



TODDLERS FROM THE CHINESE AUSTRALIA EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE IN MAWSON PERFORMING AT THEIR END OF YEAR CONCERT

ALMA NEWS APRIL 2016



澳大利亞學漢語協會

Welcome to this edition of the ALMA newsletter in 2016.

As we celebrate the release of the Blueprint to promote Mandarin we showcase just a few of the new projects recently funded to support its implementation.

This issue includes a special feature on The Story of the Stone – the Chinese novel everyone should read, as well as news from the Chinese Australian Early Childhood Centre (CAECC).

Amelia Tandy, ALMA News Editor

BLUEPRINT TO PROMOTE MANDARIN EDUCATION IN THE ACT

As mentioned in past newsletters, ALMA has been involved in an exciting initiative to develop a two-year Blueprint to enhance the learning of Mandarin and promote understanding of Chinese culture through education in the ACT. Two members of the ALMA committee were part of the working group (WG) tasked to develop this Blueprint. Chaired by the ACT Education and Training Directorate (ETD), the WG included representatives from school systems (ACT government, Catholic and independent), as well as community language schools, the ANU, UC and ACT Chinese Teachers Network.

Towards the end of last year we celebrated the public release of the Blueprint. To support its implementation, the ACT ETD provided funding grants in 2015 of up to \$5,000 to organisations and associations. In late 2015 ALMA, with the support of Canberra Grammar School (CGS), organised a meeting for all grant recipients. The purpose of the event was for recipients to network and identify opportunities for collaboration and cooperation, in order to get the best 'bang for their buck'. The meeting also provided an opportunity to showcase the new Snow Centre for Education in the Asian Century which focuses

on the advancement of Asian Studies at primary and secondary school levels. ALMA would like to take this opportunity to thank Justin Hassal of CGS who helped to organise the meeting.

ALMA was one of the successful grant recipients and is partnering with 3 organisations to undertake a range of projects in 2016.

One of these projects is about supporting parents of children who are learning Mandarin. Mawson Primary School offers Mandarin as part of their curriculum to students from pre-school to Year 6. They are planning to offer a Mandarin course for parents, enabling them to support their children's Mandarin learning. Mawson Primary School is currently seeking feedback from parents about the best way to deliver this course to maximise its benefits.

Chinese Reading Group for children aged 3-6

Time: 2pm-4pm

Dates: Last Saturday every month (except for June, which will meet on 2 July)

Place: Civic Library, Mezzanine.

Note these 2016 dates in your diary:

- 30 April
- 28 May
- **2 July**
- 30 July
- 27 August
- 24 September
- 29 October
- 26 November

For more information, contact Wenting Cheng on u5467927@anu.edu.au

Another important project is the ANU Mentorship program to support Chinese studies in ACT high schools. The Australian National University and ALMA are establishing an ANU student ambassador program to enrich Chinese Studies in ACT high schools. This program will match ANU students with ACT schools to encourage secondary students to further develop their interest in China and pursue Chinese Studies at university. This may involve activities such as ANU students giving a motivational talk about their China experiences, presenting their China research to enhance school curriculums, or forming an ongoing mentorship and teaching relationship with a particular high school Chinese program. It provides schools with an opportunity to connect their Chinese programs with the institutional support of the ANU. A meeting was recently held involving five schools and 14 ANU students with a database being created to match the needs and skills of schools and students. The response so far has been very positive and further updates will be provided in future newsletters about this exciting project.

ALMA NEWS 2016

Every October the Committee holds its Annual General Meeting and elects new members. Elected in October 2015, the ALMA committee for 2015/16 includes:

Anna Buckley (President)

Mandy Scott (Vice-President)

Amelia Tandy (Secretary)

Milli Wong (committee member)

Jaan Murphy (committee member) and

Brendan Murphy (committee member)

If you are interested in joining the committee please contact us at canberraalma@gmail.com to find out more.

MANDARIN LANGUAGE PROGRAM: Fridays 7pm -7.30pm

Tune into 98.3 FM or online at www.2xxfm.org.au for an opportunity to hear and practice Mandarin with the family. There is always a children's story in Mandarin, discussed in both English and Mandarin so everyone learns some new words, and a fun song or two. Parents and teachers are welcome to send a recording (MP3 format preferred) of children singing or reading a short story or poem for broadcast. This has proved to be a good way to encourage interest in practicing Mandarin. It may also be possible to invite children to broadcast live from the 2XX studio in Civic on a Friday evening.

The program is organised by ALMA and the 'Mandarin for Fun' group. To contact the presenters, email mandarinforfun@gmail.com. For more details see: <http://learningmandarin.weebly.com/weekly-radio-show.html>

EARLY LEARNING LANGUAGES AUSTRALIA (ELLA) TRIAL

In 2015 educators and students from 41 services providing Preschool programs around Australia participated in the Early Learning Languages Australia (ELLA) trial. The Australian Government Department of Education and Training provided funding for the trial which introduced children to words, sentences, songs and culture from one of five languages. The languages were Chinese, French, Arabic, Japanese and Indonesian. Franklin Early Childhood School was the only service chosen in the ACT. Preschoolers there experienced Chinese through iPad apps released throughout the year by the program. Students logged in using their own individual avatars, and were immersed in language from the Polyglots characters who lead them through play based games.

The apps were designed to consider the needs, interests and capabilities of four to five-year olds and provide opportunities for children to learn through interaction with a rich variety of experiences. The apps encourage collaboration, between peers and with educators as co-learners through themes such as 'The Beach', 'The Zoo', 'The Birthday' and 'The Circus'.

In 2016, the program has been expanded to include services which applied for the trial in 2015, but missed out. These services are participating in ongoing evaluation exercises to enable continued improvement of the program. For more information see:

<https://www.education.gov.au/early-learning-languages-australia>.

THANK YOU

ALMA WOULD LIKE TO TAKE
THIS OPPORTUNITY TO
THANK ALL THE
EDUCATORS OF CHINESE
PAST AND PRESENT FOR
ALL THEIR HARD WORK
AND DEDICATION OVER THE
YEARS. WITHOUT YOUR
PASSION AND
COMMITMENT,
GENERATIONS OF
CANBERRA STUDENTS MAY
NOT HAVE THE CHANCE TO
LEARN AND EXPLORE SUCH
A WONDERFUL RICH
CULTURE, LANGUAGE AND
TRADITION.

真心地感谢大家

THE STORY OF THE STONE - the Chinese novel everyone should read

Luman Ren, PhD Candidate, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific

Lately I have been tormented by my own inability to explain to those who are less familiar with Chinese culture, the value of a particular novel—The Story of the Stone (also known as The Red Chamber Dream) which my entire PhD will be based on. To those who are culturally Chinese or who have dedicated their entire lifetime in the study of Chinese language and culture, it seems that hardly any justifications were needed, a mere mention of the title would spark instant recognition and approval. The status of this novel in China is comparable to the works of Shakespeare in Britain, War and Peace in Russia, The Divine Comedy in Italy and In Search of Lost time in France. Almost all Chinese would recommend this book to foreigners who are serious about learning its language, culture, history, and philosophy. And as the novel's English translator David Hawkes puts it, it is not just a Chinese novel, but the Chinese novel.¹

So what is The Story of the Stone really about and why should a general reader who may or may not be interested in China still consider reading it? Ever since the novel's first publication in 1791, countless commentaries, books, articles, and later on, PhD dissertations were published by Chinese scholars as well as their colleagues from the international community in order to answer the first half of the question. All I can say is that so far no one can state with confidence that they know what the book is really about without inviting pungent and often times agitated counter arguments that are equally compelling. Many see the novel as a family saga based on the author Cao Xueqin's own family history. During the reign of the Kangxi Emperor, Cao's grandfather Cao Yin once held the most powerful post in Nanjing, China's economic and cultural capital. Cao Yin also had a close, almost friend-like relationship with the emperor himself, and out of the emperor's six southern tours, five times he stayed in the mansions of the Cao family. So the beautiful garden scenes vividly depicted in The Story of the Stone therefore, in the eyes of many were set in the exact garden which the emperor resided and where Cao Xueqin himself spent his childhood years in. After Kangxi's death however, the Cao family was prosecuted for corruption and incompetence by the emperor's son. Towards the end of the novel, the Jia family also underwent a similar fate.

Despite the obvious parallel between the Cao family and the Jia family (which in Chinese means 'fake' or 'unreal'), others,

especially those influenced by Marxist and structuralist ideologies, would argue that the theme of the novel should be placed in a much broader social, political, economic and historical perspective. The tragic love affair between the protagonist Jia Baoyu and his cousin Lin Daiyu is often times viewed as the author's discontent towards the arranged marriage system of China's feudal past and his advocacy for personal freedom. The decline of the Jia family which was largely a result of its own dysfunction and corruption, seen from this perspective, may also be the author's criticism against the system which breeds families like this, and his crying calls for the downfall of the Qing dynasty.

Again, many would disagree with this interpretation, and wish to emphasise the religious/philosophical undertone of the novel where the theme seems to be the main character Jia Baoyu's journey towards enlightenment. All the pleasures and sorrows Baoyu experienced in the novel is seen as jia (fake), huan (illusion), kong (vanity), and the loss of family fortune and the death of the woman he loves finally made Baoyu "see through the red dust" (kanpo hongchen) and led to his decision to become a monk (chujia) thereby achieving true enlightenment in the Buddhist/Taoist sense...



A scene from the novel, painted by Xu Baozhuan (1810–1873)

The debate surrounding the novel's true theme continues to this day as more interpretations are being put forward by readers from different cultural, ideological and disciplinary backgrounds. This might appear scary for first time readers who doesn't really know what to expect, but I believe that the beauty of the novel lies precisely in the fact that it is unclassifiable or that it is a book about everything and that anyone who reads it can walk away with something that interests them. As a young girl, I was first attracted to the novel's heartbreaking triangular love plot between the protagonist Baoyu and his two cousins, who are equally

¹ The complete English translation of the novel by David Hawkes and John Minford was published by Penguin between 1973-1986

beautiful and talented. I read the novel in a manner not so different from teenage boys or girls around the world who read the Twilight series. But as I grew older, I was surprised to discover the wide range of historical details that the novel contains, ranging from agricultural and horticultural customs, physiognomic and divinatory practices, architecture and garden design, to textile production. The book became an encyclopaedia of the mid Qing society which fascinated me. Later on, I had the fortune to attend a Chinese literature course held by Professor John Minford (who translated the last forty chapters of the novel for Penguin) at The Australian National University. I picked up the novel again, and this time, learnt to read it as a piece of literature. I was astounded and overwhelmed by the artistic and literary achievements of the novel that makes it worthy of being called a world-class novel.

In the first chapter of the novel, the author clearly states in a poem the origin of this novel:

Pages full of idle words
 Penned with hot and bitter tears:
 All men call the author fool;
 None his secret message hears.²

The Story of the Stone is a book which once you've read it, you would be summoned back again and again in search for the author's secret messages.

² David Hawkes, *The Story of the Stone* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), vol. 1, 51.

CHINESE AUSTRALIAN EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE NEWS

The commencement of 2016 has seen a very busy time with the centre operating at almost full capacity. Many new families have joined the centre's community and all the new children are settling in, gaining that all-important sense of belonging.

The centre has welcomed a new team member, Zilla, an EC educator from Hong Kong. She brings to the team expertise and a wealth of training and experience of Hong Kong's approach to early childhood education and care (ECEC). Zilla is enjoying the opportunity to learn more about Australia's EC approach and practices that are framed under the National Quality Standards and its curriculum - Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

The centre welcomes back from maternity leave Laura the Assistant Director, and Rachel a leading educator who have both been on maternity leave since October 2015.

Changes have occurred to the existing curriculum within the centre's pedagogical practices. Firstly, as part of our quality improvement to establish a more comprehensive educator and parent communication system, Storypark, has been adopted. Storypark is a web based global communication software that is specifically designed for ECEC services to use as a platform for educators to document learning experiences and allowing families to access and comment on. It can also be used as a tool to communicate specific centre activities. The content when uploaded can be accessed by any family member no matter where they are in the world. Families control who can have access to their child's portal via an invitation to join. The structure of the program has a similar layout to Facebook. Other program improvements include the acquisition of new iPads and a Smart screen to allow enhancement of all aspects of the centre's curriculum, particularly the Mandarin language element.

Recently, the centre had a visit from Ms Vilma Rotellini who is the head teacher of the Language Faculty at the International Grammar School in Sydney. Ms Rotellini contacted the school explaining their intention to introduce Mandarin as part of their Language component of the school's curriculum. The school already offers 4 languages and it's compulsory for children to start the acquisition of a language of their choosing from 4 years. Ms Rotellini was taken by the strong visual element of the Mandarin reflected within the environment. She observed educators engaging with the children in formal large group experiences conducted in Mandarin. On her departure, Ms Rotellini invited the centre Director to visit International Grammar school sometime in the future. The school intends to have Mandarin established as part of their language curriculum from commencement of 2017.

CAECC END OF YEAR CONCERT

On Friday 27th November CAECC held its End of Year Concert. This event is anticipated with much excitement each year. All children over the age 2 were able to participate. The show commenced with a performance by the toddlers who sang songs in both Mandarin and English. They all looked wonderful in their bright and colourful Chinese costumes. They were followed by the pre-schoolers who, as well as singing, acted out a short play. It was wonderful to hear the children introducing each song in both English and Mandarin. Our heartfelt thanks go to the educators who once again demonstrated their skills in music, theatre, directing and stage management.

This year Indigenous Elder Robyn Dass very kindly presented acknowledgement of country for the CAECC concert. We would like to thank her for attending and share with you a message we received from Robyn:

Firstly I wish to thank the Association of Learning Mandarin in Australia for inviting me to perform an 'Acknowledgement to Country' for the students, parents and teachers at the China-Australia Early Childhood Centre at the end of 2015. It was very rewarding to be part of the celebrations of these young children, who over the year have learnt another language, Mandarin Chinese. These preschool children were also able to perform dance routines in their new acquired language which was delightful. The different ethnic groups who participated showed their understanding and willingness to be involved and learn about another culture and to me this what made the evening of entertainment a huge success.

I absolutely enjoyed the concert and wish the China-Australia Early Childhood Centre continued success in the future as these young people are our future.

Aunty Robyn Dass PSM Tjabal Indigenous Centre for Higher Education, The Australian National University.



Pre-schoolers from CAECC performing a story at their end of year concert

FILMS AND PUBLIC LECTURES - CHINA IN THE WORLD CENTRE, FELLOWS LANE, ANU

Asia and the Pacific Screens The Auditorium, CIW	ANU China Seminar Series Seminar Room A, CIW
Tuesday 3 May, 5:00pm-7:00pm, Rouge 胭脂扣	Thursday 21 April, 4:00pm-5:30pm, <u>Participatory Natural Resource Management in Rural China: Making Indigenous/Community Narratives</u> Presenter(s): Dr Zoe Wang, University of Sydney
Wednesday 11 May, 5:00pm-7:00pm, Special screening <u>Wenchuan Earthquake Anniversary Screening: Disturbing the Peace</u>	Thursday 5 May, 4:00pm-5:30pm, <u>Xinjiang from the Han Point of View</u> Presenter(s): Dr Tom Cliff, ANU
Tuesday 7 June, 5:00pm-7:00pm In the Heat of the Sun 阳光灿烂的日子	Tuesday 10 May, 4:00pm-5:30pm, <u>Is the Taiwan Strait Still a Flash Point?</u> Presenter(s): Dr Scott Kastner, University of Maryland
Wednesday 8 June, 5:00pm-7:00pm The Big Parade 大阅兵	Tuesday 17 May, 4:00pm-5:30pm, <u>Tea, Wellness, and Beverage Culture in Song dynasty China — Perspectives from the City and the Monastery</u> Presenter(s): Professor James A. Benn, McMaster University
Thursday 9 June, 5:00pm-7:00pm July 七月	

Other events	
<p>28 April, 2:00pm-3:30pm The Tea House, China in the World Building (188), Fellows Lane, ANU</p> <p>Workshop ANU Taiwan Week 2016: Taiwanese Tea Tasting Workshop</p>	<p>28 April, 6:00pm-7:00pm Conference Room, Level 4, National Library of Australia</p> <p>Public Lecture Understanding Good Order and Chaos: The Role of Books, Libraries and Jesuits</p> <p>Presenter(s): Dr Jeremy Clarke</p>
<p>28 April, 7:00pm-8:00pm The Lotus Hall, China in the World Building (188), Fellows Lane, ANU</p> <p>Musical Performance ANU Taiwan Week 2016: 'The Elegant Night' Music Gathering</p>	<p>29 April, 2:00pm-3:30pm The Tea House, China in the World Building (188), Fellows Lane, ANU</p> <p>Workshop ANU Taiwan Week 2016: Taiwanese Tea Tasting Workshop</p>
<p>12 May, 6:00pm-7:00pm Conference Room, Level 4, National Library of Australia</p> <p>Public Lecture Late-Qing Visual Culture: Looking Modern</p> <p>Presenter(s): Dr Olivier Krischer</p>	<p>24 May 10:30am – 12:00pm The Auditorium, China in the World Building (188), Fellows Lane, ANU</p> <p>In Conversation Dealing with China Diplomatically: In Conversation with the British Ambassador to China</p> <p>Presenter(s): Ms Barbara Woodward and Ms Rebecca Fabrizi</p>
Film Screenings – Auditorium, China in the World Building (188), Fellows Lane, ANU	
<p>27 April 5:00 – 6:50pm ANU Taiwan Week 2016: Film Collection from Kuandu Film Festival 2015</p>	<p>27 April 7:00 – 9:00pm ANU Taiwan Week 2016: Hear Me 聽說 (2009)</p>
<p>28 April 5:00 – 6:50pm Kuandu International Animation Festival 2014–2016</p>	
<p>29 April 3:30 – 5:20pm God Man Dog 流浪神狗人 (2007)</p>	<p>29 April 5:50 – 7:30pm Thanatos, Drunk 醉·生·夢·死 (2015)</p>

Enquiries regarding the above contact: china.institute@anu.edu.au

Contributions to ALMA NEWS and updates welcome. Please email canberraalma@gmail.com.
NOTE: Decisions on publication remain at the discretion of the editor.

For more information about ALMA and to see past ALMA newsletters visit our website at
www.learningmandarin.weebly.com