to when there are words, say mathematics vocabulary, he doesn't understand, he finds that quite tricky. And, particularly with this child, at times will get very frustrated if he doesn't understand, he'll just kind of sigh and he likes things done. He likes things done now. So he's a little bit impatient and he really wants things done quickly.

I: Okay.

T: So with mathematics he loves being able to add quickly and subtract and do his number work. But then he finds concepts, such as time, a little tricky. Capacity, weight, all of those kind of ... the kind of non-number units in our mathematics curriculum. So, I suppose that's where he struggles. But with mathematics, I guess, he obviously can, if it's number work done on a board, he can see it happening, and he doesn't need it to really be broken down in English.

I: Yeah. Normally, in the class, does he have lots of friends?

T: Yes, yeah. Like, as I said, last year ... He is quite sociable. But, like, he mightn't, like on a one to one, he mightn't be able to converse. Like this last year he mightn't have been able to converse very easily. But this year he does have friends, and it's only during work time that he finds that hard. Like, he could play with one other child or he plays in a group. They all play together in the one group. So he does. He's a popular child.

I: Okay.

T: Great interest in animals and great interest in PE. He loves running. He really loves running and being outside. So, all those things that little boys love to do, he loves to do.

I: Fantastic. Yeah, sure. And also, is there any suggestion you would give to the general Chinese parents, you know, to help them?

T: Yeah, there's one thing, and I said it to his mum. To arrange more play dates with other children in the class. I don't know, it's not something because it's outside school. I can only encourage it, obviously. But, I just think that children, especially children from different nationalities, if they do that, then they have something to talk about outside school and, you know, they have common interest with other children. They have things to chat about at play time. I haven't heard. I heard once or twice that he's gone home with another child. And I think I heard once that maybe a child has come to his house. So I think that that would be really important, for his mum or dad to maybe invite more children.

I: Yeah, yeah.

T: And if not one, maybe two even. Just so that he begins to kind of have friends come over to his house and you know ... Another thing as well. We do show and tell in our classroom and they just bring something from home and talk about it. Maybe things like that to bring in to school, so that they'll have an excuse to talk and they could talk about something special to them. Because that's really important.

I: Yeah, yeah.

T: That's for all children, but this child doesn't seem to do that as much as the rest of them.

I: Ah, yeah.

T: And also, in particular in this school we involve parents a lot. So to get involved more in the school community. And to do things. Offer.

I: And also just now I saw, you know, a big poster in the hall to say the different festivals in the world or something.

T: Oh yeah.

I: I'm sure you must do all kinds of cultural things in your class.

T: Absolutely. Yeah, we do. We celebrated Chinese New Year. We celebrate festivals from all different religions from around the world. Because it's Educate Together, it's very much

focused on that. So, you know, there is ample opportunities for parents to be involved in whatever they wish. So it would be nice to see parents get more involved. But as I say, I'm not sure if this is typical of Chinese children, families of Chinese children, or if it's just the particular family in question. So, if you had something to kind of compare it to...

I: yeah, yeah.

T: You'll be able to do that yourself.

I: Oh, okay. Yeah, sure. Okay, and do you have any suggestion ... Okay, sorry. So do you have any other things you think is interesting, but that I haven't mentioned?

T: Let me see. I think you've kind of asked the questions that ... I find, I do think that number seven is quite important. Yeah.

I: Yeah.

T: I've finished off with that one. Yeah, I do, because I think particularly at this age, when his language is starting to flow, that if he was around other children that it would just get better overnight.

I: Yeah, yeah.

T: It just, it really would. I've just noticed, when we haven't had holidays, when we had a good run at just being in school, his language is great, like, it really is. But no, I don't think there is anything else that I can think of for now. If I think of something after the interview, I'll let you know.

I: Yeah, sure. Okay, so thank you so much for doing this interview with me.

T: No problem. It was my pleasure.

I: It was really helpful.

T: You're welcome.

I: Thank you.

<Break>

T: Just in relation to number five, what do you think of the Chinese parents expectations compared to that of the Irish parents, just, I've had experience of teaching Chinese children in Sydney a number of years ago, and I've found that Chinese in particular ... in a multidenominational school with a lot of different nationalities ... And I've found that the Chinese children were very academic, and there was also a big push from parents to achieve, and that definitely was apparent. But, just, I suppose, I only have experience of one particular family in this school. It's quite tricky.

I: Yeah, yeah.

T: But as an over all, I would say that there would be high expectations.

I: Yeah.

T: But with this family, the English barrier, you know, I'm not sure what the case would be. Maybe just particular personalities, maybe. Not as much so. I just wanted to point out that.

I: Yes, does he like, do you find, does he like Chinese language?

T: Oh yeah, yeah. He does indeed. Yeah. He does very well, and very eager to speak Chinese, because the children, the other children, would ask him to speak some Chinese for us. And then also he would write Chinese.

I: Oh, okay.

T: Like very often if I ask him to design or to draw something, to decorate something, he will write Chinese words and he will say this spells whatever. So he's very eager to. And he's very enthusiastic about it. And also we had a world culture night recently in school, and the kids decorated, did flags and did different things. We talked about different foods, we talked about different countries, and he was very animated about doing the Chinese flag.

I: Oh, okay.

T: So it was great to see that he was still very much linked to his home country.

I: Yeah. Okay, thank you.