Preface

My interest in writing this book sprung from the disconcerting situation where Duiwai Hanyu Jiaoxue has been commercialised in the West, in association with China’s economic growth. Nations have policies on learning this language which encourage unserious programmes providing a “taste” of the language or alluring for profit seeking investors, with little interest in how the language should be taught. Within China, Duiwai Hanyu Jiaoxue has experienced three decades of “floundering”, following or adopting pedagogies of teaching Chinese as a first language, combined with theories of teaching English as Second Language. Chinese language scholars are calling for a new pedagogy that suits teaching Chinese to non-native learners.

Recently I came across Martha Nussbaum’s (2010) book Not for profit: Why democracy needs the humanities. The ideas in the book inspired me to think: What is the reality of and purpose for learning another language—for profit making or for providing citizens with a complete education? Thirsty for national profit, nations and their systems are commercialising education which causes language education to lose the spirit of the humanities—languages are arts, and essentially what makes the human, human. Language education should not focus on producing
generations of useful machines, but more on creating “complete citizens” (Nussbaum 2010, p. 2). Education should give back the “humanistic spirit of language learning—the imaginative, creative aspect, and the aspect of rigorous critical thought” (Nussbaum 2010, p. 2).

As a bilingual researcher and language teacher educator, I embrace a sensitivity to languages, and more recently, deep thinking about languages in relation to epistemology and ontology led me to an exploration of the relationship between Chinese Hanzi and knowledge generation. Hanzi formation and development is based on zili (字理), or universal law and reasoning (Sun 2012; Zhao 2002). Chinese language thus has the power to engage thinking and critique. Hanzi orthography is Chinese people’s record of their “daring imagination”, logical thinking and “empathetic understanding of human experiences of many different kinds”, and critical “understanding of the complexity of the world” they lived in (Nussbaum 2010, p. 7). Hanzi orthography has the properties of early Chinese people’s understanding of the relationship between epistemology and ontology. It discloses a knowledge generation process through Hanzi formation: universal human logical thinking, self-contained meaning-making, and self-evident (不言自明) conceptualisation and critique. This understanding prompted me to propose, develop the theoretical framework of the Post-lingual pedagogical practice, Hanzi method, and to examine it against the evidence of Chinese language teaching practice. Different from most second/foreign language education that focus on “acquisition”, Hanzi method aims for “nurturing learners with the ability to think” (Nussbaum 2010, p. 7).

This is a humble book aiming to reach an audience of researchers, academics, scholars, and teachers in Duiwai Hanyu Jiaoxue. For teachers, Hanzi method might already have been included as part of their teaching, and if so, it is hoped this framework may provide a fresh angle for them to view their practice, more specifically a purposive examination of their Hanzi teaching using the framework and vice versa. For Hanyu researchers and scholars, this book may provide a platform for further theoretical debate around Hanzi and knowledge highlighting the need for further large-scale, evidence-based investigations into Hanzi pedagogy.

Post-lingual Pedagogy: Hanzi Methods is organised into eight chapters. Chapter 1 provides a review of current Hanyu teaching in China, and in
the West (Australia, United Kingdom and United States of America). The foreign language policies of these Western countries and the spread of Confucius Institutes worldwide afford the global context for the book. In Chap. 2, the sometimes “confusing” terms relating to Chinese language are defined and the boundaries between similar terms are clarified. It also provides a brief review of the problems inherent in current *Duiwai Hanyu Jiaoxue* within and outside China. Chapter 3 then turns to a review of language education and various theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). It particularly focuses on the role of first language (L1) in second language learning (L2), bearing in mind the question of what role English (L1) plays in Chinese *Hanzi* (L2) learning. This chapter provides a critique of these current theories in terms of their suitability for guiding *Duiwai Hanyu Jiaoxue* when the L1 and L2 are distant languages. This foregrounds the need for a new theoretical proposal for guiding and examining the practicality of *Duiwai Hanyu Jiaoxue*. Chapter 4 then introduces a new pedagogical framework—*Hanzi method*. It includes: real-world connection through daring imagination, universal logical thinking, empathetic/moral understanding of human experiences and critical conceptualisation of the complexity of the world.

Chapters 5–7 address these constructs in turn by testing each against evidence collected from a group of Chinese-background teacher-researchers. The evidence provided in Chaps. 5–7 has been drawn from interviews and copies of self-reflective journals, from a group of sixteen native Chinese-speaking teacher-researchers participating in a Higher Degree Research (HDR) programme offered at Western Sydney University (WSU). This programme, Research-Oriented School-Engaged Teacher Education (ROSETE), has been offered at WSU as either a Doctorate (36 months) or Masters by Research (18 months) through its partnership with Ningbo Education Bureau and the New South Wales Department of Education. The ROSETE programme involves the HDR students teaching Chinese as a foreign language to local public school students while at the same time researching their practice. The programme aims to educate these HDR students to be teachers and
researchers at the same time. Data collected from the ROSETE programme participants have approval from the WSU Human Research Ethics Committee (H11038).

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References


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