The Impact of Extracurricular Activities on Beginner Chinese as a Foreign Language Learners in the Formal Classroom

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Abstract

The following describes a two-part classroom-based study examining the impact of extracurricular, peer-taught activities on the formal learning of beginner students of Chinese as a foreign language (CFL). Student thoughts and comments related to their learning performance are also investigated and reported upon in the paper. Due to the difficulty of learning CFL, the lack of familiarity with the Chinese language and culture among students, and the need for additional practice outside the formal foreign language university classroom, the researchers provided students with more informal opportunities to use and be exposed to the Chinese language. Building upon the theory of intergroup communication, the multicultural space in which these informal activities took place is designed to encourage learners to engage in cross-cultural exchanges with peer teachers. It is located in an Irish university, and within the space local and international students promote and share their culture and language through various peer-teaching activities. The study took place in two stages over two consecutive academic years, firstly, in semester two of first year (Stage 1) and, secondly, in semester one of first year (Stage 2). Feedback from Stage 1 shows that most students agreed that the combination of formal in-class practice and peer-teaching enhanced their learning of Chinese. Before Stage 2 of the research began in a new semester with a new cohort of students, changes were implemented to the initiative based on feedback from students in Stage 1, who asked for more cohesion between the formal language classroom and the extracurricular activities. All students in Stage 2 of the research agreed that the combination of in-class practice and peer-teaching activities enhanced their learning of Chinese. The paper discusses the merits and limitations of formally linking credited courses with peer-teaching activities, and offers some recommendations for implementing future collaborations.

Keywords: Chinese as a foreign language; classroom-based research; extracurricular foreign language learning; language and culture; peer-teaching

1. Introduction

Chinese is often perceived as one of the most difficult languages to learn, due to the unfamiliarity of the language script (Osborne, Zhang & Zhang, 2018; Zhang & Lu, 2014; Zhang & Reilly, 2015) and/or the challenges of tone acquisition (e.g., Yang, 2016; Yang & Medwell, 2017; Zhao, Guo & Dynia, 2013). Chinese characters are considered to be challenging due to their pictographic origin and can also cause difficulties on account of the ways a Chinese character can be formed, based on pronunciation, meaning or both (McNaughton, 2013; Yin, 2016).

For learners based outside of China, relatively limited contact with the country and its people may also lead to learners feeling a sense of alienation from the Chinese language and culture, which may consequently lead to difficulties in its teaching and learning (Luo, 2018; Zhang, 2014 & 2013). The limited exposure of CFL learners to the language and culture suggests a need for additional practice of Chinese outside the formal classroom. The rationale for the current study is therefore based on three main factors: 1) the difficulty of learning CFL; 2) the lack of familiarity with Chinese language and culture among learners, including unfamiliar sounds, writing system and customs; and 3) the need for additional practice of Chinese outside the formal classroom. The goal of the extracurricular activities in the current research was to provide more time for first-year students to practice the language in an informal setting, and offer them an opportunity to become more accustomed to unfamiliar aspects of Chinese language and culture.

The current study presents a pedagogical initiative that involved linking a series of extracurricular activities with a formal CFL classroom. It aims to investigate the impact of this

initiative on CFL learners' learning experience and performance. Learning performance here refers to researchers' observations of participants' language usage in a variety of both formal and informal contexts, including their learning outcomes in summative test results, while learning experience refers to participants' attendance, engagement, and what they liked and disliked about the initiative.

2. Chinese Language Learning in Ireland

This section examines CFL in Ireland, although the challenges identified may also be present in other English-speaking countries. There are currently seven third-level institutions in Ireland offering credit-bearing Chinese courses for beginner learners. They offer five or 10 credits of Chinese per semester, with one institution offering 15 (Table 1).

Table 1. Credit-Bearing Beginner Chinese Modules in Irish Third-Level Institutions

Third-level institution*	Credits per semester	Total in-class workload hours per semester
1	10	72
2	5	48
3	15	84
4	10	24
5	5	36
6	5	84
7	10	60
*Note:	The names of the institutions were coded to ensure anonymity. Information for Institutions 1-6 was obtained from official websites. Information for Institution 7 was received from a personal contact.	

One European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credit amounts to approximately 25 hours of student effort (European Commission, 2017). However, the number of in-class contact hours associated with a credit varies greatly in practice (Table 1).

Chinese does not necessarily have more class contact hours than other languages in these institutions. This can be problematic in light of the point made previously that Chinese is a difficult language to learn, particularly when learners are introduced to the new writing system (e.g., Shen, 2005). The first-year beginner CFL course associated with this study has 10 ECTS credits and 72 class contact hours. In addition, 178 hours of independent student learning time are specified in the module descriptor, bringing the total number of associated hours to the 250 required within the ECTS framework for 10 credits. Independent learning time is difficult to monitor, which can lead to variations in CFL student performance that may affect their achievements. Furthermore, the limited opportunities for using Chinese language for authentic communication, and the lack of exposure to the language and culture beyond formal pedagogy, are likely to affect the overall learning experience.

In preparation for the Leaving Certificate[1] Mandarin Chinese Examination in Ireland, students are required to develop both their plurilingual and pluricultural competence (Government of Ireland, 2020). This poses another potential challenge for CFL learners living and studying in an environment where Chinese culture is neither encountered spontaneously nor naturally, nor embedded locally. For example, the number of people in Ireland identifying as Chinese was just 26,828 in 2022 (Central Statistics Office, 2023), and opportunities to use

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[1] The Leaving Certificate is awarded for the final examination at secondary school in the Republic of Ireland and is required for entry into higher education.

Chinese in everyday life are limited. Students are mainly restricted to learning this foreign language in an "artificial" classroom space (Tursunovich, 2022: 147).

3. Rationale for the Multicultural Space: Theoretical Background

The multicultural space (MS) philosophy builds upon intergroup communication, defined by Watson and Gallois (2016: 2) as "communication (face-to-face or mediated) between people who have salient identifications with one or more in-groups, which have a salient history and relationship with specific out-groups". Harwood, Giles and Palomares (2005) further explain that intergroup communication occurs when the idea of self and other is apparent to at least one party involved in the interaction. One of the most influential theories underpinning intergroup communication is Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), which was initially used to examine features of a speaker's speech after it has been adjusted to identify him/herself with the other person (Watson & Gallois, 2016). Stemming from CAT, ethnolinguistic vitality theory was proposed to capture "the relative social advantages possessed by a group" (Abeyta & Giles, 2017: 3). These social advantages are subject to the status and demographics of a group, as well as institutional support for the group (ibid.).

Communication between foreign language learners is well situated in intergroup communication, while ethnolinguistic vitality can affect the extent to which a learner adopts a foreign language and engages in communication. In the case of Chinese, despite its importance – especially in international trade (e.g., Baláž, Zábojník & Harvánek, 2020) – and the support given to the promotion of learning the language, it is not among the 23 officially recognised languages in Europe (Eurobarometer Survey, 2012). The main reasons for learning it in Europe

are often related to its instrumental value (Mayumi & Zheng, 2023; Starr 2009). This indicates its weaker ethnolinguistic vitality in comparison with dominant European languages such as English, German and French. It is therefore unsurprising that CFL learners lack exposure to Chinese or may even be reluctant to use it with other learners.

Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954) proposed the concept of homophily: the tendency and preference of individuals to bond with others similar to them (Hennig et al., 2012). In examining the experiences of Japanese learners on a year abroad in an Irish university, Pearson-Evans (2006) noted that they tended to mix with other visiting students rather than local students, a phenomenon also highlighted by Klineberg and Hull (1979). The MS space where the current study was conducted was established on the basis that it could encourage learners to step outside of their homophilic tendencies through fostering cross-cultural exchanges with peer-teachers of a similar age and status in a relaxed and informal setting. The MS allows visiting students to connect with local students and attempts to extinguish prejudices across cultures by giving learners opportunities to learn from one another, fostering empathy and developing their interest in other cultures. Research shows that peer-teaching also has positive effects in the foreign language classroom, enhancing language skills, learner autonomy and motivation (e.g., East, Tolosa & Villers, 2012; Reichert & Liebscher, 2012; Sato, 2013).

This study uses the following working definition for the MS: *a physical and/or virtual space that facilitates mutual intergroup communication to encourage and accommodate the linguistic and cultural aspirations of all groups.* In practical terms, activities in the MS include but are not limited to: beginner language workshops, practical workshops (e.g., cooking, arts and crafts), language exchanges and game events. The MS invites both local and international students to run these sessions and share their language and/or culture. It recognises their

contribution by awarding them a certificate. While the MS and the activities associated with it are open to all students, this study focuses on local students registered on a beginner Chinese module and attending sessions specific to their learning of Chinese.

4. Research Design

This paper describes a classroom-based study examining the role of extracurricular activities in the formal learning of CFL. The term 'classroom' in 'classroom-based research' here refers to both the formal classroom and the additional activities organised in the MS. Classroom-based studies are developed from teacher observations in order to address particular issues in the classroom, with the goal of identifying teaching adaptations to benefit learning (Fichtman Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2020; Taber, 2013; Yuan & Li, 2019). Although interest in classroom-based research is growing in the field of foreign language learning, Yuan and Li (2019) note a lack of focus on Chinese and call for more classroom-based CFL research.

The study adopts a teacher inquiry approach whereby teachers are involved in the research process (Fichtman Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2020). The first author attended and observed activities in the MS space, and was not involved in delivery or assessment in the formal classroom, while the second author taught and assessed the formal module. While normal ethical procedures were followed in the grading process (e.g., anonymous marking where possible, double grading, conferring with an external examiner), researcher reflexivity and ethical considerations are acknowledged here (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). The robust grading systems in place in the university mean that the final grades of the module are reliable, while feedback gathered from participants was anonymous. Above all, the purpose of this research was to assist

students in their learning and determine beneficial practices, meaning that their needs were to the fore throughout (e.g., Fichtman Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2020).

The study consisted of two stages of data collection (Figure 1). Stage 1 served as a pilot study with 11 first-year students (Group A) on a beginner CFL course participating during their second semester at the university. The following academic year, during Stage 2 of the study, a new cohort of 12 first-year students (Group B) engaged with the initiative, this time during their first semester at the university.

Figure 1. Overview of the Research Design
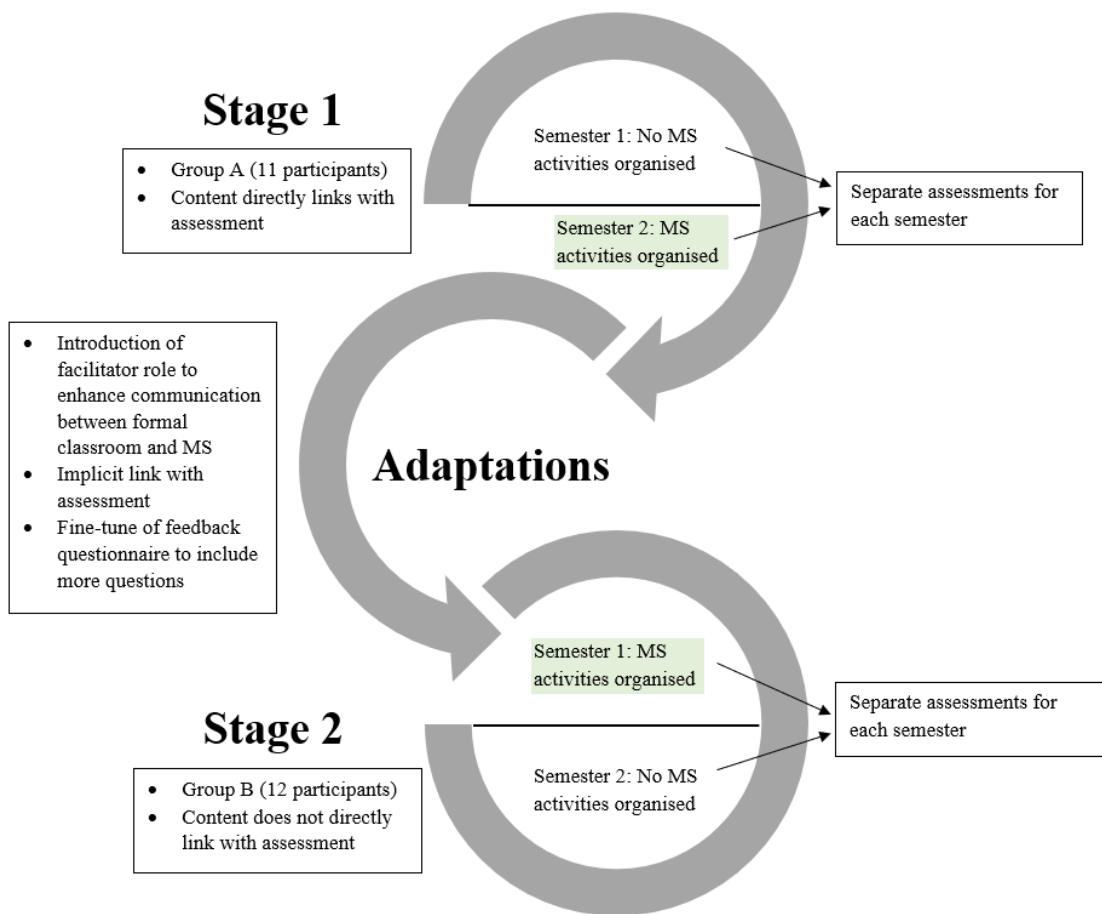
As noted in the previous paragraph, Stage 1 participants (Group A) had completed an introductory module in the first semester at the institution, and were continuing their study of Chinese in their second semester with six contact hours per week over 11 weeks in the formal classroom. After expressing to lecturers that they wanted more structured study time, they attended extracurricular Chinese sessions specifically designed for their class in the MS. Stage 2 participants (Group B) were also instructed to attend as many sessions offered by the MS as possible. Group B was offered the initiative in their first semester at the institution, unlike Group A, which had engaged with it in their second semester. This change was made based on the positive feedback received from Group A.

During each stage, participants attended MS activities relevant to their CFL learning and provided feedback on their experience. Data was collected using a feedback questionnaire and students' formal exam results, both of which are effective strategies in classroom-based research (Fichtman Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2020). Findings were supplemented with teachers' observations based on their field notes, another strategy recognised as appropriate for classroom-based research (ibid.).

Group A covered the following topics in class: family, WeChat, TV and music. However, the peer teachers were initially asked to cover different topics that were selected collaboratively by the teachers and the students. Due to this miscommunication, the first author took on the role of Communication Facilitator in Stage 2, as suggested in Stage 1 participant feedback, with the primary role of facilitating smooth and regular communication between the formal classes and MS on a weekly basis.

Group B covered greetings, asking for information, university life, family, time and dates. These topics reflected the content of the core textbook used in the credit-bearing Chinese course, *New Practical Chinese Reader 1*, for a coherent learning experience between the formal language classroom and the MS.

The assessment for both modules engaged with this initiative consisted of 50% continuous assessment (CA) and 50% final exam (FE). These included both oral and written components. For Stage 1, the oral assessment consisted of an oral report on a topic covered in the MS, while the written assessments required participants to write about one of the peer-teaching topics. In other words, the assessments required the learners to demonstrate their productive language skills in a complex and integrated manner. This is usually more challenging than the demonstration of receptive skills such as listening and reading (Brown, 2004). While the content of the assessments in Stage 2 was not explicitly linked to the MS sessions, it was envisioned that participants would be able to use information and new vocabulary learned from the MS throughout their assessments.

The feedback questionnaires used in Stage 1 and Stage 2 (Appendix) differed, with more questions included in the questionnaire for Stage 2. The questions are grouped into two categories: 1) learning experience and 2) learning performance. Participants were also encouraged to provide additional comments or recommendations.

5. Results

This section reports the results of both questionnaires under three subheadings: learning experience, learning performance, recommendations from participants. All eleven participants

completed the online questionnaire in Stage 1, while Stage 2 had a 75% response rate (nine out of twelve participants responded).

5.1. Learning Experience

In Stage 1, 55% of the participants attended four to six MS sessions over eleven weeks, while the other 45% attended between seven and twelve sessions (Figure 2). No participant attended fewer than four sessions in Stage 1. In Stage 2, no respondents attended fewer than seven sessions, while two participants (22.5%) attended over twelve sessions. As 45% of participants in Stage 1 attended seven or more sessions, while 100% of participants in Stage 2 did so, the data confirms an increase in attendance between Stages 1 and 2.

Figure 2. Attendance
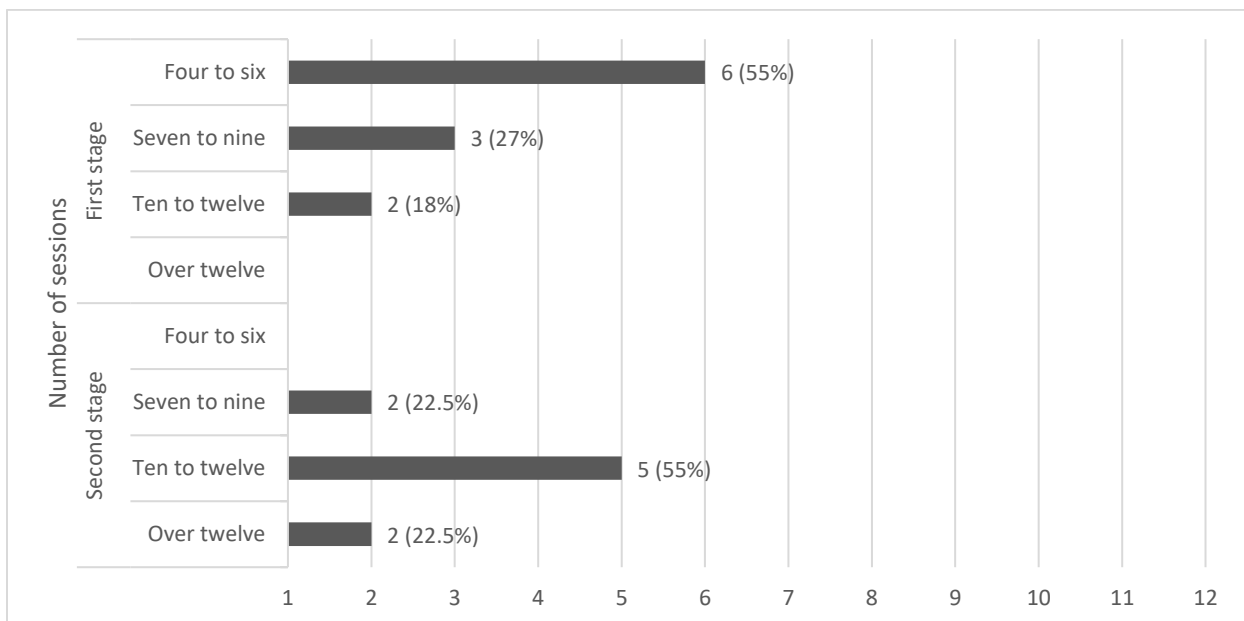
Figure 3. Factors Influencing MS Session Attendance (Stage 2)
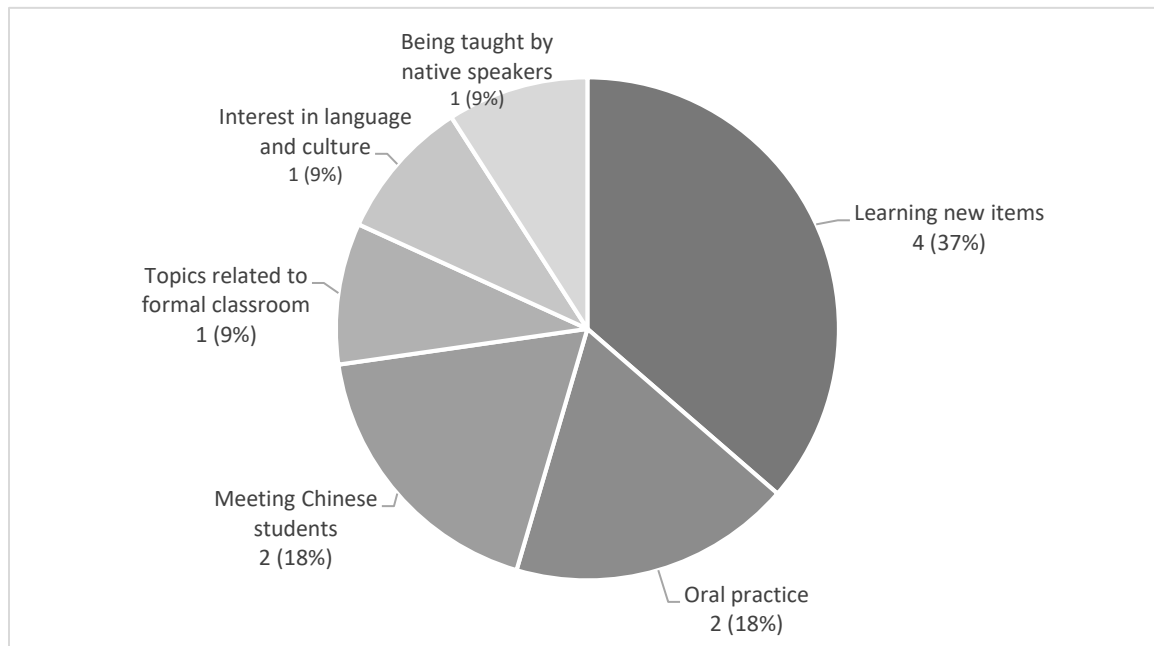
In Stage 2, participants were asked why they attended the MS sessions. The factors included

learning new items, practising for the oral exam and the opportunity to meet native Chinese peers

(Figure 3). Other factors included the alignment of content between the MS and the formal

classroom, and an interest in the language and culture.

Participants found learning about music most enjoyable in Stage 1 (Figure 4). After

music, TV shows and WeChat were most commonly mentioned. In Stage 2, family, university

life and sports were most popular, with two mentions of "all" topics. Finally, one participant

stated that he/she most enjoyed the session on asking for information.

Figure 4. Most Enjoyable Topics
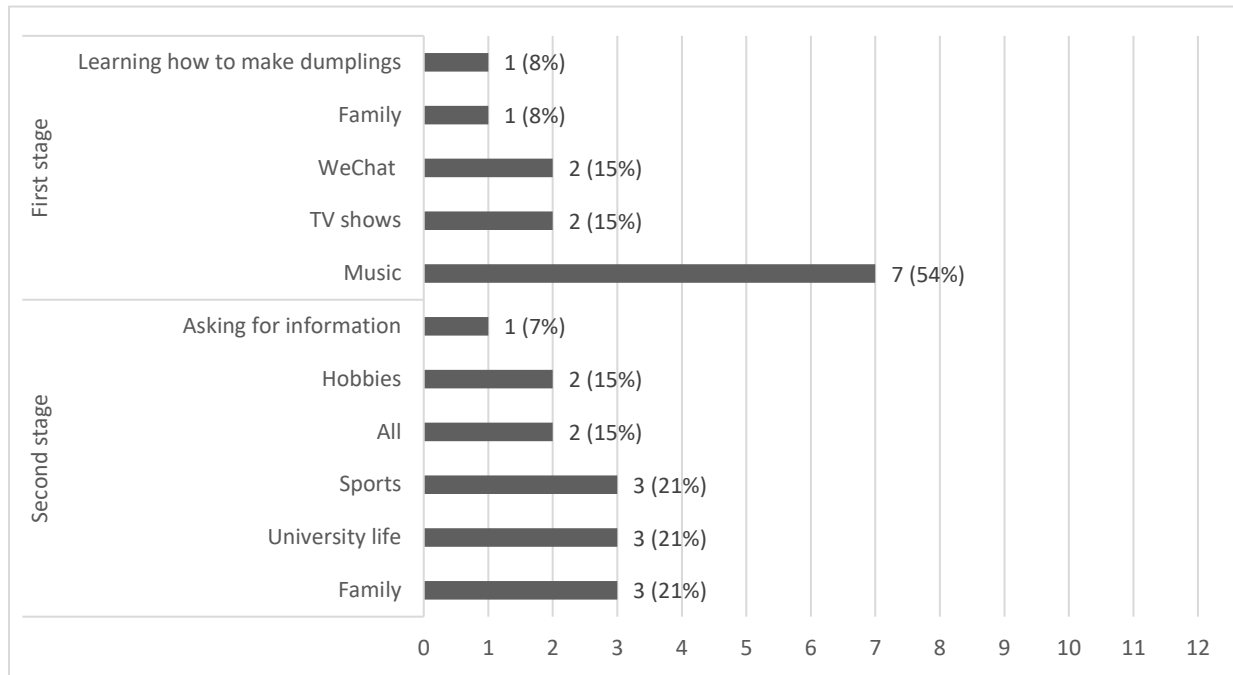
The participants in Stage 1 preferred sessions that deviated from the traditional classroom setup (Figure 5), for example, making dumplings, and listening to and discussing various genres of Chinese music. In addition, other items such as entertainment and informative talks were listed.

In Stage 2, 43% of participants said that "all" sessions were most enjoyable, with another 43% listing interactive sessions in their answers. One participant most enjoyed the session on family members.

**Figure 5. Type of Session Most Enjoyed by Participants**
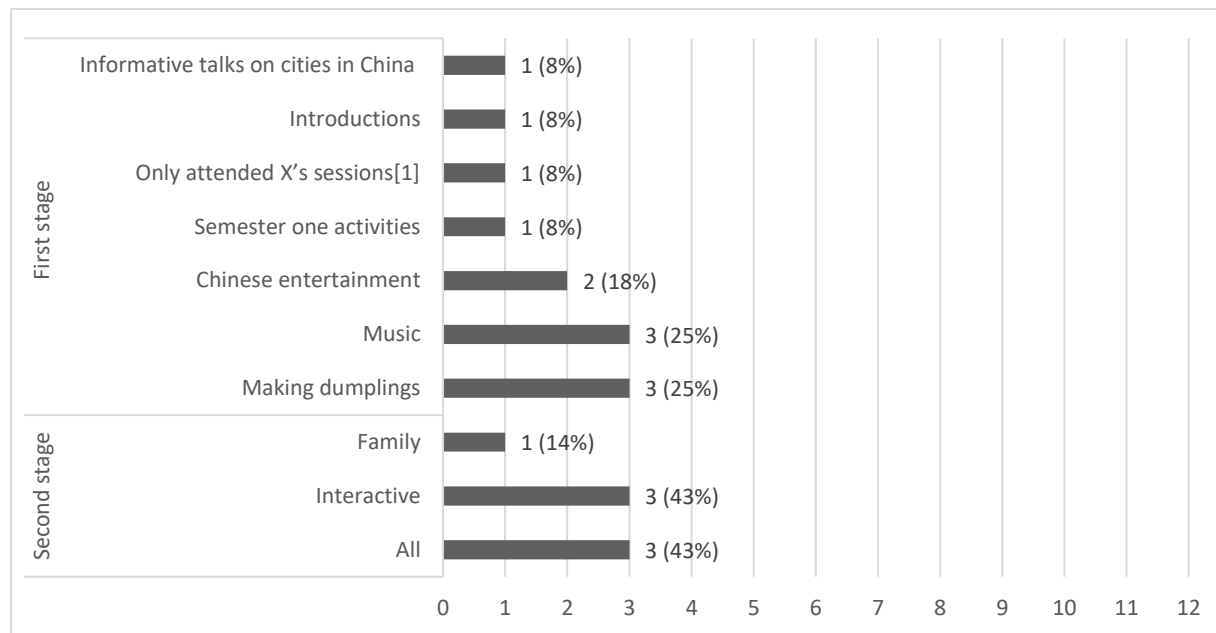
Participants in Stage 2 were also asked which type of session they least enjoyed. While three participants said that no session was unenjoyable, two participants said that the sessions involving notetaking or a similar setup to their formal classroom were least enjoyable. One participant said that he/she did not enjoy interactive games.

5.2. Impact on Learning Performance

Four participants were content with the topics covered in the MS during Stage 1 (Figure 6). Notable is that additional topics highlighted by participants as potentially helpful to their CFL learning all related to content covered in the formal classroom textbook.

In Stage 2, participants wished to see more focus on learning new vocabulary, including colours, animals, countries and rooms in a house. Learning more cultural topics was second on the list, while two participants were unsure and one could think of no other topics.

Figure 6. Additional Topics to Help with the Study of CFL
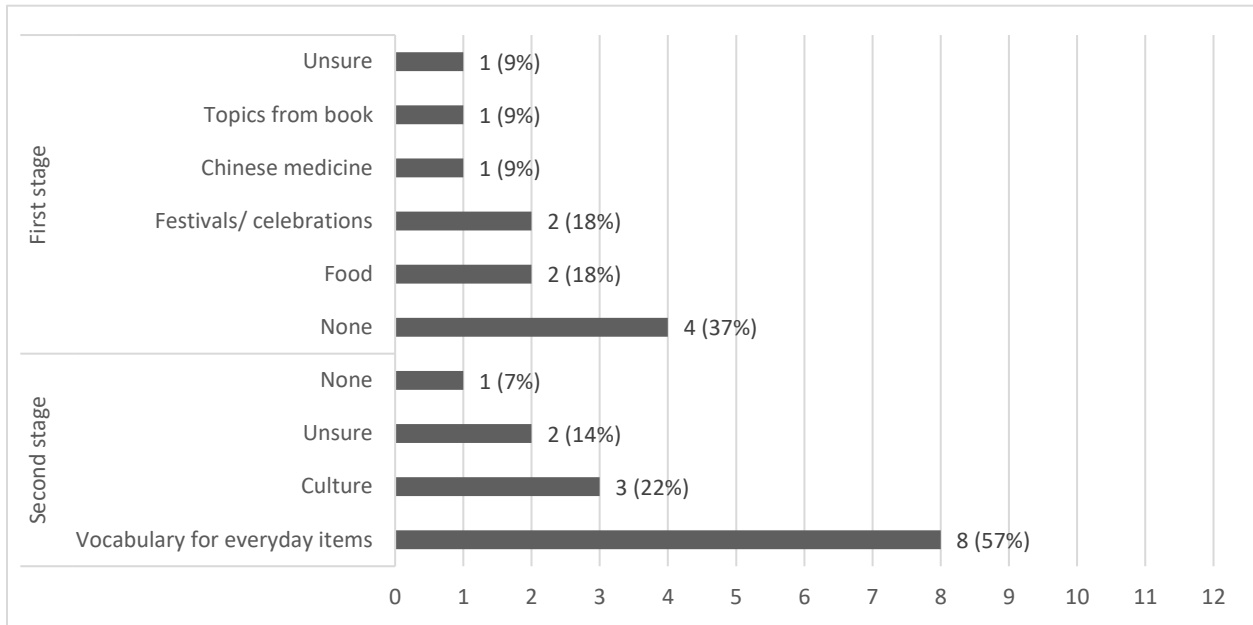
Listening to a native speaker was deemed to be the aspect of Chinese culture most relevant to participants' learning of CFL in Stage 1 (Figure 7). Popular culture and entertainment were also seen as very relevant.

In Stage 2, learning names for various family members – a cultural element that differed from participants' cultures – was most relevant to their learning. The second most frequent response was that all topics were relevant, an answer that did not appear in Stage 1, while participants also said that learning about places, time, everyday habits and playing games was relevant to their learning.

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Figure 7. Aspects of Culture Most Relevant to Learning CFL
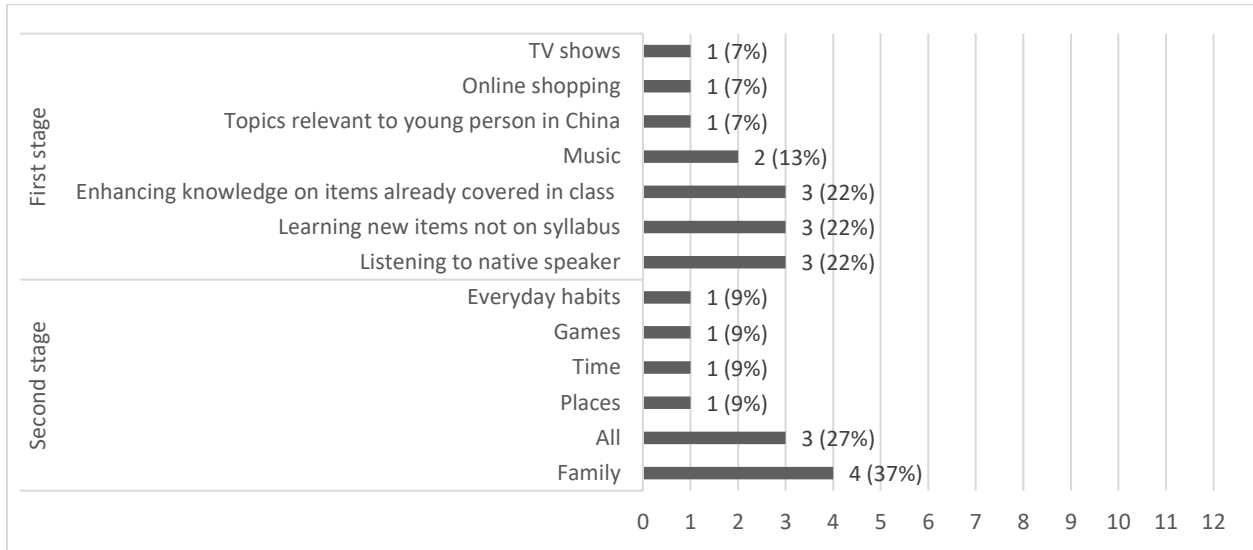
In Stage 2, participants were asked to name topics that were irrelevant to their learning. Two participants said that learning directions was not necessary for their first semester, while the other four participants who answered this question stated that all items covered were relevant.

A total of 87% of participants in Stage 1 said that the combination of formal learning and the MS sessions had helped with their study of CFL (Figure 8). In particular, participants mentioned two of the goals of this initiative: to increase their hours learning CFL outside the classroom, and to strengthen their familiarity with Chinese language and culture. Over a quarter of participants, however, did not agree that the initiative had helped with their study of CFL. The only reason given for this was the aforementioned glitch in communicating the initial topics chosen to the teachers of the MS sessions.

In Stage 2, all participants stated that the initiative had been beneficial to their study of CFL in providing additional knowledge and giving participants the opportunity to practice the language outside the classroom. The relevance of the MS sessions to the curriculum content and

the opportunity to connect with native Chinese peers also enhanced their CFL learning. In addition, the interactive nature of the classes is seen to have benefited participants.

Figure 8. Did the Initiative Enhance Participants' Study of CFL?
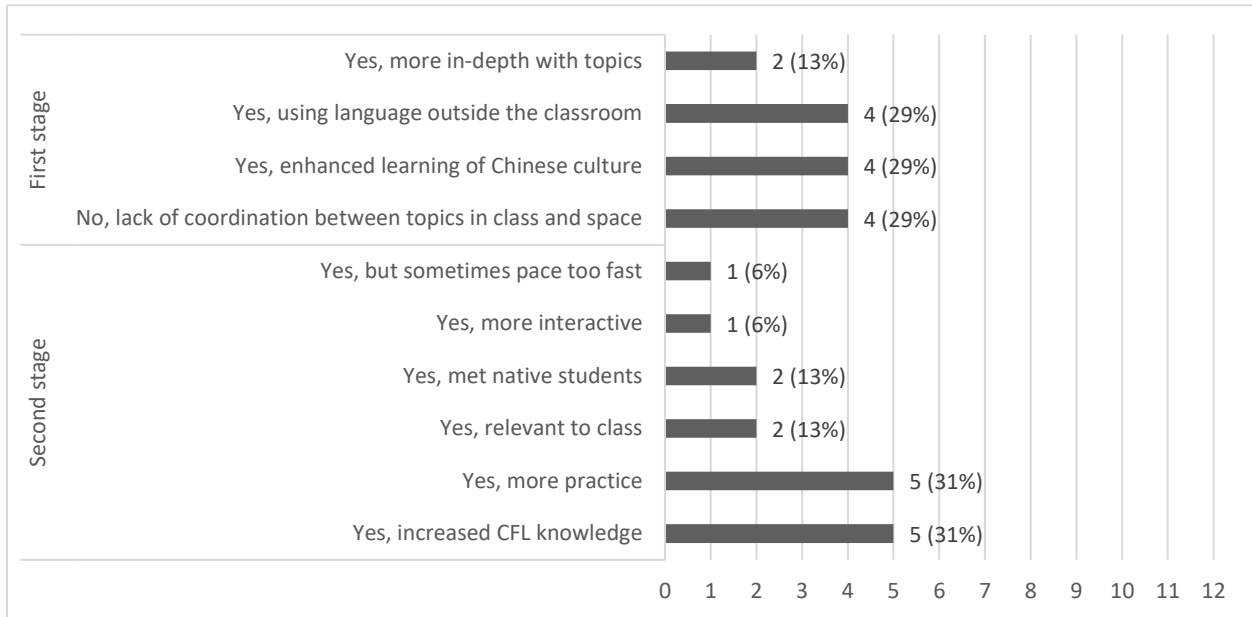
The question of whether the initiative helped participants in their formal assessments was asked in Stage 2, in which the content of participants' assessments was not specifically linked to the activities of the MS. Figure 9 shows that all participants who answered this question believed that it did help them in their assessments – increasing knowledge gained, helping with oral and written exams, and providing space for additional practice in general.

Figure 9. Did the Initiative Help Participants in Their Assessments?
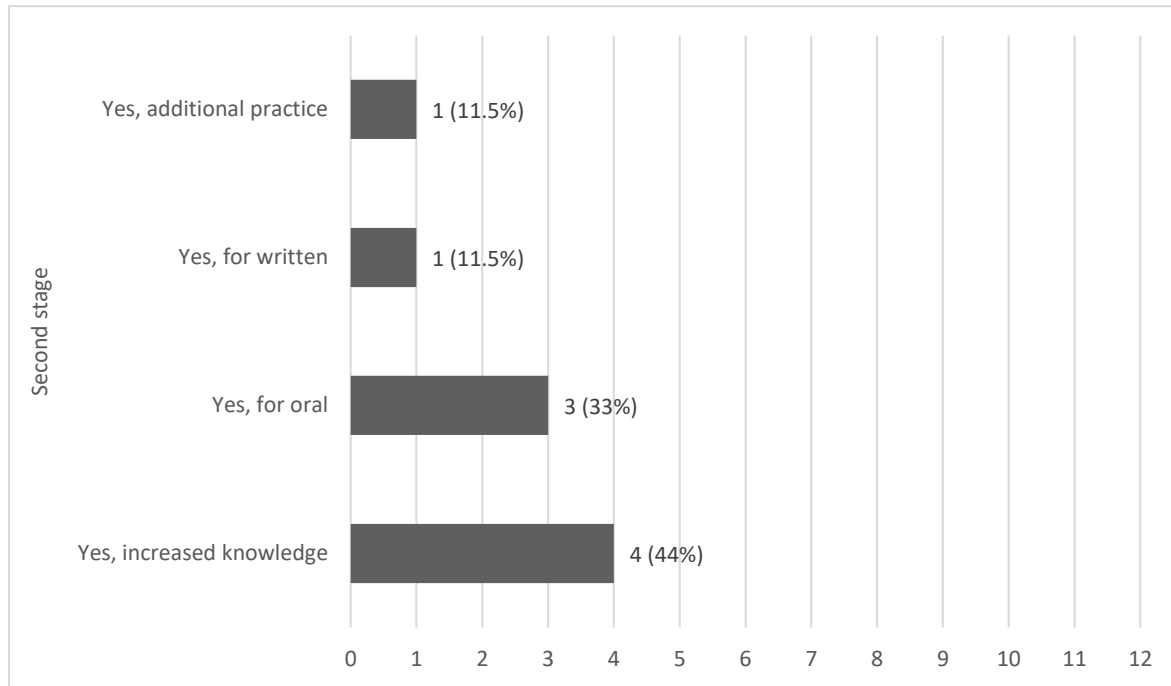
As all participants were assessed in similar ways at the end of each stage (see Section 4), the assessment results were analysed to see whether the overall positive feedback from the students was reflected in their grades (Table 2).

Table 2. Average Grades by Stage and Module

| First module first year			Second module first year		
Research stage	Extra-curricular activities available?	Average assessment score	Research stage	Extra-curricular activities available?	Average assessment score
1	No	73.5%	1	Yes	65%
2	Yes	55.7%	2	No	62.5%

In Stage 1, the average grade in the first module was 73.5%. This fell to an average of 65% in the second semester in which the peer teaching was introduced. In Stage 2, the average grade in the first semester was 55.7% (with peer teaching) and 62.5% in the second semester (with no peer teaching). Comparing across semester one and semester two modules for both stages, the first semester results were higher for those students who did not participate in the peer teaching. In the second semester, they were slightly higher for those who did participate in the peer teaching.

5.3 Recommendations from Student Feedback

64% of participants in Stage 1 stated that improved communication was needed between the MS and formal classroom (Figure 10). A move away from the traditional classroom dynamic was also called for, as was increased interaction with native Chinese speakers. One participant commented that the sessions should not have been linked to assignments.

In Stage 2, 56% of participants stated that they would not have changed the approach. The other 44% of participants suggested increasing the number of sessions per week, using pinyin rather than just characters on the handouts, and incorporating more interactive activities. Of those who said that no changes should be made, one participant said that they liked how the sessions were tailored for their class, and that having only their classmates there made them less nervous about speaking Chinese. Two others said that they enjoyed the peer-teachers' presentations on each topic.

Figure 10. Proposed Adaptations
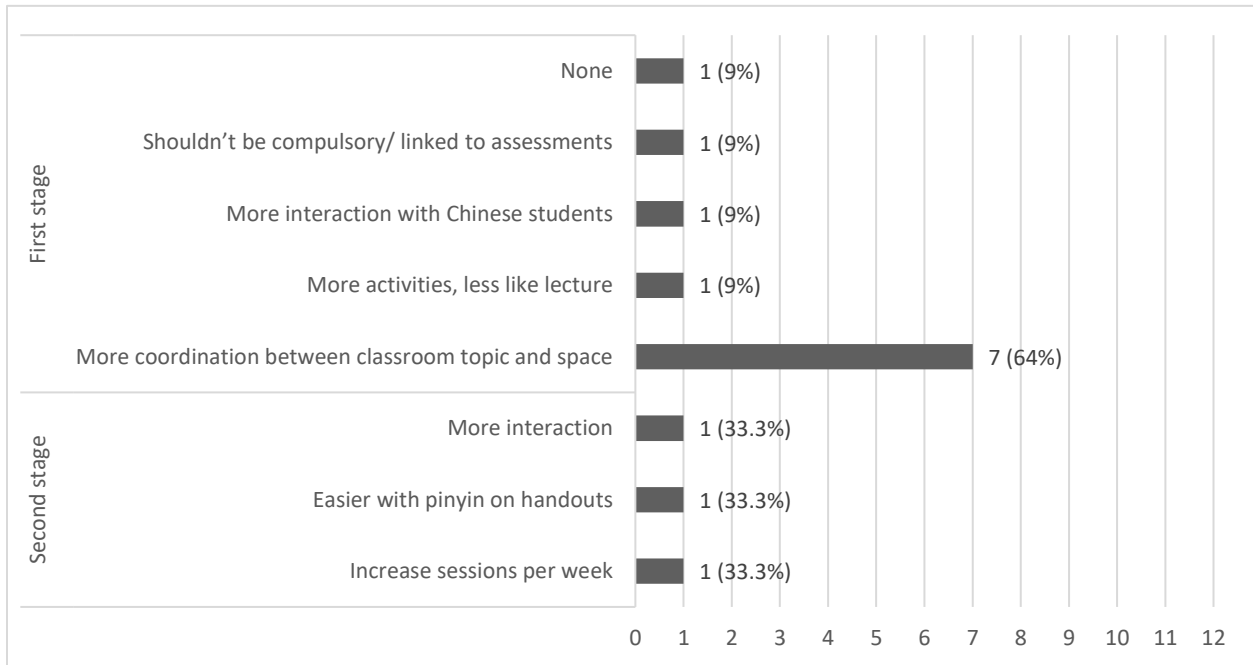
Two participants provided additional comments in Stage 1. They commented that they wished to see more variety in teaching, and that they wanted to use the MS to practice and prepare for upcoming assessments. Although only two participants responded to this question, the notion of variety in sessions had been mentioned previously. In the case of using the MS as a place to practice for assessments, perhaps the participant in question wished to practice orally; it is unclear from their answer. In Stage 2, participants had no further comments apart from one participant restating their support for the initiative.

6. Discussion

In addressing the need for additional practice and exposure to the language outside the formal classroom when learning CFL, the research investigated the combination of a credited course and

peer-taught MS sessions, with the aim of providing suggestions for future collaborations. The MS supports intercultural communication that can potentially help to mutually develop confidence and linguistic proficiency. The main goals of the extracurricular activities were to allow participants to gain more exposure to a difficult and unfamiliar language and culture through the MS, while enhancing their foreign language skills through peer-teaching activities, as well as motivating participants and promoting autonomy in their CFL learning.

6.1 Gaining Exposure to Chinese Language and Culture

When asked about the most enjoyable topics to learn about in the MS, the topics most relevant to learning CFL, and the types of session most enjoyed by participants, the variety of the answers indicates the extent to which the MS sessions enhanced participants' language learning and cultural awareness in both stages. A total of 87% of participants stated that the MS sessions aided their learning of Chinese language or culture in Stage 1, while in Stage 2 all participants stated that their learning of CFL was supported in a number of diverse ways. The variety of answers aligns with the first goal of the initiative: to allow learners to gain more exposure to a difficult and unfamiliar language and culture.

Regarding benefits to language learning and cultural awareness, researchers observed that participants in Stage 1 used colloquial language appropriate to their topics of discussion in oral assessments, while in Stage 2 participants specifically mentioned numerous times throughout the questionnaire that the initiative had aided their performance in their oral exams. It was also noted by teachers of the formal CFL course that in both oral and written parts of assessments, participants used vocabulary that had not been taught in the formal classroom. Therefore, even

attending as few as four additional one-hour classes (see Figure 2) with native Chinese peers seems to have improved participants' vocabulary expansion and cultural awareness. In stepping out of their homophilic tendencies in an environment that fosters intercultural communication, participants benefited from learning from a peer-teacher on topics of interest to them, including exposure to modern and colloquial language.

The assessment results by group were higher when the learners were not attending extracurricular activities in the MS. This could indicate that additional informal exposure to the language had an overall negative impact on learning performance. However, this is an unlikely interpretation of the findings with a number of alternative explanations possible. These may relate, for example, to the stage of learning, the particular student cohorts and/or the nature of the assessment. At the micro level, the oral and written tests used in the assessments evaluated learners' outputs in a controlled setting with limited parameters. It is possible that the learners were not able to demonstrate additional learning under such conditions. Furthermore, when analysed by semester/module rather than by cohort over time, the average result for the semester two module was slightly higher in the year in which the peer teaching initiative was included.

At the macro level, the introduction of an MS can increase exposure to the target language and consequently may positively influence the language learning process in the long term, through motivating learners and raising their intercultural awareness, aspects which are not reflected in the results of assessments that took place soon after the MS activities. Further research is necessary in order to interrogate these findings.

The participants maintained that the sessions offered by the MS assisted their language learning, so perhaps there was minimal or no opportunity for them to internalise or consolidate

the additional language knowledge acquired in the MS in their formal learning. For instance, while they may have used vocabulary they learned in the peer teaching sessions in their assessment, they may not have used it accurately, thus losing marks. Beginner learners have a tremendous amount of new knowledge to acquire and may be overwhelmed with learning content from the MS. Extracurricular activities might therefore be more beneficial if they consolidate content from the formal classroom.

These findings suggest that the MS may contribute to the development of intercultural awareness and increased motivation; however, despite the increase in language exposure, it cannot be compared with a natural language environment in which learners can fully immerse themselves and consequently improve their language proficiency. Therefore, the mere presence and unstructured or coordinated use of such a space does not necessarily lead to a positive outcome in language proficiency. Rather, extracurricular activities need to be well integrated with formal language learning in order to improve learners' performance, irrespective of any perceived positive experience.

It is too early to conclude that the introduction of an MS improves language proficiency. Further research is needed to explore the link between extracurricular activities and formal language learning in the classroom, as well as the potential and value of structured coordination of the content of peer-teaching and formal teaching. Additionally, success in learning a foreign language is not just about immediate high achievement in language tests; it also requires persistence derived from motivation (Dörnyei, 1994) and autonomy (Little et al., 2003). While there was no obvious positive association between participation in MS sessions and formal assessment results in this study, findings from the questionnaires indicate that the participants

perceived the MS activities as beneficial to their language learning. A longitudinal research design including a control would be necessary to explore these issues further.

6.2 Communication Between the Formal Classroom and MS

After the Communication Facilitator was introduced in Stage 2, attendance levels increased and all of the participants stated that the initiative was helpful to their learning of CFL. There were fewer suggestions for adaptations and additional topics to be taught compared with Stage 1. Stage 2 participants stated that all topics were relevant and enjoyable to their learning of CFL.

Informal learning and variations in the traditional classroom also appealed to participants, suggesting that these interactive sessions are likely to have motivated them to attend the MS. It is possible that the link between the MS and participants' assessments was a main motivating factor for Stage 1. However, the MS lessons were not directly related to assessments during Stage 2, yet the attendance was higher.

It could be that participants were motivated by the peer-teaching aspect in both stages. The Chinese peer-teachers stated that they believed peer-teaching to be an effective approach, and that they enjoyed designing classes differing from the traditional classroom setup. In addition, they said that some CFL textbooks appear dated; they had originally volunteered to teach in the MS in order to provide CFL learners with more realistic and up-to-date information. Motivated by their desire to counter any prejudices about their own culture, the MS also allowed them to meet and educate local students, thus enabling them to avoid tendencies to only mix with other international students (Pearson-Evans, 2006). In other words, the MS activities allowed both local and international students to engage in cross-cultural exchanges, thus encouraging

both to step outside of their homophilic tendencies within their own cultures, extinguish prejudices and develop an interest in other cultures.

Structured coordination between the MS and the formal classroom is needed to improve language performance. In the institute where the current study was carried out, training courses are now offered to peer-teachers, to equip them with teaching techniques and help them develop a thorough understanding of informal and extracurricular activities. Further research will investigate whether such training can contribute to student performance in formal modules.

7. Conclusion

The study considers the impact of an additional one-hour weekly peer-taught activity for beginner learners of CFL, as well as the advantages for students of having a space dedicated to supporting intercultural communication. Participants appear to have expanded their vocabulary and cultural awareness. The role of Communication Facilitator contributes positively to participation in the extracurricular activities, engagement in language learning and student satisfaction with their learning experience. Further research is needed to understand the effect on language learning performance.

This study is not without its limitations. Many factors may have influenced the formal assessment results and this study did not control for these. In addition, the dedicated MS in the university was originally created to support the mutual exchange of languages and cultures. This research, however, focuses on the benefits to CFL learners.

Future research could investigate the effects of intercultural exchange between native Chinese speakers and CFL learners in the space, while the effects that these peer-teaching activities have on more advanced learners of CFL, or indeed learners of other logographic languages, could also be explored. Other languages and levels should also be investigated in similar studies concerning academic performance and learner experience when attending extracurricular activities in the MS. The number of participants should be increased where possible, to ensure impactful analysis. Finally, longitudinal research should be conducted to examine the long-term effect of extracurricular activities in the MS on learners' language performance.

Acknowledgment

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Appendix: Feedback Questionnaires

<u>Stage 1</u>

1. How many *multicultural space* Chinese sessions did you attend during Semester 2?

2. What topic did you find most enjoyable learning about?

3. Are there any further topics you would have liked to include to enhance your Chinese for

   this semester? (If yes, please name them).

4. In your opinion, what aspect(s) of Chinese culture covered in the *multicultural space*

   events were most relevant to your study of Chinese language?

5. What type of activity did you most like attending?

6. In your opinion, did the collaboration of *your formal module* and the *multicultural space* enhance your Chinese language learning? How/ Why not?

7. If it were possible, would you have adapted the collaboration in any way? In terms of teaching/ content/ assessment etc.

8. Any other comments:

I consent to my anonymous responses being used in future papers/ reports concerning the collaboration of the *multicultural space* and the language classroom.

Stage 2

1. How many *multicultural space* Chinese (*formal module*) sessions did you attend during Semester 1?

2. What influenced your attendance/ nonattendance to these sessions? Be specific.

3. What topic did you find most enjoyable learning about?

4. Are there any further topics you would have liked to include to enhance your Chinese for this semester? (If yes, please name them).

5. In your opinion, what aspect(s) of Chinese culture covered in the *multicultural space* events were most relevant to your study of Chinese?

6. In your opinion, what aspect(s) of Chinese culture covered in the *multicultural space* events were most irrelevant to your study of Chinese?

7. What type of activity did you most like attending?

8. What type of activity did you least like attending?

9. In your opinion, did the collaboration of *your formal module* and the *multicultural space* enhance your Chinese language learning?

    a. Please explain your answer.

10. In your opinion, did the collaboration assist you in your assessments?

    a. Please explain your answer.

11. If it were possible, would you have adapted the collaboration in any way? In terms of teaching/ content/ assessment/ setup etc.

    a. Please explain your answer.

12. Any other comments:

I consent to my anonymous responses being used in future papers/ reports concerning the collaboration of the *multicultural space* and the language classroom.