**I. Title of the study**
Writing to build *shi*: Chinese learners' rhetoric structure as cultural praxis

**II. Introduction**
The goal of this research project is to investigate how advanced Chinese learners with English literacy background are socialized into the Chinese cultural notion of *shi* building in literacy praxis. Previous research on the development of Chinese literacy skills has primarily focused on code-based skills such as the acquisition of radical awareness and the decoding processes of individual characters (e.g., Packard, 1990; Everson, 1998; Koda et al., 2008; Ke, 2002; Shen & Ke, 2007). While many applied linguistic scholars have turned to examine the link between literacy praxis and cultural contexts (e.g., New London Group, 1996), the important link between text and context at the discourse level is still often overlooked in the field of Chinese language education (McDonald, 2011). Meanwhile, with the growing interests in Chinese L2 learning across the US and the continuing development of Chinese programs at many institutions, research on the acquisition of Chinese among advanced-level L2 learners is very much needed (Ke, 2012, p. 98). The proposed study, therefore, aims to document how advanced Chinese learners are socialized into Chinese persuasive style through writing praxis and become aware of the underlying cultural notion behind the textual structure. It draws from language socialization theory (e.g., Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986; Ochs, 1996) and uses a discourse-based approach (Gee, 2007) to study three language classrooms in three different institutions. The findings will not only generate implications for language educators to incorporate components on literacy instruction for advanced Chinese L2 learners. More importantly, they will help us to conceptualize how language and culture intersect through everyday pedagogical practices in a language classroom.

**III. Theoretical frameworks**
In the field of applied linguistics, literacy is often broadly defined as writing and reading (e.g., Luke & Dooley, 2013). Yet the notion of literacy has been cautioned as neither neutral nor unproblematic (Lemke, 1995). Theories such as functional linguistics and critical discourse analysis contend that texts are meaning-making activities situated in specific social and cultural contexts (Gee, 2007; Fairclough, 2001; Halliday & Martin, 1993; Hasan & Williams, 1996). Recent research in ESL literacy development has turned to incorporate theories of language socialization to examine how issues of culture and ideologies came to affect L2 learners' development of literacy skills (Hyland, 2003; Luke & Dooley, 2013). In these studies, writing itself becomes the interface of language and culture learning, and ultimately a site of cultural struggles (McKay & Wong, 1996). L2 learners (such those from Chinese L1 backgrounds learning English L2) do not passively absorb literacy praxis in the target language; Rather, they agentively draw upon the linguistic and social resources available to them and participate in literacy praxis in multiple forms (Lam, 2004). Yet as research on Chinese socialization processes among L2 and heritage learners has only just began to emerge (e.g., Duff et al., 2013; He, 2011), the relationship between culture and literacy remains largely unexamined in the field of Chinese language education. Taking the current literature on Chinese literacy development as a point of departure, this study aims to understand how advanced Chinese

L2 learners become aware of the link between textual structure and cultural context through writing at the discourse level.

Informed by the recent research on ESL literacy development, the current study takes a sociocultural perspective to approach the research goals. It is framed by the language socialization theory. Language socialization is the process of how children and novices are socialized into a culture through language by experienced speakers (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986; Ochs, 1996). Its methodological core is to examine how novices participate in linguistic praxis that are culturally meaningful with experts and ultimately gain knowledge about the cultural communities (Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez, 2002; Ochs, 1996). From this perspective, the goals of language learning does not only include mastery of linguistic conventions, but also the ability to use language "meaningfully, appropriately, and effectively" (Ochs, 1996, p. 408). Different from L1 socialization, L2 learners bring with them their previous knowledge in the process of second language socialization (Duff, 2008, p.115). Thus L2 socialization processes involve complex negotiations of knowledge, ideologies, stance and identities between one's L1 and L2 (Duff & Talmy, 2010).

Drawing upon this theoretical framework, we specifically focus on advanced Chinese L2 learners' engagement in and reaction to the textual structures in Chinese. Textual structures are particularly salient because they can reflect cultural ideologies and social stratifications (e.g., Lemke, 1995). With its long history of literacy praxis, Chinese texts encode complex cultural and ideological meanings (Hodge & Louie, 1998). The specific cultural notion we are examining in this study is 势 (*shi*, "momentum"*)*. The notion of *shi* can be traced back to the Chinese literati class in ancient China. For instance, in Liu Xie's symptomatic book of *Wen Xin Diao Long* 文心雕龙, there is an entire chapter on the cultivation of *shi* in writing. While *shi* can be achieved through different linguistic and textual means in different genres, it has been said that advanced Chinese language textbooks commonly present the following common *shi* building strategies (Liang, 2012): 1) repetition, 2) parallel structures: affirmative form and negative form, 3) contrast, and 4) rhetorical questions. While some of these resources such as using rhetorical questions overlap with English argumentative structure (e.g., repetition), others constitute a sharp contrast with rhetorical structures in English. For instance, although repetition can be used in oral speech (e.g., Johnstone, 1989), it is often sanctioned in English writing practices due to the Judeo-Christian tradition of persuasion (interested readers can refer to Aristotle's writings on this topic).

## IV. Research questions
The overarching goal we intend to achieve in this project is to understand how advanced Chinese L2 learners respond and react to the cultural notion of *shi* in Chinese writing. Our specific research questions are:
1. Do advanced Chinese L2 learners' awareness of the common *shi* building strategies in Chinese writing change over time? If so, in what ways?
2. If their awareness increases, how are these advanced Chinese L2 learners socialized into the awareness of *shi* building strategies while writing in Chinese?

3. If their awareness remains unchanged, what features do they perceive as characteristic of writing in Chinese?

**V. Research methods**

In line with the language socialization framework, this study uses a case study approach (Duff, 2008) while embedding a quantitative component to track students' development of literacy skills over time. The specific cases we will examine are three advanced Chinese language classes from three different public universities. These three universities are located roughly on the East Coast, Midwest, and West Coast respectively. While they are comparable in terms of the size of the student body and the Chinese language programs, their different approaches to Chinese language teaching and the diversity among their students represent the heterogeneity within the field Chinese language education in the US. In addition, one of the three Chinese language programs has incorporated explicit teaching of *shi*-building as an institutional practice for its advanced-level students, whereas the other two take a more traditional approach and do not include such practices as its pedagogical goals. This divergence also gives another layer of diversity within our focal cases.

Our participants will be approximately twenty-five students recruited from the three language classes. All of them will have taken three years of college-level Chinese (or equivalent). We will use the "maximal case selection" approach (Duff, 2008) to identify around six focal students from the three classes. The number of the focal cases was determined according to the convention in case study research. To further understand how these students engage in the literacy praxis with expert language users (i.e., their instructors), we will further include their Chinese language teachers as our participants.

Data collection in this longitudinal study will span for one semester. The specific procedures in this mixed-methods study are:

1. Quantitative:
    a. A textual structure awareness questionnaire (TSAQ) will be administered to all 25 students at the beginning and the end of the semester (Appendix 1). The rationale of examining their awareness rather than actual production is because such cultural notion of *shi* can be quite implicit and therefore students may or may not even be aware.
    b. Background survey questionnaires will be distributed to the student participants in order to understand participants' histories of learning Chinese. (Appendix 2)
2. Qualitative:
    a. We will conduct field observations (Angrosino, 2007) in the three classes and video record representative classroom sessions that involve teaching of literacy skills. A uniform observation form will be used. (Appendix 3)
    b. To understand the students' and teachers' perspectives, we will conduct semi-structured interviews (Talmy, 2010) with the focal students and teachers at the beginning and the end of the semester. These interviews will last 30 minutes each and will be audio recorded. (Appendix 4)

    c.   We will also collect artifacts from the three classrooms.  These will include participant-related artifacts such as students' textbooks and their writings in Chinese, as well as site artifacts such as writing task rubrics and so on.

## VI. Analysis

While our data collection methods include a primarily qualitative research design and a quantitative component to track students' development, our analysis also incorporates quantitative and qualitative parts.

1. Quantitative:
   a. In our quantitative analysis, we will first code students' pre- and post-TSAQ scores.  Each correct response will receive one point.  Their answers to the *why* questions will also be coded and assigned points if they correctly identify the textual features related to *shi*.
   b. We then will use descriptive statistics to show the changes of the mean scores.  To see if there is any effect of the institutionalized pedagogical practice of teaching *shi*, we will further separate the group of students who have been taught so and compare the changes in their mean scores with the other two groups.  However, it is not our intention to suggest any statistical correlation through this step of analysis.  Rather, our hope is to foreground the qualitative analysis through describing the differences manifested in numeric scores.
2. Qualitative:
   a. We will conduct textual analysis using focal students' writing assignments.  The focus will be their use of *shi* building strategies, including: 1) repetition, 2) parallel structure: affirmative form and negative form, 3) contrast, and 4) rhetorical questions.
   b. Through using qualitative research tools such as NVivo, we will also code and analyze the themes related to the students' and teachers' understanding of *shi* and how it is reflected in writing.  Through triangulating data collected from diverse sources (i.e., video recordings, observation notes, interviews with the students and teachers, as well as artifacts), we hope to situate their literacy practices at a micro level within the institutional structures at the three schools and ultimately the current state of Chinese language and culture education at the macro level.

## VII. Implications

Through analyzing the processes of students' Chinese literacy socialization at the advanced level, this study can generate multi-folded implications.  Theoretically it will show how culture can be linked to language learning processes, especially for students at the advanced level.  Methodologically it will illustrate how incorporation of the language socialization framework can improve our understanding of students' literacy development at the discourse level, particularly in the context of learning to write in Chinese for learners with English literacy background.  In addition, by comparing different pedagogical practices at the three schools and examining each in a longitudinal

fashion, the findings will also provide practical applications for Chinese language educators interested in teaching advanced students how to write.

**Timeline**
1. March, 2013: Proposal preparation
2. April, 2013: Grant application
3. Summer, 2013: IRB and human subject approval
4. Fall, 2013: Data collection
5. Spring, 2014: Data analysis
6. Summer, 2014: Write-up of results and submission to journals

**Estimated expenses**
1. Participant recruitment: non-foci students, foci students, teachers $300
2. Videotaping: $200
3. Traveling to three schools: $900
4. Printing: $100

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**Appendix 1: Awareness of writing strategies of building *shi* Questionnaire**
In the sentences below, you will see strategies of building *shi* used. Is there a difference between the sentences in each group? And if so, how do you decide which one sounds more powerful in the situations given?
1. Repetition
   1) You are writing an essay on the rapid development of China.
        a) 中国的经济、文化和环境，无一不吸引着世界的关注。
        b) 中国的经济，中国的文化，中国的环境，无一不吸引着世界的关注。
        c) I don't know.
Why? _____

   2) You are writing an essay on New York. You want to emphasize its tolerance of people from all over the world. In this situation, which one sounds <u>more powerful</u>? Why?
        a) 纽约是纽约人的纽约，也是美国人的纽约，更是世界人民的纽约。
        b) 纽约是纽约人的，也是美国人的，更是世界人民的。
        c) I don't know.
Why? _____

   3) You are writing an essay on migrant children. You want to criticize the unfair policy which excludes migrant children from taking college entrance exam in cities. In this situation, which one sounds <u>more powerful</u>? Why?
        a) 同样在一个城市生活，流动人口子女却无法参加高考，真是不公平啊！不公平！
        b) 同样在一个城市生活，流动人口子女却无法参加高考，太不公平了！
        c) I don't know.
Why? _____

2. Parallel structure
A. Affirmative form:
   1) You are writing an essay on China's development. You want to describe the drastic changes after the opening up and reform policy. In this situation, which one sounds <u>more powerful</u>? Why?
        a) 改革开放以后，中国从落后走向进步，从贫穷转变到富裕，从封闭过渡到开放。
        b) 改革开放以后，中国不但进步了，而且富裕了，同时也更开放了。
        c) I don't know.
Why? _____

   2) You are writing an essay on university students in China. You want to describe future paths for them after graduation. In this situation, which one sounds <u>more powerful</u>? Why?
        a) 大学生毕业后，可以去公司工作，出国留学，或者继续读研。
        b) 大学生毕业后，要么去公司工作，要么出国留学，要么继续读研。
        c) I don't know.
Why? _____

3) You are writing an essay on the new generation of Chinese young people. You want to emphasize that their habits are greatly influenced by the western culture. In this situation, which one sounds more powerful? Why?

  a) 新一代的中国年轻人从小吃的是汉堡薯条，从小喝的是可乐汽水，从小穿的是 T

  恤牛仔，他们已经完全西化了。

  b) 新一代的中国年轻人常常吃汉堡薯条，喜欢喝可乐汽水，穿的衣服都是 T 恤牛

  仔，他们已经完全西化了。

  c) I don't know.

Why? _____

B. Negative form:

1) You are writing an essay on one-child policy. You want to make the point that the only child usually lacks the ability to live independently. In this situation, which one sounds more powerful? Why?

  a) 许多独生子女缺乏独立生活的能力，不要说做饭，也不要说洗衣服，就连扫地

  都不会。

  b) 许多独生子女缺乏独立生活的能力，他们不会做饭，洗衣服和扫地。

  c) I don't know.

Why? _____

2) You are writing an essay on people's use of cell phone. You want to criticize people's over-reliance on cell phone in modern society. In this situation, which one sounds more powerful? Why?

  a) 现代人可以不吃饭，不睡觉，不上班，手机却一分钟都离不开。

  b) 现代人饭可以不吃，觉可以不睡，班可以不上，手机却一分钟都离不开。

  c) I don't know.

Why? _____

3) You are writing an essay on online game addiction. You want to criticize the negative effects of such addiction. In this situation, which one sounds more powerful? Why?

  a) 网络游戏使青少年不念书，不上学，不回家。

  b) 网络游戏使青少年有书不念，有学不上，有家不回。

  c) I don't know.

Why? _____

3. Contrast

1) You are writing an essay on the development of city. You want to make the point that the charm of a city lies in its space for people to live. In this situation, which one sounds more powerful? Why?

  a) 城市的魅力不在于有许多美丽的建筑，而在于建筑的周围有空闲的地方.

b) 城市的魅力在于建筑的周围有空闲地方。

c) I don't know.

Why? _____

2) You are writing an essay contrasting the old generation of Chinese with the new generation. You want to emphasize the dietary change of the young generation. In this situation, which one sounds <u>more powerful</u>? Why?

a) 新一代的中国孩子习惯吃美国快餐，倒是包子水饺反而带有一些"异国风味"。

b) 新一代的中国孩子习惯吃美国快餐，他们觉得包子水饺带有一些"异国风味"。

c) I don't know.

Why? _____

3) You are writing an essay on young people's view on marriage. You want to emphasize their tolerance view toward divorce. In this situation, which one sounds <u>more powerful</u>? Why?

a) 年轻人不认为离婚是不道德的事，他们觉得这表现了社会的自由。

b) 年轻人不但不认为离婚是件不道德的事，反而认为这是社会自由的表现。

c) I don't know.

Why? _____

4. Rhetorical question

1) You are writing an essay on basic education of China. You want to make the point that basic education fail to prepare students for future development. In this situation, which one sounds <u>more powerful</u>? Why?

a) 如果学生不具有思考和探究的能力，又怎么能说基础教育为学生未来发展打下

了基础呢？

b) 如果学生不具有思考和探究的能力，就不能说基础教育为学生未来发展打下了

基础。

c) I don't know.

Why? _____

2) You are writing an essay about migrant workers. You want to criticize employer's unfair and inhumane treatment to them. In this situation, which one sounds <u>more powerful</u>? Why?

a) 农民工有尊严，他们的生命并不廉价。

b) 难道农民工就没有尊严吗？难道他们的生命就很廉价吗？

c) I don't know.

Why? _____

3) You are writing an essay about women's status in society. You want to emphasize that women should share equal rights with men. In this situation, which one sounds more powerful? Why?

   a) 谁说女人的能力不如男人？谁说女人就应该在家做家庭妇女？

   b) 女人的能力不比男人差，她们不应该只在家做家庭妇女。

   c) I don't know.

Why? _____


**Appendix 2: Background surveys** (adapted from Freed, Dewey, Segalowitz & Halter, 2004)

1. Name (print):    _____
2. Gender:    _____
3. Age:    _____
4. Ethnicity:    _____
5. Country of birth:  _____
6. What is your native/first language?  1) English   2) Mandarin   3) Other _____
7. What language(s) do you speak at home?  1) English   2) Mandarin   3) Other _____
8. How long have you studied Mandarin in school at each of the levels listed below?
   a) Pre-college: __No __Yes: __ less than 1 year  __1-2 years  __ more than 2 years
   d) College:  __No __Yes: __ less than 1 year  __1-2 years  __ more than 2 years
   e) Other (Please Specify) _____:
      __No __Yes: __ less than 1 year  __1-2 years  __ more than 2 years
9.  What year are you in school? (circle one):
    Freshman  Sophomore  Junior  Senior  Graduate Student
10. Major(s): _____
11. On average, how many essays did you write in the semester prior to the start of this semester? _____
12. What kind of essay did you write **in Chinese** in the semester prior to the start of this semester? (You can choose more than one)
    1) Narrative  2) Description  3) Exposition  4) Argumentation
    5) Other _____
13. Did you write **in Chinese** outside class?    __No   __Yes
    If yes, please specify how often and for what purpose do you write in Chinese?

**Appendix 3. Two-column field observation notes (example, adapted from Diao, 2013)**

| | Pg. # |
|---|---|
| Date:<br>Time:<br>Location: | Project Description:<br><br>Observation #: |

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" align="center">Overarching Question:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Focus Questions</td></tr>
<tr>
<td align="center"><strong>DETAILS</strong><br>(Objective Observations: sights, sounds, participant actions/statements, etc.</td>
<td align="center"><strong>REFLECTIONS</strong><br>(Subjective Interpretations: personal thoughts/ideas, opinions, questions, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr><td colspan="2" align="center">Overall Reflections of the Observation</td></tr>
</table>

**Appendix 4. Semi-structured interview protocol**
A. Pre-interview with students
1. Grand tour
  1) What's your name? Could you spell it for me?
  2) How long have you been studying Chinese? When and where?

2. Personal and familial background
  1) What is your major? Which year are you in school?
  2) Do you have any Chinese-speaking family members or friends? Do you write to them in Chinese?

3. Learning Chinese
  1) Why did you decide to study Chinese?
  2) Have you studied any other languages? If so, which languages and for how long?
  3) How would you evaluate your Chinese proficiency in four skills?
  4) What do you want to do in the future? Will that be related to Chinese?

4. Understanding of writing
  1) How would you evaluate your Chinese writing skills?
  2) What are the challenges of writing Chinese essays?
  3) What are the similarities and differences between Chinese writing and English writing?
  4) What do you think are features of a good argumentative essay in English? What strategies do people use to build the power of the argumentative essay in English? Can you give me an example?

5. Learning of writing
  1) What kind of writing assignments did you have in the last semester? What kind of topics did you write?
  2) Did your teachers teach you writing strategies in the last semester? If yes, how do they teach it?

6. Closing
  1) Do you have a preferred pseudonym?
  2) Do you have any questions for me?

B. Post-interview with students
A. Pre-interview with students
1. Grand tour
  1) What have you learned in this semester?
  2) Can you describe to me a typical Chinese class in advanced level?

2. Understanding of writing
  1) What are the challenges of writing Chinese argumentative essays?
  2) What do you think are features of a good argumentative essay in Chinese?

3) What are the similarities and differences between Chinese argumentative essays and English argumentative essays?

  4) What strategies of building the power of the argumentative essay in Chinese do you know? Can you give me an example?

3. Learning of writing

  1) What are the differences between advanced level and previous levels in terms of writing assignments and topics?

  2) Do your teachers teach you how to write powerful argumentative essays in Chinese? If yes, how do they teach it? Is such instruction helpful? If not, do you think it's necessary to teach it? Why?

  3) How would you evaluate your skills of writing argumentative essays now? What factors do you think important in learning writing skills?

  4) What advice or suggestions will you give to students who want to improve writing skills?

4. Closing

  1) Will you continue to study Chinese in the next semester? Why or why not?

C. Interview with teachers

1. Grand tour

  1) What's your name? Could you spell it for me?

  2) How long have you been teaching Chinese? When and where?

  3) What course have you taught other than this?

2. Personal and familial background

  1) Where were you born? When and why did you come to the States?

  2) What's your educational background and research interest?

3. Teaching Chinese

  1) What do you think of the relationship between language and culture?

  2) What do you think of the differences between advanced level and previous levels?

  3) What's your students' overall language proficiency?

  4) What's the goal of this course? How do you help students achieve the goal?

4. Understanding of writing

  1) How do you evaluate your students' Chinese writing skills?

  2) What are the similarities and differences between Chinese writing and English writing?

  3) What do you think are the challenges of writing Chinese argumentative essays for students?

  4) What do you think are features of a good argumentative essay in Chinese?

  5) How do you understand *shi* in Chinese writing?

  6) What strategies of building *shi* in the argumentative essay in Chinese do you know? Can you give me an example?

5. Teaching of writing

  1) What kind of writing assignments do you usually assign? What kind of topics do students usually write? What's the rationale behind the assignment design and topic selection?

  2) Do you teach students the notion of *shi* and strategies to build *shi* in writing argumentative essays? If yes, how do you teach them? To what extent do you think students understand the notion? If not, why?

  3) How do you evaluate students' writing skills during the semester? What factors do you think help them improve their writing skills?

6. Closing

  1) Do you have a preferred pseudonym?

  2) Do you have any questions for me?