In recent decades, globalization and transnational movements have increased the learners who learn Chinese as a second or foreign language (CSL/CFL) in varied linguistic and sociocultural contexts. Little research attention, however, has been given to identify the effective ways of teaching and learning of Chinese. Hence this well-presented book, *Teaching and Learning Chinese as a Second or Foreign Language: Emerging Trends* is very timely indeed. Comprising a diverse range of empirical and theoretical studies, the edited volume not only highlights the diversity and complexity of Chinese learning in diasporic communities but also suggests directions for future research to better depict the complicated issue. The 14 chapters were not further divided into sections but were broadly pointed out by the editor to have addressed three emerging themes in CSL/CFL, i.e. ‘Information and Communication Technology (ICT)’, ‘Young learners’ and ‘Teaching and Learning of Chinese Characters’. In the following review, we shall highlight the findings of each chapter deemed critical to CSL/CFL studies, after which we shall provide comments on this volume’s contributions in the three emerging themes.

With Chapter 1, *STARTALK eTower: Increasing Chinese Language and Cultural Proficiency Through Open Access Online Technology*, by Dali Tan, Angela Gunder, Shaoyu Chi, and Susan Picard, the volume introduced an effort on computer-assisted language learning (CALL), named the STARTALK eTower, which draws principles from Integrated Performance Assessments, Adaptive Learning and Open Educational Resources. This system consists of learning modules encompass an overarching theme, whereby the modules are designed to keep students engaged and persisted in their CL learning, by removing impediments to access and fulfilling learners’ desire for a personalized learning progression. This progression began with a user assessment to determine the learners’ level and guides the user through each module with pre-assessment, interactive instruction, learning activities, practice activities, and a final task, with custom feedback at every stage of learning.

In Chapter 2, *Learner Autonomy and Chinese Vocabulary Learning with Technology*, by Yalun Zhou and Michael Wei, another CALL attempt using an internet-based games approach were introduced. Through individual vocabulary gameplay, live group vocabulary game competition...
and self-paced vocabulary learning on Quizlet, 54 college-level CFL learners were expected to know the Chinese characters, pinyin and meaning of words in English in periodic word dictation tests. Via an open-ended question, the study found that the live group vocabulary game competitions promote engaging vocabulary learning and motivated learners to achieve day-to-day instructional goals in the CFL classroom, and hence urged the strategic use of CALL in L2 learning.

In a similar tune of using CALL to facilitate language learning, Chapter 3, Use Reflective Learning Model to Assess the Effectiveness of Online Language Learning by Pei-ni Causarano, adopted an action design approach to intervening 14 secondary level students in their learning of Chinese using 8 units of fully-online lessons. With minimum instructions, students are given autonomy to complete the units of lessons and complete weekly exit tickets to reflect on their experience and contents learnt, so as to adjust subsequent units accordingly. By coding students’ responses with “helpful tasks” and “non-enjoyable tasks”, the study evaluates the effectiveness of the course. Through statistical analysis of the coded results, significant differences among students' experience and evaluation were found between the two types of tasks.

Unlike previous chapters using CALL, Chapter 4, Empirical Studies of Teletandem between U.S. and Taiwan Universities by Yan Gao and I-Ping P. Fu, studied the effectiveness of learning Chinese through Teletandem. Teletandem was accomplished by paring Chinese language learners in the US with English learners in Taiwan, and tasking them to co-complete course topics over online webcam technology such as Skype or Zoom. After eight weeks of practice, students participated in a survey and a focus group discussion. They revealed that Teletandem did improve their communicative skills in the target language, and further indicated that their language partners have motivates their language learning.

Upon illustrating the use of technologies in earning Chinese, the volume turns to explore learners’ motivations for learning Chinese in Chapter 5, Why and How Should Chinese Be Learned? A Preliminary Investigation regarding Italian High School Learners by Chiara Romagnoli. This chapter engaged 43 Chinese language learners in an Italian secondary school, and surveyed for their demographics, their preferred learning activities, and their reasons for learning Chinese, so as to provide a basis for improvement of the Chinese programme. The students reveal that their reason for learning Chinese is mainly for a better job prospect, and interestingly they like activities such as writing characters and talking with native speakers. With these findings, the chapter urged educators to explore more creative and engaging ways to teach the most popular “writing of characters” activities.

In a similar vein but targeting younger CFL learners, Chapter 6, Why Do Children Learn Chinese? An Exploratory Study of Parental Beliefs, Classroom Motivational Strategies, and Young Learners’ Motivated Behaviors by Xin Zhang, look at parent-oriented motivation factors and classroom-motivated behaviors that develop motivational strategies among pre-K to elementary CFL learners. By survey and interview, the study found that heritage, linguistic, and cultural background affect parents’ motives and beliefs of learning Chinese for their children, with heritage parents emphasized on linguistic and cultural connections, whereas non-heritage parents emphasised on benefits of language. Via classroom observation, the study found that teacher discourse and activity design have significant positive correlations with young CFL learners’ classroom motivation.

Departing from learners’ motivation, Chapter 7, Integrating Content and Language Instruction in a Chinese Immersion Classroom by Wenying Zhou, introduced the content-based instruction (CBI) that integrates language and content to optimize the learning environment to provide authentic and practical use of the language. The chapter highlighted the pedagogical and practical knowledge for implementing CBI in CFL programme, and suggested guidelines such as setting suitable language and content goals, providing comprehensible input and sufficient output opportunities. The chapter has also pointed out some instructional concerns for CBI, such as students’ abilities to comprehend and use Chinese, and teachers’ pedagogical knowledge to teach the content.

Despite the persistence of concerns on Chinese character acquisition, some progress has been made. Chapter 8, Using the Chunking Method in Teaching Chinese Characters in a Sixth-Grade Chinese Dual Language Immersion Classroom by Ko-Yin Sung, Hsiao-Mei Tsai, and I-Chiao Hung
focuses on the effects of explicit teaching of chunking (i.e., internal structure of characters) on learners’ ability to encode 141 target characters. Two classes of sixth graders of one-way Chinese dual language learners received the intervention on daily basis for one semester. Results showed that experimental group demonstrated superior knowledge of radical meaning and character configuration than the control group. Moreover, results from delayed test showed such knowledge were well-retained.

In a similar vein, Chapter 9, Instructional interventions and Character Learning Strategies: A study on Orthographic Study Assignment by Yan Xie also focuses on the components embedded in sets of characters. Yan investigated how orthographic study assignment as a form of instructional intervention may influence adult learners’ character learning strategies. 155 university students who learn Chinese as L2 participated the study and their character learning strategies were gathered by the Strategy Inventory for Character Learning and semi-structured interviews. An open-ended survey was administered one semester later to document changes of their learning strategies. Results showed that orthographic assignment had a strong impact on learners’ capability of utilizing orthographic knowledge-based strategies, which in turn affected the choice of strategies. In addition, to ensure the effectiveness of orthographic assignment, consideration needs to be given to the amount of the assignment and format of assessment.

Concurring with Chapters 8 and 9, Chapter 10, Exploring Chinese Character Learning by English Speakers through Error Analysis L2 by Lan Zhang, highlights that learning the components of the Chinese characters is by no means an easy task. By analysing errors in adult learners’ production of characters in phrases or short sentences, Zhang found that learners were able to use the deconstruction method to break the characters into smaller components. However, they may not acquire all the details of orthography of radicals, as they still made more errors related to the characters as a holistic unit. Sequence of strokes, suggested by Zhang, should be emphasized in beginning stage to help learners understand how the strokes are interrelated to form the characters and its components.

Presented in an engaging manner, the last four chapters of the book showcased the pedagogical potential of technology supported Chinese character and literacy acquisition. Chapter 11, “Using Multimedia-Assisted Materials to Facilitate the Self-Paged Learning of Traditional Chinese Characters” by Hsiu-Jen Cheng and Hong Zhan, examines how self-paced multimedia materials helped 11 American university L2 students learn traditional Chinese characters. The participants have learned 700 Chinese simplified characters before they were exposed to the multimedia materials. The results showed that the materials was effective in helping learners recognise traditional characters and understand their meanings, which in turn rendered learning satisfaction.

Addressing the most fundamental writing unit of Chinese language – stroke, Chapter 12, Which Is More Effective: App Game or a Workbook? An Experiment on Learning Chinese Character Writing by Xiaoshi Li and Wenying Zhou, examines the effects of an App game designed for character recognition and production on adult L2 learners, in comparison to the traditional pen-and-paper approach. Results showed that learners who used the App wrote characters faster than those in pen-and-paper group, and they also demonstrated more advanced knowledge of character stroke order as they followed the sequence of the strokes more strictly and arrange the character structure in a more balanced way. Another advantage of using App games is that learning and practicing character is less constrained to location and time, hence teachers will be at a better position in planning pedagogical activities.

In Chapter 13, Multimodality in Learning and Communicating via Chinese Characters, Justin Olmanson, Xianquan Liu, Christopher C. Heseltong and Asha Srivastava developed a writing App – DaZiBao to assist learners in establishing connections between pinyin and character writing. Tapping on learners speaking skills, the App provides multimodal supportin a sequenced and time delayed manner to help learners compose a text with Chinese characters. Screencast and interview data demonstrate that the App is a helpful tool to facilitate Chinese text and character production via less repetitive and less character-centric practices. The chapter also highlights the importance of adequate communication between app developers, teachers and students to ensure the effectiveness of App application.
The last chapter, Acquiring Chinese Character Literacy Through Student-Produced Videos, by Sujane Wu and Yalin Chen, adopted a blended and learner-centered multimodal approach. The study integrated textual, aural, linguistic, spatial, and visual elements. Learners were required to produce their own videos of one Chinese character, which included basic Chinese character knowledge such as definition, radical, structure and stroke orders as well as the learning strategies used in learning the character. Video analysis revealed that the video-making process not only helps learners with character learning but also empowers learners to individualize their Chinese learning experience by exploring their learning strategies.

With the highlights for each chapter, we shall now look at the volume’s contribution to the three emerging themes highlighted by the editor. Firstly, the first four chapters address the theme of ICT. They, in common, have focused predominantly on students/users’ feedbacks as the key indicator of their advocated ICT approaches. In all, the results and conclusions of the four chapters are convincing, especially with their well-articulated research designs. As pointed out by the editor in the preface, these four chapters have filled a gap of research in ICT by illustrating how ICT technologies can be methodologically applied in the teaching and learning of CSL/CFL. However, we believed that these chapters have mainly enlightened us from the students’ perspective on how ICT can be applied, and future works on teachers’ perspective would be expected to provide educators with more relevant knowledge and practices to be used in lessons. In other words, these four chapters have shown how ICT improved learning, but how ICT improve teaching is left uncovered.

Secondly, on the theme of young learners, Chapters 5 and 6 are the two chapters that focused on this theme. Probably due to the surveying of elder students and parents in the two chapters, their findings are not too distinct (highlighting better prospects with Chinese) though the age of the learners is supposed to be different. Generally, we agreed with the editor that these two chapters has provided some insights into young learners of CSL/CFL, especially the motivation factors for learning Chinese. Though uncovering motivation factors are important for CSL/CFL teaching and learning, we believed that there would also be a need to profile other aspects of young CSL/CFL learners, such as learning strategies, attitude, and beliefs etc., preferably from the learners themselves than from their parents or teachers.

Thirdly, the last seven chapters were devoted to the theme on teaching and learning of Chinese characters Chapters 8 to 10 focus on pedagogical innovation, learners’ strategies and learners’ errors; whereas Chapters 11 to 14 provided readers with a series of technological-based approaches to assist learners in learning Chinese characters. In summary, this cluster of informative chapters allows readers to probe deeper into these thorny issues of focus. However, most chapters focus on decoding ability (i.e., character recognition), other important language skills (e.g., vocabulary, narrative ability, reading comprehension, writing) are not covered.

In general, from the perspective of educational researchers, we found this volume as an informative and inspiring resource that offers readers a comprehensive and updated view of essential issues in Chinese teaching and learning. It serves as a welcome and thought-provoking source that will be of great interest to a diverse readership, including policymakers, researchers from social sciences, Chinese teachers and parents who wish to gain a deeper understanding of this under-researched field. However, there are some limitations noteworthy: (1) In most of the chapters, participants are university students who are learning Chinese as a second language. To reach a more diverse readership, however, the inclusion of more younger participants from other contexts would be desirable, especially when there are many pathways of learning Chinese in this day and time. (2) Table and figures were not included in most chapters using empirical data, which greatly hinders understanding and interpretation of the reported results. (3) though most of the chapters illustrate their studies and findings with empirical data, there are chapters (such as Chapter 7) that are gear towards the introduction of guidelines for designing CBI lessons for CSL/CFL learners. Such chapter is enlightening but has also posed confusion among us, in terms of its role in the volume. A more elaborated description in the preface or the book’s synopsis may guide readers to better understand the role of the chapter. Nonetheless, upon reading this volume, we
believed that it would provide readers insights into the use of CALL in CSL/CFL, motivation factors of learning CSL/CFL and the practices to improve the teaching and learning of Chinese characters.