



# STARTING DAY CARE IN ESPOO FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF CHINESE PARENTS



Zhao, Wei

2009 Otaniemi

LAUREA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Laurea Otaniemi

STARTING DAY CARE IN ESPOO

FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF CHINESE PARENTS

Wei Zhao (0402015)

Degree programme of Social Services

Bachelor's thesis

April 2009

Wei Zhao

**Starting day care in Espoo from the viewpoint of Chinese parents**

Year 2009 Pages 78

---

The thesis is a small-scale evaluative research. The day care start folder, which provided practical and detailed information about starting Finnish day care to support multicultural parents in Otaniemi day-care centre and Servin-Maija day-care centre, was assessed among nine Chinese parents of children in five municipal and outsourced day-care centres in the City of Espoo.

The purposes of the current research were to find out how Chinese parents perceive starting day care in the City of Espoo and their difficulties and suggestions concerning starting day care in the City of Espoo; to evaluate how the day care start folder is experienced as a working method in opinion of Chinese parents living in the City of Espoo; and to further improve the day care start folder as a working method for multicultural families and personnel in Otaniemi day-care centre and possibly for other day-care centres in the similar situation.

Two types of interview, namely semi-structured individual interview and focus group interview, were utilised as the primary qualitative data-collecting methods in the current research. In addition, questionnaire as an assistant quantitative data-collecting method was employed as well to ensure verification of the consistency of the data, and supplement the abundance of the narrative data collected from interviews.

The qualitative data gathered from the six interviews was coded, categorised and analysed in accordance with the method of content analysis. The results showed that the participating Chinese parents basically concerned about the information on starting day care; their child's language learning; their communication and cooperation with day-care staff; cultures, religions and festivals; playing, learning and friends; child protection and legislation and so forth.

Furthermore, these Chinese parents also put forward some important problems and suggestions on Finnish day care, such as problems caused by cultural differences, different opinions on learning by playing and Finnish as a second language-teaching, difficulties to obtain enough English information about Finnish day care, and the lack of mediums for foreign families to receive help concerning Finnish day care. In addition, these Chinese parents perceived the day care start folder as useful and adequate. The results based on the questionnaires supported and verified the results generated from the qualitative data analysis.

Key words: Chinese parents, day care, early childhood education, day care start folder

## CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>FINNISH EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE AND FINNISH DAY CARE.....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1	EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE IN FINLAND .....	7
2.2	DAY CARE IN FINLAND .....	8
<b>3</b>	<b>MONIKU PROJECT AND THE EVALUATED THESIS.....</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1	MONIKU PROJECT .....	9
3.1.1	<i>Finnish as a second language.....</i>	<i>9</i>
3.1.2	<i>Education partnership.....</i>	<i>10</i>
3.1.3	<i>Developing and spreading of good working practices .....</i>	<i>10</i>
3.1.4	<i>Action model of multiculturalism in early childhood education of metropolitan area</i>	<i>10</i>
3.2	THE EVALUATED THESIS.....	11
<b>4</b>	<b>CHINESE CULTURE AND PEOPLE .....</b>	<b>12</b>
4.1	CHINESE CULTURE AND ITS INFLUENCES ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION.....	12
4.1.1	<i>Chinese culture as a collectivist culture.....</i>	<i>12</i>
4.1.2	<i>Influences of Confucianism on Chinese culture and parenting practices .....</i>	<i>13</i>
4.1.3	<i>Influences of Chinese culture on Chinese early childhood education .....</i>	<i>15</i>
4.2	CIRCUMSTANCES OF CHINESE PEOPLE IN FINLAND .....	17
<b>5</b>	<b>RESEARCH PURPOSES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND PARTICIPANTS .....</b>	<b>18</b>
5.1	PURPOSES OF THE RESEARCH .....	18
5.2	RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	18
5.3	PARTICIPANTS .....	20
<b>6</b>	<b>METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION.....</b>	<b>21</b>
6.1	PROCESS OF METHODS SELECTION AND DATA COLLECTION .....	21
6.2	INTERVIEWS .....	22
6.2.1	<i>Semi-structured individual interview .....</i>	<i>23</i>
6.2.2	<i>Focus groups.....</i>	<i>23</i>
6.2.3	<i>Audiotape recording and notes taking .....</i>	<i>25</i>
6.3	BRIEF SUMMARY OF COLLECTED DATA .....	25
<b>7</b>	<b>METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>26</b>
7.1	TRANSCRIPTION .....	26
7.2	DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS AND CONTENT ANALYSIS .....	27
<b>8</b>	<b>RESULTS.....</b>	<b>29</b>
8.1	STARTING DAY CARE .....	29
8.1.1	<i>Applying for day-care centre.....</i>	<i>29</i>
8.1.2	<i>Adapting process to day-care life .....</i>	<i>30</i>

8.2	A CHILD'S LANGUAGE LEARNING .....	32
8.2.1	<i>A child's Chinese language learning</i> .....	32
8.2.2	<i>A child's Finnish language learning</i> .....	33
8.3	COMMUNICATION AND COOPERATION .....	34
8.3.1	<i>Language between Chinese parents and Finnish day-care staff</i> .....	34
8.3.2	<i>Communication and cooperation</i> .....	36
8.4	CULTURES, RELIGIONS AND FESTIVALS.....	38
8.4.1	<i>Cultural differences</i> .....	38
8.4.2	<i>Multicultural environment</i> .....	39
8.4.3	<i>Religions and festivals in Finland</i> .....	40
8.5	PLAYING, LEARNING AND FRIENDS.....	41
8.5.1	<i>Learning by playing</i> .....	41
8.5.2	<i>Outdoor exercises</i> .....	43
8.5.3	<i>Climate and clothing</i> .....	45
8.5.4	<i>Friends</i> .....	45
8.6	CHILD PROTECTION AND LEGISLATION OF FINLAND .....	47
8.7	USEFULNESS, ADEQUACY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR DAY CARE START FOLDER .....	48
<b>9</b>	<b>DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>50</b>
9.1	ANSWERS TO RESEARCH PURPOSES AND QUESTIONS .....	50
9.1.1	<i>Problems and suggestions of Chinese parents</i> .....	50
9.1.2	<i>Knowledge and information Chinese families need</i> .....	54
9.1.3	<i>Usefulness and adequacy of the day care start folder</i> .....	55
9.2	SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER DIRECTIONS OF THE RESEARCH .....	55
<b>10</b>	<b>ETHICALITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS .....</b>	<b>57</b>
10.1	ETHICAL CONSIDERATION .....	57
10.1.1	<i>Informed consent</i> .....	57
10.1.2	<i>Confidentiality</i> .....	58
10.1.3	<i>Consequences</i> .....	58
10.2	TRUSTWORTHINESS.....	58
	<b>LIST OF REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>61</b>
	<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>63</b>
	APPENDIX 1: CONSENT LETTER FOR PARTICIPANTS (ENGLISH TRANSLATION) .....	63
	APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW THEMES (ENGLISH TRANSLATION) .....	65
	APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONNAIRE (ENGLISH TRANSLATION) .....	67
	APPENDIX 4: DATA CODING AND CATEGORISING (ENGLISH TRANSLATION) .....	75
	APPENDIX 5: AN EXAMPLE OF CODING SYNONYMOUS CHINESE WORDS AND PHRASES AND TRANSLATING INTO ENGLISH.....	78

## 1 Introduction

By 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007, the total population of the City of Espoo reached 235,019, and the population of the Suur-Tapiola area, which was one of the major areas of the City of Espoo, was 41,905. Particularly, the proportion of children up to six years old was 9.7 per cent in the overall population of the City of Espoo. In 2006, the total number of child day care units in the City of Espoo was 13,202 in which 7,994 units in municipal day-care centres were included, and the number of Espoo's municipal child day-care centres was 146. (City of Espoo, pocket statistics 2008, 10-11 & 21) Besides, there were more than 7,000 children in Espoo's municipal day care in 2007 (Espoo annual report 2007, 20). By 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007, 6.7 per cent of the population living in the City of Espoo spoke other languages except Finnish and Swedish, and 4.9 per cent were of other nationalities except Finnish nationality (City of Espoo, pocket statistics 2008, 11-12).

The project of MONIKU - social empowerment in multicultural early childhood education of Helsinki metropolitan area 2005-2007 was a project in which both Laurea University of Applied Sciences and Otaniemi day-care centre participated. The project started in 2005 and ended in 2007. The project united regional cooperation of metropolitan area's municipalities Espoo, Helsinki, Kauniainen and Vantaa, as its main goal of the formation of metropolitan area's multicultural early childhood education action model and common concepts. One of the goals of Moniku project was a child's comprehensive well-being and promotion of social empowering, especially by systematising Finnish as a second language - teaching. Moreover between day care personnel and multicultural parents, the developing of educational partnership was supported by empowering and peer learning early childhood education personnel's multicultural awareness, professional skill and know-how. (cf. Socca 2008a)

As a contribution to Moniku project, Laurea students Heidi Miettinen and Laura Tarvainen completed their thesis "Eri kulttuureista suomalaiseen päivähöitoön" (From different cultures to Finnish day care) in May 2007. Moreover, as a result of cooperation of students of Laurea University of Applied Sciences and staff of Otaniemi day-care centre in Moniku project, Miettinen and Tarvainen also created an English day care start folder for supporting multicultural parents in Otaniemi day-care centre and Servin-Maija day-care centre by providing practical and detailed information about starting Finnish day care. Simultaneously, the staff members of Otaniemi day-care centre created the corresponding day care start folder in Finnish that could be utilised by Finnish staff members. The English day care start folder was sent to Otaniemi day-care centre at the end of 2007, and it was already given to one Chinese mother whose child was in Otaniemi day-care centre.

In order to evaluate the English day care start folder from the viewpoint of Chinese parents living in the City of Espoo, the current thesis was conducted as a small-scaled evaluative research. The English day care start folder had been assessed among Chinese parents of children in five municipal and outsourced day-care centres in the City of Espoo. The purposes of the thesis are listed as follows:

1. Finding out how Chinese parents perceive starting day care in the City of Espoo and their difficulties and suggestions concerning starting day care in the City of Espoo;

2. Evaluating how the day care start folder is experienced as a working method in opinion of Chinese parents living in the City of Espoo;
3. Improving the day care start folder as a working method for multicultural families and personnel in Otaniemi day-care centre and possibly for other day-care centres in the similar situation.

Qualitative interview methods, semi-structured individual interview and small focus group interview, were utilised in the current research to gather data. In addition, quantitative questionnaire method was employed as well to ensure verification of the consistency of the data, and to supplement the abundance of the narrative data collected from interviews.

Data gathered from both interviews and questionnaires was coded, categorised and analysed in accordance with the method of content analysis. The results generated from analysis were further discussed with consideration of the research purposes and questions. Moreover, the issues of ethical consideration and trustworthiness were emphasised throughout the whole research process.

## 2 Finnish early childhood education and care and Finnish day care

### 2.1 Early childhood education and care in Finland

In National curriculum guidelines on early childhood education and care in Finland (2004, 12), Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is defined as “educational interaction taking place in young children’s different living environments, aimed at promoting their balanced growth, development and learning.” Close cooperation between a child’s parents and educators, such as an ECEC partnership, is essential to form a meaningful entity from the child’s perspectives with the educational efforts of families and educators. ECEC in Finland has two primary objectives, which are to fulfil the day care needs of children under school age and to provide early childhood education. “ECEC is systematic and goal-oriented interaction and collaboration, where the child’s spontaneous play is of key importance.” (National curriculum guidelines on early childhood education and care in Finland 2004, 12) ECEC, in which pre-school education is included, and basic education together build an integrated entirety ensuring consistency and continuity in the child’s development.

The child’s human dignity is the core value in the Convention on the Rights of the Child that underlies ECEC in Finland. This core value is related to the four overall principles, which are respectively non-discrimination and equal treatment, the child’s best interest, the child’s right to life and full development, and giving due weight to the views of the child (National curriculum guidelines on early childhood education and care in Finland 2004, 13). Core ECEC principles in Finland embody children’s right to warm personal relationships; secured growth, development and learning; secure, healthy environments that allow play and a wide range of activities; receive understanding and have their say in accordance with their age and maturity; receive the special support they need; and their own culture, language, religion and beliefs (National curriculum guidelines on early childhood education and care in Finland 2004, 13).

The intrinsic value of childhood, to foster childhood, and to help the child develop as a human being are emphasised in ECEC. Therefore, three broad educational goals should be followed to fulfil the emphases. First, every child’s individuality should be taken respect for to promote personal well-being. Second, Reinforcement of considerate behaviour and action towards others aims at children learning to think of and care about other people. Last but not least, “Gradual build-up of autonomy aims to help children grow up into adults who are able to take care of themselves and their close people and to make decisions and choices concerning their own life.” (National curriculum guidelines on early childhood education and care in Finland 2004, 14)

In National curriculum guidelines on early childhood education and care in Finland (2004, 28), ECEC partnership is defined as “a conscious commitment by parents and staff to collaboration for supporting children’s growth, development and learning.” In order to achieve the cooperation, equality, mutual trust and respect between parents and staff are very important. On one hand, parents undoubtedly know their child very well and have the primary right to and take the responsibility for their child’s education. On the other hand, staff that master professional knowledge, competence and experience take responsibility to create favourable conditions for ECEC partnership and cooperation based on equality. It is emphasised in National curriculum guidelines on early childhood education and care in Finland (2004, 28) that “The

child's well-being is best fostered when parents and educators combine their knowledge of the child." Parents can discuss their child's education with certain members of staff, the whole staff, and other parents. The ECEC partnership supports cooperation between parents as well.

## 2.2 Day care in Finland

"In Finland, every child under school age has an unconditional right to day care provided by the local authority once the mother or father's period of parental allowance comes to an end, irrespective of the parents' financial status or whether or not they are in work." (Early childhood education and care policy in Finland 2000, 22) According to the specific and differential situations of individual families, parents can choose from various forms of day-care services provided by local authorities. These municipal day-care services include day-care centre, group family day-care centre, family day care at the child-care minder's home or in the form of group family day care, and supervised play activities organised by several local authorities open to everyone in a playground or at an open day-care centre. Besides full-time day-care services chosen for the majority of children, local authorities also provide part-time care and round-the-clock care for children.

"The 1973 Act on Children's Day Care incorporated private day care as part of public day care in such a manner that it was even given the opportunity to receive the same state subsidies as municipal day care, provided that selection of children rested with the local authority." (Early childhood education and care policy in Finland 2000, 24) Mainly non-governmental organisations and associations provide private day-care services. "The proportion of private day care, however, remains at a relatively moderate level, accounting for about 2% of day-care places." (Early childhood education and care policy in Finland 2000, 25) This OECD report (2000, 25) also points out that "maintenance of a fully private day-care service without public support has proved to be financially difficult" and the opportunity for ongoing dialogue between public and private day care is available.

The churches' own ECEC are carried out in several different ways in all of the nearly 600 Finnish Evangelical Lutheran parishes, as well as a small Greek Orthodox Church. In addition, several child welfare organisations in Finland have been providing education and care services for small children too and engaging in lobbying activities to increase services.

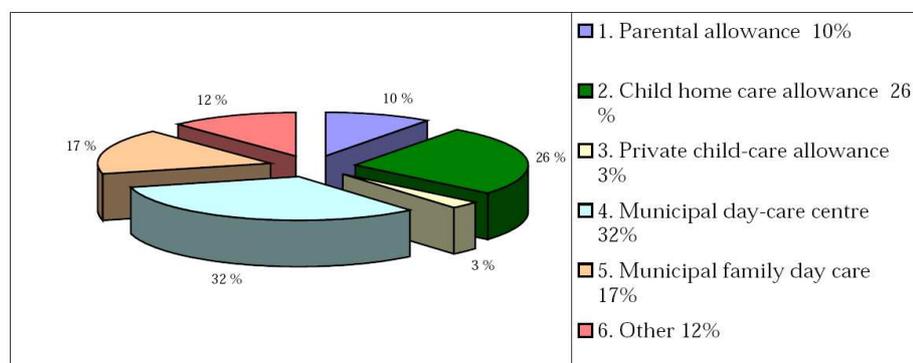


Figure 1. Day care for children aged under 7 at the end of 1998  
(Early childhood education and care policy in Finland 2000, 27)

### 3 Moniku project and the evaluated thesis

#### 3.1 Moniku project

The full name of Moniku project is MONIKU - sosiaalinen vahvistaminen pääkaupunkiseudun monikulttuurisessa varhaiskasvatuksessa 2005-2007 (MONIKU - social empowerment in multicultural early childhood education of Helsinki metropolitan area 2005-2007). The project united regional cooperation of metropolitan area's municipalities Espoo, Helsinki, Kauniainen and Vantaa, as its main goal of the formation of metropolitan area's multicultural early childhood education action model and common concepts. The goal of the project was a child's comprehensive well-being and promotion of social empowering, especially by systematising Finnish as a second language - teaching. The goal was protecting of the growth and development of a child's need and to promote a child's adaptation to Finnish society. Furthermore, the goal of the activities was the supporting of a child's own mother tongue and culture. (cf. Socca 2008a)

Between day care personnel and multicultural parents, the developing of educational partnership was supported by empowering and peer learning early childhood education personnel's multicultural awareness, professional skill and know-how. In the project, further education programme of multicultural early childhood education was planned for personnel's further education. Empowering of resources of a child and a family and increasing of customer-orientation of services were emphasised in the project. The goal of the activities was increasing of parents' participation opportunities and securing well-timed and flexible service of early childhood education, which responded to customers' requirements. (cf. Socca 2008a)

The activities of the project were based on collecting, evaluating and implementing of municipalities' existent and new multicultural early childhood education working practices and working methods. The project was fulfilled in the chosen regional developing units of municipalities of metropolitan area and in forming regional developer network of these personnel. Regional developer network planned and organised with units the realisation of goals of the project by developing and evaluating working methods. The results of the project were divided regionally and nationally. (cf. Socca 2008a)

##### 3.1.1 Finnish as a second language

The participation of early childhood education supported the opportunity of a child of different language and cultural background to learn Finnish or Swedish as a second language in natural situations with other children and educators. However in addition, a child needed special guidance to assimilating and using of the language. A child's comprehensive well-being and promotion of social empowering were supported particularly by systematising Finnish as a second language - teaching. (cf. Socca 2008b)

In the project, day-care centres developed and evaluated working practices of the everyday routine to the comprehensive supporting of children's speaking and language development. The goal of developing of Finnish as a second language - teaching was to build a basis for functional bilingualism and to empower a child's multicultural identity. The goal of the activities was to form the metropolitan area's common Finnish as a second language - plan. (cf. Socca 2008b)

### 3.1.2 Education partnership

The goal of the project was to develop working practices of educational partnership of day care personnel and multicultural parents in the everyday routine of day care. Education partnership was based on the supporting of a child's individualised requirements. The goal was to enhance the involvement of multicultural parents in the planning, implementation and evaluation of their child's early childhood education. The activities of early childhood education were planned together in collaboration with parents, so that a child's benefit and rights were fulfilled. (*cf.* Socca 2008c)

### 3.1.3 Developing and spreading of good working practices

In the project, working practices of early support were developed to work, which took place with multicultural children and families in the everyday routine of day care. Practical workers developed working practices of multicultural early childhood education. Developing work took place from the requirements of the everyday routine of day-care centres, which participated in the project. Day-care centres formed a regional developing units' network, which had facilities for its self-developing and self-change. (*cf.* Socca 2008d)

Developing of field of activities was the task of day-care centres, which belonged to the multicultural regional developer network. Developing work was based on critical evaluation of own multicultural early childhood education working methods and as good to develop and utilise of day-care centres, which belonged to other projects of spreading action models that were experienced. Day-care centres, which participated in developing work, increased in their own area professional know-how by developing and evaluating new courses of action, and model ways to other area's units different ways connected the developing orientation with the basic task of the unit. (*cf.* Socca 2008d)

Day-care centres, which belonged to Moniku project, had started developing work of multicultural early childhood education working practices in autumn 2005. Day-care centres had chosen the systematisation of Finnish as a second language - teaching and education partnership as central developing themes of the project. (*cf.* Socca 2008d)

### 3.1.4 Action model of multiculturalism in early childhood education of metropolitan area

The goal of the project was to form a functional regional expert network of multicultural early childhood education. The purpose was to network experts of multicultural work of early childhood education, to collect methods and projects, and to improve multicultural cooperation and services' operation structures of early childhood education of municipalities of metropolitan area. Metropolitan area's players of early childhood education and central regional and national partners were extensively bound along with the project. (*cf.* Socca 2008e)

Metropolitan area's common multicultural early childhood education action model and common concepts were created as the result of the project. Action model contained working methods, which were developed and evaluated in the project, and good practices, which were collected regionally. Principles and directions of organising of multicultural early childhood education

services in metropolitan area were incorporated into the action model. Action model included also the multicultural early childhood education further education plan, which was developed in the project, and regional Finnish as a second language - plan. (cf. Socca 2008e)

### 3.2 The evaluated thesis

As a contribution to Moniku project, Laurea University of Applied Sciences students Heidi Miettinen and Laura Tarvainen produced their thesis in May 2007, which was named “Eri kulttuureista suomalaiseen päivähoitoon” (From different cultures to Finnish day care). The purpose of their thesis was to find out what kind of knowledge multicultural families need about the Finnish early childhood education when their children start day care. (Miettinen and Tarvainen 2007, 4) In addition in cooperation with staff of Otaniemi day-care centre in Moniku project, Miettinen and Tarvainen also created an English day care start folder for supporting multicultural parents in Otaniemi day-care centre and Servin-Maija day-care centre by providing practical and detailed information about starting Finnish day care.

The main research question of the thesis was “Millaista tietoa monikulttuuriset perheet tarvitsevat suomalaisesta varhaiskasvatuksesta lapsen aloittaessa päivähoiton?” (What kind of information multicultural families need about Finnish early childhood education when a child starts day care?) Besides, there were two more sub-questions, which were respectively “Mitä on monikulttuurinen varhaiskasvatus?” (What is multicultural early childhood education?) and “Mitkä asiat auttavat monikulttuurista lasta suomalaiseen päivähoitoon sopeutumisessa?” (What issues help in the adaptation of a multicultural child to Finnish day care?) (Miettinen and Tarvainen 2007, 27) These three above-mentioned questions constructed the correspondent three main themes in the theme interviews to collect data. Consequently, the related results of the thesis, which were originated from the data gathered, were subsequently stated under each theme.

As the results of the thesis, in the opinion of Miettinen and Tarvainen, information particularly about day care in practice, professional early childhood education, the importance of play, cooperation among day-care centre, families and environment where early childhood education takes place should be provided to multicultural families to fulfil their needs. Furthermore, the results of the thesis also offered valuable knowledge about multicultural day care for early childhood education professionals. (cf. Miettinen and Tarvainen 2007, 4)

## 4 Chinese culture and people

### 4.1 Chinese culture and its influences on early childhood education

China is one of the oldest civilizations in the world, and Chinese civilization and history can be traced back to ancient times. Being as descendants of this age-old nation, the Chinese people nowadays are still proud of their glorious history. The unique Chinese cultural values and beliefs, which are deeply rooted among the Chinese people and have remained unchanged for many generations, have reflected such sense of history. (cf. Chen-Hafteck & Xu 2008, 9)

#### 4.1.1 Chinese culture as a collectivist culture

Chen and Kennedy (2005, 113) indicate that Chinese culture emphasises collectivism rather than individualism. In other words, the predominant Chinese culture emphasise the importance of family instead of the importance of individual. The interests of family are more crucial than its members' individual interests, and the maintenance of domestic harmony is the primary goal of the whole family. Therefore, effective family communication and family functioning are determined by the preservation of peaceful relationships among family members. (cf. Chen & Kennedy 2005, 113)

Chen-Hafteck and Xu (2008, 10) also point out that Chinese children are strongly influenced by the collectivist nature of traditional Chinese society. The emphasis of harmonious connectedness with others, by means of attending to others and fitting in as a member of the society, was of the fundamental importance in the concept of interdependent self, which dominates Chinese culture, as well as many other Asian cultures. Moreover, Chinese children learn to be humble and respectful to adults in the process of socialisation. A child saying or feeling proud of herself or himself is perceived as inappropriate and negative in Chinese culture. Therefore, Chinese students represent lower self-esteem and more shyness compared with students in individualist cultures. (cf. Chen-Hafteck & Xu 2008, 10)

Triandis and Suh (2002, 139) consider that collectivism correlates with tightness of culture. They further quote Mills and Clark's viewpoint that people in collectivist cultures are interdependent with their in-groups, which can be presented in forms of family, tribe, nation and so forth. Moreover, collectivistic people prioritise the goals of their in-groups, shape their behaviour predominantly according to in-group norms, and behave in a communal manner. In addition, Chinese culture is mentioned as a vertical collectivist culture, which is traditionalist and emphasises in-group cohesion, respects for in-group norms and the directives of authorities. (cf. Triandis & Suh 2002, 139 & 143)

Triandis and Suh (2002, 141-145) also distinguish detailedly between collectivism and its polar opposite individualism at the cultural level, and three major differences are stated as follows: firstly, people in collectivist cultures focus more on contexts than on internal processes in predicting other people's behaviour; secondly, behaviours of a person in collectivist cultures are less consistent across situations; lastly, a person's behaviour in collectivist cultures is more predictable from norms and roles than from attitudes. (cf. Triandis & Suh 2002, 145)

Fulfilling one's own duties and obligations is an important goal of people in collectivist cultures,

and their social obligations are very focused. Prominent in-group membership in collectivism increases obligation to the in-group. From the angle of cognition, collectivist cultures regard the environment as more or less predetermined, and stable norms, obligations and duties are fixed. However, people in collectivist cultures consider themselves as changeable and ready to fit in the unchangeable environment. Therefore, it would not be difficult to understand that East Asians perceive human traits and dispositional attributions as very malleable, and possess a higher tolerance for contradictions and inconsistencies. In addition, maintenance of interpersonal order and harmony within the in-group is advanced by oriental people's holistic thinking patterns. (cf. Triandis & Suh 2002, 141-142)

Concerning the aspect of motivation, due to the primary focuses on adjusting the individual to better fit between the self and the demands from the social environment, people in collectivist cultures are less motivated by available personal choices and to be unique. As to emotions, people in collectivist cultures are inclined to root emotions in relationships, and regard emotions as reflecting the status of such relationships. Besides, emotions in collectivist cultures feature in the so-called other-focused manner. The satisfaction of collectivists is predicted intensively by their social norms, such as the approval by others. (cf. Triandis & Suh 2002, 142)

The typical personality traits, which are appreciated in collectivist cultures, are attentiveness, respectfulness, humility, cooperativeness and so on. In regard to social behaviour, social proof arguments and other people's thoughts and behaviours strongly influence people in collectivist cultures. In communication circumstances, indirect and face-saving strategies are implemented by people in collectivist cultures. Particularly in China, ambiguity in communication could be quite beneficial, whereas clarity might cause sanctions. In addition, silence during communication is acceptable in some of collectivist cultures. (cf. Triandis & Suh 2002, 142-144)

Finally in the aspect of ethics, community codes are of the great importance to people in collectivist cultures. Morality is considered to be more contextual among people in collectivist cultures, and the collective welfare is their paramount value. For the sake of face saving or in-group assistance, people in collectivist cultures perceive lying as a more acceptable behaviour and even a correct behaviour, and thus they de-emphasise authenticity. Face saving is very important in collectivist cultures, and a moral person behaves ideally and consistently with their roles and social stipulation, and as a member of in-group. Otherwise, the person may lose face of her or his own, as well as of the entire in-group. (cf. Triandis & Suh 2002, 144)

#### 4.1.2 Influences of Confucianism on Chinese culture and parenting practices

In Chinese culture, Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism are three predominant schools of philosophical thought, which profoundly influence practices of Chinese culture and socialisation. Most of Chinese people comprehend best the traditional family values and parenting practices in the context of these important philosophies. The essential doctrines of Confucianism are collectivism, harmony, humanism, self-discipline, obligation, moderation, order and hierarchy. (Hulei, Zevenbergen & Jacobs 2006, 460) Confucianism has been dominatively influencing Chinese people and Chinese culture for more than two thousand years. In addition Taoism and Buddhism, which have long integrated with Confucianism in China, also

profoundly influence Chinese culture. Hulei *et al.* (2006, 460) indicate that competitiveness and sense of self are de-emphasised both in Taoism and Buddhism.

According to Chen-Hafteck and Xu (2008, 10), every individual ought to fulfil the functions of her or his respective role in society on the basis of Confucian ethnics. Therefore, interpersonal harmony, unity and social order, which are important doctrines of Confucianism, could be secured and maintained. Furthermore, Chinese culture and social habits have been pervaded by the Confucian doctrine of social hierarchy. A representative example, which illustrates the practice of social hierarchy in Chinese culture, is that Chinese children must be submissive and respect their parents and teachers as superiors. (*cf.* Chen-Hafteck & Xu 2008, 10)

Chao (1994, 1113) points out that some of the crucial Chinese parenting notions are rooted in the role relationships defined by Confucius. In detail, the role relationships of Confucian thought consist of three fundamental aspects. Firstly, an individual is defined by her or his relationships with other people; secondly, such relationships are structured hierarchically; finally, every party of the society honours the requirements and responsibilities of the role relationships, and thus maintains order and harmony in the society, especially in the family. (*cf.* Chao 1994, 1113 & 1117)

Dominated by the Confucian doctrine of role relationships, traditional Chinese culture lays greatest stress on five specific kinds of hierarchical relationships, which are listed as follows: relationships between sovereign and subject, father and son, older brother and younger brother, husband and wife, and among friends. Moreover, the relationships between father and son are of the highest importance among these different sorts of relationships. As the subordinate member of these typical hierarchical relationships, the son must display loyalty and respect to the father, who is perceived as the senior member and must also responsibly and justly govern, teach and discipline the son. (Chao 1994, 1113) Nowadays in contemporary China, the traditional role of the father in the father-son relationships is undertaken more or less by both of parents in the family.

Distinctive notions and styles of Chinese parenting practices have evolved in traditional Chinese culture shaped by significant philosophies of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. Hulei *et al.* (2006, 460-461) state that typical patterns of Chinese parenting practices are featured as strong parental control, expectations of child obedience, discipline, filial piety, family duty and obligation, and maintenance of harmony. For example filial piety, which means a respect for parents and also ancestors, is rooted in the above-mentioned Confucian doctrines of social hierarchy and father-son relationships, and it also reflects the concept of the parental role as teacher. In other words, a child is required to be obedient and respect the parents and teachers as seniors; meanwhile, the parents must take responsibility for the child's education and development.

According to Hulei *et al.* (2006, 459), the parenting practices, childrearing values and attitudes of European-American middle-class culture have been historically perceived as the dominant norm for optimal child development. Chao (1994, 1111-1113) criticises that Chinese parenting practices are usually identified as controlling, authoritarian and restrictive, under the conceptualisations and criteria originated from literature and researches with only European-American cultural backgrounds. However, the indigenous concepts and standards of

Chinese parenting practices based on Chinese culture are not sufficiently taken into consideration. As a result, such above-mentioned descriptions of Chinese parenting practices, which are commonly considered as negative characters according to European-American parenting, are actually misleading, as the meanings of controlling, authoritarian and restrictive are not cross-culturally shared between Chinese people and European-American people. (cf. Chao 1994, 1111-1113)

Deeply rooted in Chinese culture and philosophies, concepts and styles of Chinese parenting practices may have unique implications, which could be quite divergent from the European-American understandings. Chen and Kennedy (2005, 113) emphasise that the so-called authoritarian parenting style viewed in Western society is authentically a reflection of loving and caring parenting in Chinese culture. The involvement, care and supervision of Chinese parents and their encouragement of the child's academic achievement are vivid demonstrations of such loving and caring parenting. Chen and Kennedy (2005, 113) also find out in their study that a less authoritarian parenting style in Chinese culture could probably reflect less loving and caring parenting. Besides, Chao (1994, 1112) also points out that parental concern, caring and involvement could be equivalent to parental obedience and some aspects of strictness in the light of thoughts of Chinese parents.

Instead of European-American concepts of controlling, authoritarian and restrictive, Chao (1994, 1112) provides some alternative concepts, such as *chiao shun* and *guan*, which are directly derived from Chinese culture, to appropriately explain Chinese parenting practices. As a fundamental concept in Chinese parenting practices, *guan* means to govern, but it connotes very positively in Chinese culture. Chinese parents show their love and care to their child at the same time when governing the child, so the parents' firm control and governance of the child are regarded as synonyms for warm parental care, concern and involvement in China.

In Chinese culture, the other crucial parenting concept *chiao shun* means training, that is to say, Chinese parents teach or educate their child to behave appropriately and expectedly. In addition, child training usually means child rearing as well, and it is a component of Chinese parental control. (Chao 1994, 1112) Chen-Hafteck and Xu (2008, 11) indicate that because of Chinese traditional beliefs, Chinese parents are very significant in upbringing and educating their child. They usually appear to be highly involved and concerned with their child's academic achievement, which is commonly considered as the reflection of the success of the parents' education. This kind of parenting style is widely accepted as a positive attitude to motivate children in achieving academic excellence in China. Therefore, a child is often under much stress to achieve the high expectations set by the parents for bringing prosperity and glory to family. Chen and Kennedy (2005, 113) also mention that parental warmth and children's well being are coherent and correlated with parental training in Chinese culture. Besides, parental control and warmth are of great importance to children's adaptation and well being.

#### 4.1.3 Influences of Chinese culture on Chinese early childhood education

Traditional Chinese culture and philosophies have also strongly influenced early childhood education in China. Chao (1994, 1112-1113) emphasises that the concept of *guan* is mostly implemented by Chinese teachers as well in control and regimentation of the classroom, where

children's behaviours are continuously supervised and corrected by their teachers. Chinese teachers evaluate whether children meet the teachers' clear expectations and standards by comparing children to each other. In the same way of Chinese parents, Chinese teachers also quite positively perceive control and governance, which are the role responsibilities and requirements of both teachers and parents in China.

Liu and Elicker (2005) find out in their research that interactions between teachers and children in Chinese kindergartens are influenced by traditional Chinese culture. Detailedly, children are subject to disciplines set in the kindergarten; teachers' authority is considered as very important in China; and learning, order, and observing the correct etiquette are emphasised in the kindergarten according to Chinese culture. Teachers in Chinese kindergartens strongly emphasise and actively instruct and guide children to learn new knowledge and skills, rules and regulations of the classroom and the larger society. It is widely believed by Chinese people that the more knowledge and skills a child gains, the better person she or he will be.

Chinese teachers also play a crucial role in initiating and directing interactions between teachers and children, and they display high control and restraint towards children during such interactions. Children who communicate with teachers also show high acceptance, obedience and dependence on teachers' authority. In Chinese kindergartens, inclined interactions in which teachers are certainly dominant and powerful educators and children are the educated participants occur far more frequently than parallel interactions in which teachers and children are almost equal to each other. As mentioned earlier, teachers are regarded as superior to children in every respect in Chinese culture and philosophies. Therefore, children's obedience to teachers' educating and rules in the kindergarten is considered as the premise of positive potential of children in their life. (*cf.* Liu & Elicker 2005)

#### 4.2 Circumstances of Chinese people in Finland

By 2008, the total population of Chinese people living in Finland is about 4,620 (芬中家/Suomen kiinalainen yhdyskunta 2009), which mainly distributes in Helsinki metropolitan area. Although they are all Chinese origin, they can be divided into 3 categories.

The first category is Chinese people who still keep their Chinese nationality. They are basically young students and graduates working in Finland, and most of them can speak English language well but can only speak limited Finnish language. However, because of the huge and increasing need of educated labour force in Finnish domestic labour market in future, many Chinese people of this category tend to stay and work in Finland after their graduation.

The second category is Chinese people who have already got the permanent resident permission of Finland and hold the passport of Finland. Because of the changes in immigrant policy of Finland, this kind of people came to Finland several years ago, and generally they have jobs and can speak both English and Finnish language well.

The last category is people who have Chinese origin but are or become citizenship of Finland. In this situation, one of their biological parents can be a citizen of Finland, or they were adopted by Finnish couples from China, or their spouses are Finns, or they immigrated into Finland. Most of them have lived in Finland for quite a long time or even since they were born, so they usually can speak fluent Finnish language.

## 5 Research purposes, research questions and participants

### 5.1 Purposes of the research

Miettinen and Tarvainen also suggested the directions of further research of their thesis. One of the directions was to undertake their study again by interviewing only multicultural parents. Therefore, the views of multicultural parents could be possibly found out about what kind of knowledge they need on Finnish early childhood education when their children start day care. (cf. Miettinen and Tarvainen 2007, 4)

In addition, Miettinen and Tarvainen pointed out some questions for further research: Is the contents of the day care start folder enough broad and intelligible? Does the information existing in the day care start folder answer the requirements of different multicultural families? Is the day care start folder lacking for any essential issues? (Miettinen and Tarvainen 2007, 55) Moreover, Miettinen and Tarvainen also suggested a possibility of further research to find out how the day care start folder is experienced as a working method in the opinion of multicultural families. More explicitly, the following issues could be researched: Does the multicultural family obtain enough information about Finnish day care from the day care start folder? Is the day care start folder lacking for any essential issues? Is the day care start folder intelligible and clear? (cf. Miettinen and Tarvainen 2007, 56)

Therefore, based on Miettinen and Tarvainen's thesis, this evaluative research was originally aimed at evaluating the day care start folder by interviewing only multicultural parents, more accurately Chinese parents, in Otaniemi day-care centre. However, due to the lack of Chinese parents in Otaniemi day-care centre who accepted to participate in the research, the researcher found more participants from other municipal day-care centres in the City of Espoo. Therefore, the amended purposes of the research are:

1. Finding out how Chinese parents perceive starting day care in the City of Espoo and their difficulties and suggestions concerning starting day care in the City of Espoo;
2. Evaluating how the day care start folder is experienced as a working method in opinion of Chinese parents living in the City of Espoo;
3. Improving the day care start folder as a working method for multicultural families and personnel in Otaniemi day-care centre and possibly for other day-care centres in the similar situation.

### 5.2 Research questions

This research is a small-scaled evaluative research. Hall and Hall (2004, 6-7) express evaluation as it "focuses on the aims of a program and investigates to what extent the intentions of the program providers are being realized." Hall and Hall (2004, 7) also conclude that "Evaluation thus implies a judgement of the worth or value of a program." This evaluation research aims to evaluate the outcome and influence to Chinese parents of a previous project work done by students in Otaniemi day-care centre. As stated in the previous project, the specific issues necessary to be included in the day care start folder were found out, and the file was produced

for interaction between the personnel and parents of children in Otaniemi day-care centre. Therefore, the functionality for Chinese parents of the day care start folder as a product of the project will be assessed. Furthermore, as Hall and Hall (2004, 10) emphasise the role of evaluation research for development, the small-scaled evaluation research should be “concerned with service improvement through recommendations for manageable change.” Therefore, this research also aims to improve the services and the utilisation of the project work in Otaniemi day-care centre and possibly in other similar day-care centres as well.

This research is a bachelor’s thesis by one student whose mother tongue is Mandarin Chinese. Due to its limitation of available time, resources and personnel, this research is small-scaled and locally based in Otaniemi day-care centre. Hall and Hall (2004, 8) emphasise that this sort of research is “negotiated between partners - academic researchers (often students) and service providers (usually from local welfare agencies which are usually not-for-profit agencies).” In this research, the academic researcher is the student, and the service provider is Otaniemi day-care centre whose day care start folder for personnel and parents was produced by some other students. All of the students involved are from Laurea University of Applied Sciences, and the student undertaking this evaluation research is under the supervision of tutors in Laurea. In addition, both Laurea and Otaniemi day-care centre participated in Moniku project, which started in 2005 and terminated at the end of 2007, and cooperated with each other. The day care start folder is a product contributing to Moniku project, and this research is an evaluation of the folder.

Hall and Hall (2004, 8) also state, “Small-scale evaluation is a *collaboration* between student and practitioners in service agencies and is a learning experience for both sets of parties.” The student as an academic researcher has theoretical and systematical knowledge of evaluation and qualitative research, and she or he is supported by college tutors who have much more research expertise throughout the entire research. The practitioners, who are familiar with the services and the customers, have rich experiences and practical knowledge in their working places. The evaluation research could only succeed with the cooperation of these two equal sides of partners and by learning from each other. “The relationship is one of mutual benefit.” (Hall and Hall 2004, 9)

In accordance with the purposes of the research, the main research questions are respectively set as:

1. How Chinese parents perceive starting day care in the City of Espoo and what are their difficulties and suggestions concerning starting day care in the City of Espoo?
2. What kind of knowledge and information do Chinese families need when their children start Finnish day care?
3. Can Chinese parents obtain enough information from the day care start folder to meet their needs when their children start Finnish day care?

### 5.3 Participants

The original target group was Chinese parents whose children were in Otaniemi day-care centre. However, due to the lack of Chinese parents in Otaniemi day-care centre who accepted to participate in the research, the researcher found more participants whose children were in other municipal day-care centres in Tapiola area, with much help of Benita Carpelan-Turkki, the director of both Otaniemi day-care centre and Servin-Maija day-care centre. In addition, the researcher via her personal contact also found another two Chinese families who had been living in Espoo and whose children were in Espoo's municipal day-care centres or the day-care centre whose services were bought by the City of Espoo.

Therefore, there were nine parents of six Chinese families, which live in the City of Espoo, participated in the research. In other words, the participants were three couples from three different Chinese families and the other three mothers from another three different Chinese families. All of the parents of the six families were sincerely invited to the research by phone and email, and the consent letter in Mandarin Chinese language was sent by email to every family, before the parents and the researcher met at the first time in the interviews. However, due to various realistic reasons, not all of the twelve parents were available to participate in the research, and even fewer parents could participate in interview, although the researcher provided all of the parents nearly total freedom to choose the time, place and duration of the interview.

## 6 Methods of data collection

### 6.1 Process of methods selection and data collection

The current research is primarily a small-scale qualitative research, and it was initially aimed at evaluating the day care start folder by interviewing parents of Chinese families. Originally in the research-planning phase, two types of interview included in qualitative data-collecting methods, namely focus groups and semi-structured individual interview, were chosen for the current research. In other words, the primary data-collecting method was initially designed to be focus groups, which are embodied in group interviews. In the planned interview of focus groups, all of the Chinese parents as interviewees would participate together in one group, and they discuss the preset topics raised by the researcher according to the research purposes and questions, as well as issues possibly emerged from these parents' own concerns about Finnish day care.

In addition, as the backup data-collecting method of the current research, semi-structured individual interview was also prepared during the research-planning phase. In a semi-structured individual interview, a participant would personally converse with the researcher and discuss the preset topics of the researcher and own concerns of the participant. One of the original aims of preparing such assistant semi-structured individual interview was to ensure that sufficient data could be gathered for research analysis, in case focus groups could not achieve the anticipated data-collecting expectations. The other initial aim was to enhance the flexibility of the research interviews to the maximum extent, in order to recruit more participants who were very busy and could hardly arrange any vacant time to attend focus groups together with other participants at the same time. Thus, the researcher could arrange such interview according to each individual participant's concrete timetable and preferable place.

However as the ongoing research proceeded in reality, it was found hardly possible to arrange any common time for focus group interview for Chinese parents, because all of the participants had different timetables. Therefore, before any data collection was conducted, the initially planned data-collecting methods were accordingly adjusted to such practical situations. Detailedly speaking, in most of the Chinese families participating in the current research, only one parent of the family was available to attend interview. Therefore due to such circumstances, semi-structured individual interview was rearranged as the primary data-collecting method by which the researcher could be able to gather abundant data from each individual participant in accordance with the participant's decision on time and place of the interview. Besides, focus groups were still reconsidered as the other alternative appropriate in some interview in which both parents of a family would participate together.

Based on the family units, consequently six interviews were arranged and completed. Amongst the six interviews, two interviews were focus groups in which a couple participated and discussed together as a family in one interview. Moreover, the other four interviews were semi-structured individual interviews in which only one parent, mother or father, of a family participated in the interview and discussed with the researcher. In total, eight of the nine parents participated in the six interviews. In addition, every interview was audiotape recorded, and the researcher also took notes during the entire interview process.

Furthermore, as the result of improvement of the research design with great help of many college tutors, an auxiliary questionnaire (see Appendix 3) was designed as well for the participants to answer after the semi-structured individual interview or the focus group interview. In order to evaluate the day care start folder, which contained many detailed contents, the questionnaire was utilised in the current research as an assistant quantitative data-collecting method. Thus, the questionnaire was designed to gather some more detailed information from the participants, because such information could barely be covered in the interview situations. Besides, some of the data collected from the questionnaires, which might overlap with the data gathered in the interviews, could also be utilised to verify the narrative information collected from the interviews.

As a result, eleven accessorial questionnaires were handed out to the parents of six families at the end of the interviews, and nine of those questionnaires were filled and returned back to the researcher. In detail, all of the eight interviewees completed their questionnaires, and also one mother who did not participate in interview filled a questionnaire. Therefore, the detailed data gathered from questionnaires supplemented the abundance of the narrative data collected from interviews. The verification of the consistency of the data, which was collected separately from interviews and from questionnaires, became possible as well.

## 6.2 Interviews

The main data-collecting methods of the current research are qualitative methods. In detail, the chosen methods are two forms of interview, respectively semi-structured individual interview and focus groups. Hall and Hall (2004, 118) consider the interview as an exchange of information between the interviewer and the interviewee. Kvale (1996, 124) also emphasises that the interviewer and the interviewee mutually create qualitative knowledge inter their viewpoints during the process of the interview. The aim of the interview implemented in the qualitative research should be acquiring descriptions of the interviewee's lived world according to explanations of the meaning of the described phenomena (Kvale 1996, 30).

Therefore in the current research, the researcher made efforts to conduct the interviews in an open and flexible way, so that the parents could be able to express their experiences, feelings and thoughts in the interviews without many restrictions. For instance, the participants and the researcher conversed in the interviews in their mother tongue, namely Mandarin Chinese, for the sake of obtaining naturally and smoothly expressed data. Moreover in the light of warm suggestions from some participants, the researcher modified the interview themes before implementing any interview. Thus, the improved interview themes (see Appendix 2), which were initially designed according to the thesis "Eri kulttuureista suomalaiseen päivähöitoon" and its attached day care start folder for both semi-structured individual interviews and focus groups, were better adjusted to the Chinese parents' views.

In addition, as an important part of the context for the interview, a briefing before the interview provides the interviewee the opportunity to get familiar with the situation and purpose of the interview, to negotiate the use of a tape recorder, and to ask questions before the interview starts. The briefing is the prerequisite for the interviewee to talk freely, expose their experiences and feelings to the interviewer who is a stranger in the interview. After the

interview, a debriefing is also essential for relieving the interviewee's tension, anxiety and feelings of emptiness. "The subject has given much information about his or her life and may not have received anything in return." (Kvale 1996, 128) Kvale (1996, 128) also points out, "a common experience after research interviews is that the subjects have experienced the interview as genuinely enriching, have enjoyed talking freely with an attentive listener, and have sometimes obtained new insights into important themes of their life world." Main points reviewed as a feedback at the end of the interview and opportunities provided for the interviewee to comment contribute to a successful interview too.

#### 6.2.1 Semi-structured individual interview

The primary qualitative data-collecting method in the current research is semi-structured individual interview in which the specific themes were focused, but these themes were neither rigidly structured with standardised interview questions, nor totally unstructured and free (Kvale 1996, 30). Thus, qualitative knowledge and information, which is relevant to the current research, could be appropriately collected in the semi-structured individual interview. In the current research, four semi-structured individual interviews were conducted when only one parent of a family could participate in the interview. A sequence of well-prepared themes, which emerge from the research purposes and questions, and the suggested questions from some participants were all covered in every semi-structured individual interview. Simultaneously, the sequence and forms of the interview themes and questions were always open to follow up the contents and sequence of the interviewee's answers and narratives, and to adapt to the process of the interview. (cf. Kvale 1996, 124)

Noticeably, conversations in a research interview are not entirely reciprocal interactions of two equal partners that usually happen in daily life. Instead, the definite asymmetry of power exists in conversations of a research interview. In other words, the interviewer defines the interview situation, introduces topics of the conversation, and guides the whole interview process through further questions for the interviewee. Therefore, the interviewer more or less dominates the course of the research interview. (Kvale 1996, 126) Hall and Hall (2004, 117) also emphasise more amply that the interviewer is required to be very flexible during the entire practical interview, in order to terminate the ongoing discussion in case the interview questions are answered excursively, to determine decisively when to follow up by probing questions on new meaningful issues raised by the interviewee, and to return to the themes which may be overlooked. The four semi-structured individual interviews in the current research were all conducted based on these above-mentioned requirements.

Throughout all of the interviews, the researcher actively listened to narratives and answers of every interviewee. Active listening requires the ability and skills of the interviewer to listen to the interviewee actively in the interview, and it is perceived by Kvale (1996, 132) as more important than the particular mastery of questioning techniques. Moreover, in the current research, the researcher also listened to the interviewee expressing and discussing without the researcher's subjective prejudice and presuppositions borne in mind during the interview.

#### 6.2.2 Focus groups

The other qualitative data-collecting method in the current research is focus groups, which

were implemented when both parents of a family together participated in the interview. Two focus group interviews were conducted in the current research. Hall and Hall (2004, 121) point out that focus groups are a development of group interviews and were originally implemented in market research in which the participants' shared experience was focused in the way of open discussions. Nowadays, social researchers have also been utilising focus groups to estimate opinions of communities of interest, and topics in which group meanings and norms are of great importance.

Morgan (1998, 1) defines that as a sort of group interviews, focus groups are interviews in which a small group discusses a predetermined set of topics raised by the interviewer, and which are simultaneously guided by a moderator whose task could be undertaken by the interviewer as well. In focus groups, the expressions and narratives generated by the interactions of all participants are the essential data to be collected. Besides, communication in focus groups continually progresses between the moderator and the participant and also among the participants themselves. Thus like in the semi-structured individual interview, active listening to and learning from different participants are still very crucial for the researcher during the focus group interview process. (cf. Morgan 1998, 1 & 9)

Hall and Hall (2004, 121) emphasise the merits of the focus groups as a form of qualitative interview that an individual participant could be able to express her or his own views and attitudes without being threatened, and such views and attitudes could be immediately examined by other participants in the same group around a clear focus. Although some inconsistencies of different participants' opinions and attitudes, which seldom appear in an individual interview, might usually occur in the focus group interview, the researcher could actually acquire more realistic accounts of the participants' thoughts at the end of the focus group discussion. Because the participants in the group are often forced to argue with each other, challenge one another's opinions, reflect and modify their own ideas during the process of the focus group interview. (cf. Hall & Hall 2004, 121-122)

Hall and Hall (2004, 121) and Morgan (1998, 1) all point out that the typical and mostly recommended number of the participants in a focus group interview is six to eight, but the amount of the participants in one group could also be fewer. On one hand, the focus group size should be large enough to generate various voices from every participant, and on the other hand, the group size should not be excessive that may leave some participants silent in the interview. In addition, inviting the participants from similar backgrounds could magnify the effect of the discussion in a focus group. (Hall & Hall 2004, 121-122) Due to the specific circumstances of this current research, the number of participants in each focus group interview was two, namely the couple from a Chinese family.

Holstein and Gubrium (1995, 67, 70 & 72) emphasise the advantage of the inclusion of a spouse as a significant other to help the interviewee mould and expand the narrative horizons and the stock of knowledge created in the interview. In each of the two focus group interviews in the current research, the participating couple together constructed the conversations with the researcher, reminded each other about the forgotten and ignored issues, and amended the mistaken details of their experience. Therefore, the abundance and accuracy of the collected data benefited from these two focus group interviews.

### 6.2.3 Audiotape recording and notes taking

All of the six interviews in the current research were audiotape recorded. During the interviews, the conversations were recorded after obtaining the participants' formal consent, and at the same time the researcher concentrated on the topics and the dynamics of the interviews (Kvale 1996, 160). Kvale (1996, 129) also emphasises that the lived interview situation in which the interviewee's verbal statements are accompanied with her or his voices and facial and bodily expressions could offer a richer access to the interviewee's meanings than the later transcripts will provide. The Interviewee's words, tone, pauses and so forth can be recorded in the tape as a permanent document, which could be listened and checked after the interview (Kvale 1996, 160).

However for the sake of avoiding the decontextualisation of the interview, the important visual information from the interviewee should be taken onto the notes as well during the interview or recorded into the tape by the interviewer after the interview to assist further tape transcription and data analysis (Kvale 1996, 160-161). In the current research, the interviewees' crucial visual information in the interviews and the practical issues needed to remind and explain in later research stages were written down onto the notes by the researcher during and after the interviews.

### 6.3 Brief summary of collected data

The research data gathered from six interviews and nine questionnaires was abundant. The originally planned duration of every interview anticipated by the researcher was around thirty minutes, but the actual duration of each of six interviews varied from forty minutes to two hours, and the total length of all interviews was around seven hours. It was due to the keen willingness of the interviewees to narrate, complain and discuss with the researcher about the topics on Finnish day care with which they were concerned. Therefore since the first interview, the researcher determined that she would provide a chance for interviewees to speak out their narration and share their experience, which was relevant to the research purposes and questions. Furthermore, she as the interviewer would not arbitrarily punctuate the interviewees' thinking in their interviews. Consequently, comprehensive and profound data was gathered from the interview conversations, and it was used as main data in the research analysis.

As to the nine questionnaires, excepting one single-choice sub-question in one questionnaire was not answered, all questionnaires, that each was eight pages long in Chinese language version and composed by fifty-two questions, were completely and clearly answered. Detailed information was collected from the questionnaire answers, and it was utilised as accessorial and verifying data in the research analysis.

## 7 Methods of data analysis

The primary method of data analysis selected in the current research is content analysis, which coded and categorised the qualitative data collected from the interviews. Before conducting content analysis, the audiotape-recorded interviews were fully transcribed into computer-readable texts. Besides, the quantitative data gathered from the assistant questionnaires were counted and summed up as well, in order to provide detailed information to complement and verify the qualitative data analysed with content analysis in the current research.

### 7.1 Transcription

Silverman (2005, 163-164) emphasises that the preparation of a transcript from an audiotape is already the work pertaining to data analysis. Although discourses of different interviewees could be possibly remembered and summarised by the interviewer, such recollections of conversations merely from the interviewer's memory were not sufficient and thus appropriate for the current research. Therefore, the transcriptions of actual occurrences in their actual sequence recorded in audiotapes and the corresponding notes taken in the six interviews were used in further data analysis. The authentic and detailed aspects of the interviewee's social life could be focused by analysing the recorded and transcribed conversations in the interview. (*cf.* Silverman 2005, 183)

The task of transcription of every interview was completed as soon as possible after the interview was tape-recorded when the researcher's memory of the interview was still fresh and detailed. In the current research, the conversations in all of the interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese, which was the mother tongue of both the participants and the researcher. Therefore first of all, the seven-hour-long audiotapes were carefully and repeatedly listened by the researcher, and around 140-page-long full transcriptions were typed out into computer-readable texts in Mandarin Chinese for the further use of data analysing. In line with the prerequisite of ensuring consistency and accuracy in transcription, the audiotapes were frequently replayed, and some slight editing was desirably implemented to improve the transcriptions, but correction and interpretation of the data were not conducted in the stage of transcribing. (*cf.* Silverman 2005, 184)

As important research activities, the production and use of the transcripts could also reveal some crucial and recurring features of the contents, dynamics and arrangements of the conversations that may be ignored by the researcher during the interview processes. (Silverman 2005, 184) In the current research, the researcher benefited greatly from the implementations of audiotape recording and transcribing, especially in two focus group interviews in which usually more than one person spoke simultaneously. Kvale (1996, 182) warns that the interviews are living conversations; therefore the transcripts were utilised as tools and means for the explanations of the discourses in the interviews, but not as the subject matter of the current research.

## 7.2 Data analysis process and content analysis

In the current research, content analysis was selected as the essential and the most appropriate method for analysing the qualitative data collected from the interviews. As a research technique, content analysis is defined as to make replicable and valid inferences from the collected data to their context (Bell 1999, 111). Denscombe (2003, 221) states that content analysis is a method that can aid the researcher to analyse the content of documents. The advantage of content analysis is that some deep-rooted clues, unintentional messages, and implied aspects of the data could possibly be disclosed in the analysing process. Content analysis is a very proper method of data analysis in handling straightforward, obvious and simple communications in practice. In the current research, the data in the transcribed texts from the interviews was analysed in terms of the method of content analysis. Ordinarily, content analysis abides by a logical and comparatively straightforward procedure, and the process of content analysis conducted in the current research was shown as follows. (*cf.* Denscombe 2003, 221-222)

Above all, the transcribed texts were read through by the researcher to discover significant expressions and ideas about which the Chinese participants concerned. The particular words and phrases, which directly appeared or represented the occurrence of these significant ideas and expressions found out in the transcripts, were then determined by the researcher to be the small component units for further analysis. The researcher's choice of such words and phrases was based on the reviewed literature and existing theories, the specific words and phrases employed and emphasised by the interviewees, and the researcher's own reflections during the phases of data collection and data analysis. (*cf.* Denscombe 2003, 221 & 271)

Subsequently, the selected words and phrases were analytically and systematically coded by a series of ordinal numbers, and the transcribed texts were segmented according to these codes. Afterwards the codes, which represented the corresponding words or phrases and thus the ideas and expressions in the interviews, were categorised in the light of their properties and dimensions and their relationships among one another. Finally based on commonalities, differences and interconnections among the established categories, seven important main themes were generated and composed the first categorising level of the current research, and the second-level and third-level categories were also made up under each relevant theme (see Appendix 4). In addition during the phase of data analysis, the early coding and categories were consistently revised by rechecking the notes taken in the interviews, reflecting the transcribed data more deeply, and discovering some implicit messages and meanings in the data and their relationships with other codes and categories. (*cf.* Denscombe 2003, 221-222 & 271-272)

Because of the unexpected circumstances during the interviews that the Chinese parents were very eager to reveal their problems, complaints and suggestions concerning Finnish day care, much of the transcribed data was related to such extra issues, which were not initially planned in research purposes and questions. However, these above-mentioned extra concerns of the Chinese parents were perceived by the researcher as an added bonus for the current research, because they genuinely presented the practical and primary attentions that the Chinese parents paid about Finnish day care. Therefore, these extra concerns were coded, categorised and analysed together with the data related to the preset research purposes and questions, and they were displayed under the main themes of the results part in the thesis report.

In particular, the circumstances of language using in data analysis deserved a mention here. In the current research, the transcribed data was totally written in mandarin Chinese, and the researcher also analysed the data in Mandarin Chinese. As basic linguistic components, usually more than one synonymous Chinese word and/or phrase were utilised as one unit for further coding and categories, because different participants had their personal preferences in using specific words and phrases in the interviews. The synonymous Chinese words and phrases, which explained exactly the same matter, were coded with one ordinal number, and thus translated into one precise English word or phrase in the thesis report. (See the example in Appendix 5)

Moreover, the results part of the thesis report was written in English on the basis of the researcher's analysis in Mandarin Chinese. Some of the representative discourses in the interviews were also directly translated into English and used as quotations displayed in the results part, so that the authentic voices of these Chinese parents as members of a minority group in Finland could be heard by this opportunity. Like these parents emphasised in their interviews, they rarely had such chance to speak out their concerns, problems, complaints and suggestions in daily life in Finland. In addition in the results part, showing such quotations from the Chinese parents to which the researcher's analysis corresponded could also enhance the trustworthiness of the entire thesis research.

In summary, the seven main themes emerged from the data analysis are shown as follows: starting day care; a child's language learning; communication and cooperation; cultures, religions and festivals; playing, learning and friends; child protection and legislation of Finland; usefulness, adequacy and suggestions for day care start folder. In accordance with the above-mentioned main themes and their second-level and third-level categories, which were essentially constitutive of the main themes, the results part of the thesis was structured in the subsequent chapter.

## 8 Results

In the interviews, the Chinese participants concerned about the practical issues of many aspects on Finnish day care. Besides providing their views related to the planned research purposes and questions, the Chinese parents also spontaneously revealed many of their problems, complaints and suggestions for Finnish day care, which were regarded by the researcher as very valuable data for the research. Therefore, such above-mentioned qualitative data was comprehensively collected and analysed, and the generated results are displayed here. Moreover, the results are presented based on the themes and categories emerged from content analysis. The following seven segments of the contents correspond respectively with the seven main themes generated from data analysis, and the sub-titles within each segment were organised in terms of the relevant second-level categories, which are included in each main theme.

In addition, the detailed and assistant quantitative data was collected from the questionnaires and it was further counted and summed up for the sake of complementing and verifying the qualitative data analysed with content analysis. As a result, the quantitative data showed its great consistency with the analysed qualitative data, and thus to some extent verified the results of the current research.

### 8.1 Starting day care

#### 8.1.1 Applying for day-care centre

Seven parents in five interviews pointed out that it was not easy for them to apply for and obtain a place in a municipal day-care centre in Espoo. Parents usually had to wait for several months to get their child into a municipal day-care centre. Furthermore, it was more difficult for the child to enter a particular municipal day-care centre, which the parents considered as the most desirable one for their child or which was the closest one from home.

Parents in two families mentioned in the interviews that their criterion for choosing day-care centre was the short distance between their home and day-care centre. Besides, one parent emphasised that the day-care centre, which consisted of several small groups, was more suitable for a foreign child whose Finnish language was not outstanding. The parent believed that the group teachers were probably able to pay more attention to practise Finnish language with this specific child among a small group of children than among a large group of children. In addition, grouping arrangement, hygiene condition, tidiness and order of a day-care centre were other important criteria as well that some parents adopted in choosing day-care centre.

Parent 8 (P.8.): Because, at that time, actually, you know, getting the place in this public day-care centre in Espoo was not quite an easy affair, waiting in the queue for about several months.

(Interview 6/I.6.)

P.6.: I feel that applying for day-care centre is quite difficult, especially if you want, particularly want the kid to enter which day-care centre, that is more difficult.

.....

P.6.: At that time when I applied, I, when applying, basically you couldn't specifically limit to which day-care centre, you could only say that you applied for a day-care centre, it randomly assigned your kid to which day-care centre. But if you requested to designate in this day-care centre, well then you must prepare longer time to be able to get (the place in this day-care centre).

.....

Researcher (R.): As to the transfer to XXX day-care centre, this applying process, (was it) difficult, or a little easier?

P.6.: Not easy, because in general circumstances, they are not willing to let parents choose day-care centre, but I feel there are still some differences among day-care centres.

(I.4.)

Two families spontaneously emphasised in the beginning of their interviews that it was difficult for foreign parents to obtain enough information about the process of applying for day-care centre in Espoo. These parents could merely find out by themselves some limited information in English language on the website of the City of Espoo, because they could hardly understand the rest of abundant information about Espoo's day-care centres on the same website that was written in Finnish language.

The parents were lacking in mediums for foreign families to acquire related information, such as how to obtain day-care services, which municipal department or office they should contact, how to go through the entire applying process, how to fill the application form, which specific day-care centres belonged to the residential area where the family lived, which specific day-care centres temporarily had vacant place to accept their child, what the differences were between public and private day-care centres in Finland, how to enter a bilingual or an international day-care centre, and so forth. In addition, one parent mentioned that he hoped such mediums could be established to reduce foreign parents' difficulties in obtaining information about the process of applying for day-care centre in Espoo.

#### 8.1.2 Adapting process to day-care life

Accordingly in the interviews, parents in five families considered that the information about the adapting process was certainly important for them to know. All six families had already experienced the adapting process when the children attended day-care centre for the first time. However, one parent was not satisfied with the staff member's arrangement for her child and herself during the first-week life in the new day-care centre. The parent considered that it was not very necessary for her child, who had been in another day-care centre since one year old until two and half years old, to be again accompanied during the entire first week in the new and current day-care centre:

P.3.: I actually I felt there was no that much necessity. Moreover accompanying for how long, She (the staff member) didn't either, not very explicit, she only told me, oh today

you stayed here for one hour then you could go home, you tomorrow once more stay for two hours, three hours, so I feel if I could be told about this beforehand, I could also arrange a bit of time, what I didn't expect was, I remembered at that time I didn't expect it was like this, (it) needed such a long time, besides I didn't feel it was necessary, actually, every child was different as well.

(I.2.)

One parent in another interview also mentioned the almost same arrangement for her child and herself when starting in a new day-care centre. This parent considered that her child was already familiar with Finnish day-care life and did not need to be accompanied anymore at the beginning in the new day-care centre. However, the parent still showed much understanding to the staff members' decision and thus cooperated well with day-care staff in her child's adapting process:

P.1.: Moreover she (the child) at the beginning during the first week we all accompanied a bit, they because that group was brand new, those two teachers said that they were under a lot of stress, hoped that parents could accompany (their child) during the first week.

(I.1.)

Furthermore, the parent recalled in the interview that in practice when she accompanied her two and half years old child during the first-week in the new day-care centre, her child only stayed alone and spoke Chinese language with his mother. The child neither got along with any other child, nor spoke Finnish language when his mother was present in the day-care centre. Therefore, the staff member at the beginning misunderstood that the child was not yet proficient in Finnish language, until the child started to speak Finnish after his mother had left the day-care centre. One parent in another interview also pointed out that her child primarily demanded for the mother's close accompanying rather than playing with other children and day-care staff during the first week in the day-care centre.

P.3.: When I accompanied, the child he only stayed with me, actually he didn't get along with other children, he didn't speak Finnish either, he at the beginning he didn't speak either, didn't speak but waited for me, afterwards the staff member also considered him, he at the beginning didn't speak, namely (the staff member thought) oh he didn't speak, then the staff member didn't speak (with the child) either.

.....

P.3.: That staff member saw (the circumstances), oh no problem, no problem, (the staff member) said that he (the child) could speak Finnish, but before that he didn't speak, because I was at the side, he followed me all along, the child felt comfortable to talk with me, he only spoke Chinese with me.

(I.2.)

The parent also expressed her opinions in the interview that although the parents' first-week accompaniment with their child was very important, in reality the child was always only staying

with parents in the day-care centre. Therefore, the child's second week, when the child must stay in the day-care centre without any accompaniment of the parents, should be more crucial in the child's adapting process than the first week. This parent believed that the child's commencement of individual adaptation to the new life in day-care centre authentically started since the second week, thus the second week was more challenging to the child as well as the parents:

P.8.: Hum, what more important should be the following, hum, for example, hum, the first week is that you accompany him (the child), every day, gradually prolonging the time, the second week is actually, you put him there, to gradually prolong the time, probably this second week relatively speaking, is more important than the first week, it is to let himself gradually longer and longer time to individually adapt to this environment, so for him, more challenging. The second week is more important, therefore this communication with the teachers during the second week, is thus, much more important.

(I.6.)

In addition, four parents in four interviews emphasised that the day-care staff played a very crucial role in their children's adapting process. The progress of their children's adaptation to the day-care centre life was influenced by the warmth and temper of staff members, and the trust built between children and their staff members. It was difficult for a child, especially for a young child, to adapt to day-care life if the child had to often transfer to new day-care centre or new group even in the same day-care centre, or if a large part of staff members in the day-care centre changed frequently.

## 8.2 A child's language learning

All six Chinese families took both Chinese and Finnish language of their children into account. Mandarin Chinese language was the mother tongue and Finnish language was a second language of the children of these Chinese families.

### 8.2.1 A child's Chinese language learning

Chinese language environment was more or less limited in Finland compared with China where the parents came, thus their children's Chinese language learning was potentially challenged, and the parents had to take on more responsibility for their children's Chinese language learning. All six Chinese families consciously taught their children Mandarin Chinese language at home. Four parents in three interviews mentioned that their children's Chinese language was good, but another two parents in two interviews showed their worries about their children's Chinese language development.

P.1.: Because at home, we forbid her (the child) speaking Finnish, generally want let her only speak Chinese at home, because as time goes by, (always speaking Finnish at home will be) equivalent to. Many of our friends' kids are like that, when parents are not at home, they kids communicate basically all in Finnish, gradually, gradually forget the mother tongue completely, forget Chinese completely. We do not expect either that she will develop to that instance, at least Finnish and Chinese can be concomitant, so now we

let her only speak Chinese at home.

.....

P.2.: Chinese, Finnish, all in all we do not want to give up either of them.

(I.1.)

### 8.2.2 A child's Finnish language learning

Three parents in two interviews had already known that their children were regularly attending Finnish as a second language lesson in day-care centre. In addition, one of these parents said that at least she thought this Finnish language lesson was supposed to be useful for her child. These three parents also pointed out that their children were capable to learn and communicate in Finnish language with adults and other children in daily life of day-care centre, however these children's Finnish vocabulary could not yet reach the wideness of native Finnish children of the same age. The older the child grew, the more distinct this Finnish vocabulary gap revealed. The parents attributed this gap to the different domestic language environments, in which their children were immersed in Mandarin Chinese language, while in which native Finnish children still communicated with their family members with Finnish language.

P.3.: This I think generally their (Finnish day care's) primary principles, are almost the same in the entire Finland, that is to say you do not need to teach him (the child) Finnish language at home, let him learn in the day-care centre. But in reality, I just recently found out that, ah he originally, he has been performing all along as not good at words, his structure, there is no any problem in this integral structure of his language, he can all, but his words are awfully lacking, he will

R.: The vocabulary is not very wide?

P.3.: Yeah yeah yeah, vocabulary, obviously he does not know how to say, he, firstly he reacts in Chinese, he once knows this is ah, that is ah, as well as this, but he does not know how to say in Finnish, once he does not know how to say in Finnish, he stops speaking.

(I.2.)

However, not all of the other interviewees agreed with these above-mentioned parents. Another three parents in three interviews stated that there was no any Finnish language lesson for multicultural children in their children's day-care centres. Moreover, two of these parents further pointed out that there was neither necessity nor effect to deliberately arrange such a Finnish language lesson for their children. They believed that their children were able to master Finnish language in the natural and normal life in day-care centre, in which their children could play happily with their Finnish friends, listen to the staff's speaking, and learn Finnish language in a spontaneous process. They considered that it was the best approach for their children to learn Finnish language.

P.4.: I feel the best way, because he (the child) now has, the kid has, in the day-care centre has Finnish children, (who) are his friends, in this way they basically play together every

day, he could learn many words from the kids.

.....

P.4.: Especially the effect (of Finnish language teaching) is supposed to be even worse (if) a teacher with whom he (the child) is not familiar comes to teach. So we and XXX day-care centre's teacher all considered that it would be best in this sort of current circumstances he could have, you should, you shouldn't HELP him, (but) you should SUPPORT him, that is to say providing him this condition, let him in this kind of good environment could, he masters (Finnish language) naturally, but if you intentionally teach him, on the contrary (it would be) unlikely to have any effect either.

(I.3.)

In despite of which opinion the parents held towards Finnish language learning in day-care centre, seven interviewees of five Chinese families were much concerned about their children's Finnish language learning in day-care centre, excepting one parent whose child mastered Finnish language very well in the day-care centre. Four parents in three interviews emphasised that they already suggested the educators of day-care centre that they hoped their children's Finnish language could be reinforced. One parent expressed her thought of the importance of her child's Finnish language learning in day-care centre as follows:

P.8.: Of course, of course very important, because, for us, if (we) will continue living here, Finnish, is a very important, condition of existence, especially for him (the child), he must study in school (in the future), hum.

(I.6.)

### 8.3 Communication and cooperation

#### 8.3.1 Language between Chinese parents and Finnish day-care staff

In the interviews, the parents in two families stated that they used both English and Finnish language when communicating with day-care staff, and the other four families mentioned that they mainly used English in day-care services. Two parents in two interviews mentioned that so far they could hardly speak Finnish with day-care staff, thus they were satisfied with the specific day-care staff members who communicated with them daily in English. One of these two parents considered it was unnecessary to require day-care staff to master complicated English for daily communication with foreign parents, nor the parent herself could use complicated English. However, simple and clear communication in plain English between parents and day-care staff was of crucial importance. Besides, this parent also emphasised that day-care staff members' initiative to speak English was vital in such communication:

P.8.: And then, now I am in the public day-care centre, I feel quite lucky, that XXX's (the child's) teacher is very young, so she, that is to say, even if there are something which cannot be expressed, like we two possibly use body language or very, there are some ways could communicate, I feel this point is, why now I am more satisfied with this public day-care centre, one of the reasons.

(I.6.)

The parents who basically depended on English in daily communication pointed out that they could hardly obtain from day-care staff enough materials and information in English about Finnish day care and daily arrangement of day-care centre, and it was difficult in reality for them to search for necessary information of these above-mentioned aspects outside day-care centre. These parents expected that day-care centre could provide many more English materials, which were already available from the municipal government of Espoo, for parents who were not yet able to comprehend Finnish language. Two of these parents also hoped that more of Finnish materials could be translated into English in future. One of these parents also emphasised that information and materials in English were definitely very helpful to parents whose children newly started their day-care life and who were not yet familiar with Finnish day care system and daily activities in day-care centre.

P.3.: Having English information, I feel, I hope it in every aspect all has some information in English, as long as it has foreigners, because it seems that the municipal government has these materials of this aspect (Finnish day care), but seems not delivered to every day-care centre.

.....

P.3.: I feel that information in English should be used as much as possible, that is to say (the day-care centre) could give us, could provide foreign parents an English (material), that would be very good, because, also, also reduce many unnecessary troubles, because at the time when you didn't know, you were like at your wits' end, didn't know what the matter was, after you have this material, after you read you get the situation measured out.

(I.2.)

Four families in the interviews mentioned they had experience that Chinese-Finnish interpreter was invited to their formal conversations with day-care staff members. Before the interview, one parent in another family had not known the interpreter services, although the couple had already had one formal conversation in the day-care centre. This parent considered in the interview that it would be very necessary to invite an interpreter into such conversation, if day-care staff member's English language proficiency was not very good. One parent who already had several formal conversations with the assistance of Chinese-Finnish interpreter also had the same opinion:

P.4.: I feel generally it is still necessary to invite an (interpreter), like this you won't have too many language restrictions, barriers. We now, sometimes this, afterwards possibly if some day-care teacher whose English is very good, we sometimes may not invite (an interpreter), but at least we at that time in the day-care centre, that teacher didn't seem to be very good (at English).

(I.3.)

### 8.3.2 Communication and cooperation

In the interviews, parents discussed issues of various aspects concerning communication with Finnish day-care staff. One parent had personal experience of effective communication and cooperation with a day-care staff member who had taken care of her child in a previous day-care centre. The parent mentioned in the interview that the staff member was supportive, took initiative to guide her and spoke very good English. The parent further emphasised that communication was of the great importance particularly between parents and day-care staff members. Although experience and knowledge of a staff member was important as well, good communication was considered as the most helpful issue for this parent to solve various detailed problems, which frequently appeared in day-care centre's daily life.

However, this parent complained in the interview that staff of the current day-care centre did not authentically consult with her when making decisions on her child, such as grouping and language arrangements, and sometimes the parent was merely informed about the day-care centre's arrangements for her child. Moreover, this parent also considered the justification that day-care staff provided to explain their decisions was sometimes not actually persuasive enough. It was usually too late for the parent to negotiate with day-care staff to improve upon the existing arrangements, which the parent discovered as inappropriate and disadvantageous for her child's growth and development in the day-care centre.

P.3.: Don't know they (day-care staff) were, so I feel this day-care centre, my greatest problem is, they made decisions, decided like this, notified you, seemed to ask you whether you agreed, she (the staff member) didn't really listen to your opinion either, didn't explain why she would do so. This I feel is, this is I up to now, the issue that I still feel relatively confused. I feel if the day-care centre does in this way, I feel not comfortable.

(I.2.)

One parent from another family had also experienced limited and non-spontaneous communication with day-care staff in formal conversations as well as in daily casual talks in a previous day-care centre. The parent thought that communication between foreigners and Finns were essentially much more difficult than communication simply between Finns due to language barriers and cultural differences. Such communication might probably become tougher in circumstances of problem solving.

The parents in two interviews mentioned that some characters of Chinese parents should be considered in communication with Finnish day-care staff. The parents in one family emphasised that Chinese parents were generally very tolerant and not used to issue their opinions or complain immediately after the problem appeared. Moreover, Chinese parents would rather like to observe the problematic circumstance for quite a while, before they could not anymore able to tolerate the troublesome situation and finally put their opinions forward in front of day-care staff.

P.1.: I feel we Chinese people generally are all like this, namely first observing for a while, when really couldn't bear anymore I bring forward my opinion. At that moment I was even

quite angry, but I wanted to observe for a longer while.

(I.1.)

One parent in another family pointed out that one common weakness of both Finns and Chinese people, namely shyness and thus rarely giving many expressions, obstructed communication between Chinese parents and Finnish day-care staff. Besides, this parent considered language barriers further worsened such communication. Therefore, the parent believed that for Chinese parents written materials, such as a material of introduction of Finnish day care, was relatively easier and convenient to comprehend than merely verbal communication. Furthermore, this parent considered when a child entered day-care centre for the first time, day-care staff should clearly communicate with the parents about distinct features of Finnish day care to prevent parents from cultural shocks in the future:

P.8.: But I think, if it (communication) becomes, a, hum, how to say, having a, namely like, like this (the day care start folder), this written introduction for entering day-care centre, having a, genuinely having a written material, probably everybody reads relatively handily as well, moreover it becomes a, hum, a process, I tell you (the differences) as soon as you come in (the day-care centre), so you afterwards these issues, automatically you already have a subconsciousness, then gradually (the differences become) very easy to accept, right?

(I.6.)

The parents in three interviews emphasised that they were very eager to receive from day-care staff more detailed feedback about their children's daily performance in day-care centre. A child spent the whole day in day-care centre, but parents at work could barely know much information about their child there. These parents were not very satisfied with the only and too generalised and simplified daily feedback that they could receive from day-care staff about their children, like "Today was a good day to your child." and "Your child spent a good day today." for example. These parents would like to be aware in more detail about what their children usually did during a long day and how well the children spent a whole day in day-care centre, especially during the time when a child started the day-care life and when a child was too young to talk.

R.: Well then do you think if the teacher at this point, could be able to provide you more feedback about the kid every day, will it be better?

P.6.: That is for certain. That is for certain, that is what parents would like to hear most. That is he (the child) in the day-care centre, with which children (he) plays together, what (he) likes to play, what (he) likes to eat, his in the day-care centre, performance in every respect, happy or unhappy, whether (he) fights or not, and so forth.

(I.4.)

P.8.: Hum, afterwards that is every evening, when I go to take him (the child), the teacher and I, hum, always communicate with each other, I feel, this is one point that I feel very

lucky, that is, as I told you that teacher is very young, she is quite willing to, inform me about XXX's (the child's) condition of this whole day, this, I am very glad, hum, I am very willing to listen to her telling the more the better.

(I.6.)

Furthermore, the parents of two families suggested that day-care centre could regularly organise some open days for parents, so that parents in person could accompany their children to spend a half or one day time in day-care centre. In accordance with the views of these parents, if possible they would very much like to participate in day-care centre's open day to acquaint themselves with their children's real and detailed daily life in day-care centre.

P.4.: Besides, I don't know, I personally would very much like to for example, have, hum, for example, have that a half day or a day, I stay in the day-care centre, I could probably know the kids, what those kids do in the day-care centre, because I, I just accompanied him (the child) for two or three days at the beginning (of the day-care life).

.....

P.4.: But I, we, for me, I really don't know very much either about this, in what status concretely he (the child) plays every day, hum, actually (it) is, the status.

(I.3.)

The parents in two interviews mentioned that they were not authentically familiar with the issue of cooperation between parents and day-care staff, and the parents in one of these interviews would like to receive more information from day-care staff about the cooperation. In addition, the parents in two families considered that information about such cooperation was certainly important for them to know. Besides, one parent pointed out that there had been not much cooperation between her and day-care staff so far, and she hoped that the cooperation could be improved and reinforced in the future.

## 8.4 Cultures, religions and festivals

### 8.4.1 Cultural differences

When discussing different cultures between China and Finland, the parents in three interviews emphasised that they were open-minded to respect and accept Finnish culture, and they hoped that their children could adapt to and integrate into Finnish culture as well, because their families had been living here in Finland. Four parents in three interviews mentioned that they personally and their children had not experienced misunderstanding, problem or inconvenience arising out of cultural differences in day-care centre. The parents in two of these interviews attributed such harmony between Chinese and Finnish cultures to their long-time living in Finland. The other family considered the above-mentioned harmony as the result of its effort to integrate into Finnish culture:

P.2.: Generally we always try to understand them (day-care staff), relatively speaking, not particularly, that is to say, to change their mind with Chinese people's thoughts, in general circumstances, we always consciously try to integrate into their thoughts, (it) seems so far

that (there) has been no serious problem.

(I.1.)

However, parents in the rest of three families pointed out that they more or less experienced some difficulties caused by cultural differences in day-care centre. One parent mentioned although she did not feel strongly about problems resulted from cultural differences, sometimes when she needed guidance in the day-care centre, day-care staff would not on their own initiative to take charge of such affairs. It was because day-care staff considered these affairs not as their responsibilities or tasks, and this kind of Finnish working style was distinctly different from the one in China, where day-care staff would be ready to help parents even out of staff's individual jobs. Another parent felt that a teacher, who previously took responsibility for caring his child, was sometimes dissatisfied with this parent due to inconsistencies in different educating styles between the teacher and the parents, and the inconsistencies were partially resulted from cultural differences.

The couple in the other family revealed in the interview much of their experience of cultural differences encountered in day-care centre. The distinct way of solving conflicts among children in day-care centre was this couple's major concern over cultural differences. These parents noticed that as long as the conflict was not too serious for children to solve by themselves, Finnish day-care staff generally did not interfere in children's own conflict solving process. However, day-care staff in China usually would like to immediately stop such conflict at the beginning:

P.8.: I feel (it) possibly is, actually Finns probably have a sort of concept, letting kids themselves solve conflicts, I also quite approve of this, but probably as parents, that is to say, we come from China, probably, culturally can't somewhat accept (this way). As in China, parents would possibly more like to interfere in this kind of circumstance of kids, let it, namely hold it back right at the beginning, prevent it from going on, but Finland, probably it is, in case kids already really clash, she (the teacher) probably goes to mediate, but before this, of course maybe this is good for the growth of kids, but, whether, between the teacher and parents, could communicate a bit beforehand?

(I.6.)

#### 8.4.2 Multicultural environment

The parents in three interviews were in favour of introducing more multicultural elements to municipal day-care centre, which in their opinions would be beneficial to the growth of their children whose family came from a foreign country and retained its distinct oriental culture in Finland. One of these parents suggested that day-care centre could organise some interesting cultural activities to vividly introduce the children to diverse cultures of the world, for example Chinese culture, Indian culture and some African cultures.

R.: How do you think if this XXX day-care centre could be able to introduce some, such as Chinese culture, or Indian culture, do you think if in this wise, (is it) good for kids?

P.6.: I feel (it) should be good, that is to say, a kid could probably feel kinder, a sort of

relationship between one's own native culture and Finnish culture, build a sort of relationship. I feel, now he (the child) is here, is already quite accustomed to accepting Finnish culture, as to Chinese culture he, basically is at a kind of status of ignorance.

(I.4.)

Another of these parents further emphasised that introducing various cultures by organising some cultural-featured activities in day-care centre was not merely an issue important to the children in day-care centre, but it was also crucial to the children's parents who were not yet acquainted with other cultures. As a Chinese, the parent believed that Chinese culture still needed to be acquainted by Finns. The parent also pointed out there was still no proper medium for Finns, nor Finns had such intentions, to get familiar with Chinese culture.

P.4.: Nowadays I feel that Finns namely, some of Finns gradually become interested in Chinese culture, including that is, China, now that New Year activity is started, information of various aspects, increases, but, surely there still are the majority of, I feel there are the majority of Finns, they, generally still have a sort of, this sort of emotion relatively inimical to openness. But there are various aspects of factors, that is to say including Chinese people themselves, or including Finns their own characters, but, but this, if you really for instance find some relatively good activities, they (Finns) are supposed to gladly accept (the activities), at least I, my personal feeling is like this, so this, needs some efforts, at least.

(I.3.)

When asked about their views on multicultural elements in municipal day-care centre, the parents in another two interviews considered it was not necessary to introduce other cultures than Finnish culture to children in day-care centre. These parents were satisfied that their children were educated in an almost pure Finnish cultural environment in day-care centre. One of these parents believed it was barely possible to introduce other cultures to day-care centre, and it was not always beneficial to simply bring other cultures in day-care centre. However, the other parent emphasised that the open attitude of day-care staff towards children with different cultural backgrounds, which parents would most like to see and feel comfortable, was of the importance in day-care life. This parent further mentioned that she would feel glad if the teacher had knowledge and interest in Chinese culture, but the parent did not see such instance happened in reality.

#### 8.4.3 Religions and festivals in Finland

The parents in two interviews considered that at the time when their family started living in Finland, they would like to receive more information about Finnish culture, religion and festivals from day-care staff:

P.6.: But when (a family) just came (to Finland), for instance what (food) was particularly eaten in some festivals, these issues I feel were still, what little kids often did before Christmas, how about when on birthday, it was also very nice to somewhat introduce (these issues) a bit.

(1.4.)

The parents in three interviews mentioned that they did not mind their children taking part in the religious activities arranged in day-care centre. The parents in another two interviews further showed their approvals of their children's participation in such religious activities. The parents in these five families commonly thought that day-care centre's religious activities were not just limited within the narrow confines of religion, and they rather considered these religious activities generally as some social activities, cultural activities and traditional festival celebrations in which the parents would like to let their children join.

P.8.: Hum, yea, the teacher once asked me, said that towards this kind of religious activity, whether or not, to participate, our answer was to participate, hum, that was not to say that let him (the child), afterwards believe in this, of course this will be his own choice, but I now just hope that he could, acquaint more, acquaint himself with this world a bit more, so, I hope he could participate much.

.....

P.8.: Moreover I hope that, day-care centre towards this kind of, traditional activity, in fact it is not, meaningly, until now, not merely restricted to religion itself, it in fact is communication among individuals, is a sort of social activity, I hope he could participate much, hum, he also find joys from it for certain.

(1.6.)

## 8.5 Playing, learning and friends

### 8.5.1 Learning by playing

The conceptions and methodology of early childhood education significantly differed between Finland and China, and all six families had already been aware of obvious differences between these two national early childhood education systems. Four parents in four interviews considered more or less positively about learning by playing as an educational method in Finnish day care. These parents consider it was most important and hence the best approach for their children to spontaneously, happily and healthily grow and learn in a natural and unrestricted environment. Two of these parents thought there was no need for their children to acquire as much knowledge at the day care stage as children usually did in China. Moreover, one parent was afraid that the growth and development of her child would certainly be oppressed, if her child was forced to learn like in China since this very young age, which would thus negatively affect many other aspect of the child including physical health.

P.4.: Above all, the most important is still that he (the child) in the day-care centre could have a normal, we all hope that he is like Finnish children, could have own friends in the day-care centre, he per se plays very happily, this is the most natural course of learning.

.....

P.4.: So I feel that Finnish, this kind of, relatively free learning, free environment, is

probably fine, that is to say certainly.

(I.3.)

P.7.: At least, let the kid develop a kind of capability of practical operating, views towards the world, I feel this is the most primary. Possibly, I feel their education is relatively reasonable, I feel western education is somewhat more reasonable than our Chinese education.

(I.5.)

However, two parents in the other two interviews showed their doubts about the method of learning by playing in early childhood education in Finland. They mainly wondered whether their children could genuinely learn something in such playful educational environment. These parents' doubts were generated from their observations on day-care staff in children's playing. Children usually play among themselves, and day-care staff generally did not participate in children's playing activities.

P.8.: Hum, actually I, what I want to know is, hum, hum, that is to say, whether or not teachers, play with them (children), you know? That is to say whether or not adults, participate in their (children's) playing process, you know playing with the participation of adults and, merely among children are not much alike, with the participation of adults, there might be some guiding, for example maybe, building blocks should be built to a house, or, building blocks should be taken to throw out.

.....

P.8.: That is to say how to play, how to play meaningfully. But I, I see that their teachers do not play with children.

(I.6.)

One of these parents considered that Finnish day care did not take as much count of education as Chinese day care, and the parent hoped that day-care staff could deliberately organise some games in which both children and day-care staff participated. One parent in another interview also expected that more intellectuality developing games could be organised for children in the day-care centre. Furthermore, the parents in two interviews suggested that the children should develop their own interests and potentials, for example arts and crafts, singing and so forth, with specific guidance and support of day-care staff members who ought to know the children well.

Besides, two parents in two families would like to know about Finnish children's average levels of educational and intellectual achievements in their children's ages and the educational standards of Finnish day care. One of these parents pointed out that she could be able to support her child in learning at home, if she got familiar with the educational standards of Finnish day care. The other parent was also very willing to know about her child's developmental level in comparison with other children of the same age:

P.3.: After entering this large day-care centre, I don't know, what level he (the child) should achieve, say, he also learns something at home, he learns some numbers, but I don't know what level they (day-care staff) have for these children that should be achieved, don't know. I don't know either our child, namely in comparison with other children, which aspect on earth he is strong on, which aspect is relatively weak, their day-care centre rarely tells about this, always says that every child is different.

.....

P.3.: But I feel, that is to say in which aspect on earth he represents very strong interest.

(I.2.)

### 8.5.2 Outdoor exercises

A parent considered in the interview that spending very long time daily outside was very nice and very healthy for children. Also in two interviews two parents regarded the information about outdoor exercises as important for them. Moreover, the parents in these two interviews thought it would be much better for their children that the day-care staff could bring children to participate more activities outside the courtyard of the day-care centre. The parents hoped that day-care centres could resume activities of going to theatre and watching puppet show and children's drama, even though the parents needed to pay extra fees for these activities. Otherwise parents had to organise these activities by themselves for their children anyway with limited performance information. It was boring for the child who could only play swings and sand in the courtyard, thus the child was reluctant to go to the day-care centre, which was considered as a signal to the parent.

P.6.: Actually I expect more that they (children) have some more outdoor activities, I feel that they have too many activities inside the day-care centre's courtyard, that is to say limited in a very small area, but activities that the day-care staff bring them out are relatively few. (It is) possibly because it also has reasons of the lack of this work force and various aspects.

R.: So what you expect is, it would be better if they have more activities that they can play outside the day-care centre?

P.6.: Yeah, Yeah. That (activity) which (children) use feet more and walk more, don't always stay in a small courtyard, the amount of exercise is not large enough namely.

(I.4.)

Three parents in another two interviews pointed out that the size of the day-care centre's courtyard was very important for children to play freely outdoors. In one interview, the parents thought that the courtyard size of the day-care centre was a bit too small for children to play unrestrictedly, especially during the wintertime, and there were no enough apparatuses in the courtyard either. The other parent was satisfied with the day-care centre's large courtyard where his child could play quite freely, and the parent believed that it was better for a child to play in a large courtyard in day-care centre than in a small one.

One parent in another interview told her worries about outdoor playing in day-care centre. When accompanying her child in the day-care centre, this parent observed that children in outdoor activities were not taken as much care as she supposed so. Generally in outdoor exercises, day-care staff stayed aside and did not participate in children's playing.

P.8.: Besides, when I was there (in the day-care centre), I found out, when playing outside, I probably speak relatively in detail,

R.: Hum, never mind.

P.8.: Kids were all snotty, nobody wiped (their noses). This was, I felt (it) was unacceptable to me, because, that, very dirty,

R.: Right.

P.8.: Kids might eat (snot) into mouths, as well the phenomenon of eating sand was absolutely, so pervasive. Kids were all eating sand, I thought that I was still here, my kid was taken care of like this, if I was not here, for certain, I felt possibly (it) would be even worse than this.

R.: That is to say when kids were snotty or ate sand, didn't the teachers look after (them)?

P.8.: No, moreover I also saw a situation that some older kids teased younger kids,

R.: The teachers didn't yet take control?

P.8.: No.

(I.6.)

Furthermore, the parents in two interviews concerned about the child's safety issue in outdoor activities in day-care centre. A couple in an interview mentioned that they would like to receive more information about day-care centre's safety control system, which they had not yet received from day-care staff so far. The couple in the other interview pointed out that vivacity was essentially the nature of a child, and their child was also relatively active. Therefore, this couple took their child's safety issue into great account, and they had already communicated with the teacher about this issue when their child newly entered the current day-care centre. The couple hoped that the teacher could pay close attention to their child's safety in outdoor activities:

P.1.: Besides I feel that the safety issue is also very important, because some accidents already occurred in Finnish day-care centres, that is to say kids were brought to day-care centre, but some kids ran out, the day-care centre didn't know. Because I put my kid there (in the day-care centre), most importantly you must at least guarantee the safety.

(I.1.)

### 8.5.3 Climate and clothing

The parents in three interviews considered that information about climate, seasons and clothing in Finland was very important for Chinese families who newly settled down in Finland and whose children just started their day-care life for the first time. As the result of distinct differences in climate and clothing between China and Finland, inexperienced Chinese parents commonly did not clearly know what clothes they should prepare for their children to wear outdoors in day-care centre. In addition, two of these parents as well mentioned that they usually took their children back home in rainy, windy or wintry weather before the children entered day-care centre, but the children must play much longer time outside in day-care centre. Therefore, when the children started their day-care life, these parents had no appropriate clothes, and did not know what clothes they should prepare for their children either.

These parents also pointed out that although the relevant information offered in the day care start folder was detailed and useful, they still hoped day-care staff could provide advice for inexperienced foreign parents on choosing appropriate clothes for their children. Based on her experience of choosing children's wear in Finland, one of these parents expected that day-care staff could guide inexperienced parents in person, introduce more detailed information about clothing, and emphasise key issues that parents might frequently ignore or with which parents were not familiar. Another parent suggested that she would like to obtain from day-care staff a clear list of requisite clothes, thus she could purchase clothes for her child easily and quickly with the complete list.

P.3.: Because for myself, I actually had never stayed that long time outside in winter, one hour, one and a half hour like this, never had, so I per se didn't even know what kind of clothes should be worn on earth, in such a cold weather, so she (the staff member) told me, I went to buy. She said this sort of shoes was needed, that sort was needed, she brought and showed those clothes of other children to me. I felt this was all very helpful, otherwise I didn't have experience, especially that (my) first kid, entered day-care centre for the first time, (I) didn't have experience.

(I.2.)

The parents in four interviews mentioned about wearing rain clothes in day-care centre's outdoor activities, to which parents should pay attention. Two of these parents pointed out one difference between day-care centres in China and in Finland. When it rained, children in Chinese day-care centres usually stopped outdoor activities and soon went back indoors, but in Finland children in a similar weather condition often continued their playing with their rain clothes on. One of these parents further expected that day-care staff could be more careful in outdoor exercises in rainy or snowy weather and they should change a child's wet clothes in time.

### 8.5.4 Friends

The parents in five interviews emphasised the importance of friends to their children in day care. According to their views, friends played a crucial role in their children's language

development and adapting process in daily life in day-care centre. One parent mentioned that his child became in a cheerful mood and played happily after the child made several friends in the day-care centre. Furthermore, the child's Finnish language proficiency progressed considerably, thanks to the mutual practices between the child and his friends, especially Finnish friends, who played and learned together every day in the day-care centre. Therefore, the parent thought it had been very important for his child to be arranged among Finnish children in the day-care group and to make friends with them.

A parent in another interview revealed the similar concern about the apparent effect of friends on her child's Finnish language learning. As the result of the grouping arrangement of the day-care centre, the child was grouped with other children who were not in the same age, thus the child could barely find any good friend of the same age. The parent considered this problem as a poor start for her child's life in that day-care centre as follows:

P.3.: The feeling that it was not easy for him (the child) to find a friend. In this wise I feel that he cannot find a friend, (then) his language cannot catch up with other children, (the problem that his language) cannot catch up with other children results in a vicious circle. So I recently I at present, I also have some apprehensions, some worries about this (problem).

.....

P.3.: But supposing that his Finnish language affects him making friends, what I am afraid is, and further affects his disposition, because supposing he always likes to play alone over there, so then won't he, become very, whether unsociable and eccentric or not?

(I.2.)

One parent in another interview emphasised that friends were of importance in her child's adapting process. As a newcomer, the child adapted quickly to the day-care life, because she made a very close friend, and they played nicely together in the day-care centre. When the child transferred to another day-care centre, where she did not have any friend in the beginning, her adapting process was slower, even though she was already familiar with the day-care system.

The parents in the same five interviews all mentioned that their children had gone through some periods of time when the child could hardly make any friend in the day-care centre. Those periods mostly appeared when the child started the day-care life in a new day-care centre, a new team or a new group, because the child needed to establish new associations with unfamiliar children around in a different environment. During the time without any friend, the child played alone and felt lonely. One parent attributed the phenomenon that sometimes other children did not play with her child to Finnish language and the exotic traits of her child:

P.7.: She (the child) herself sometimes also says, "They don't play with me.", but I also feel there is probably the reason of language. But, once more, generally there are completely all Finnish kids around us, she or he after all foreign kid accepts that there is a, namely Finns accept a foreign kid, she or he also need a, namely I feel that kids are supposed to, I feel that they are unlikely to possess any that kind of, this kind of narrow

concept, I don't feel so. Basically, previously my daughter was in this day-care centre, they all had their own good friends and so on.

(I.5.)

Another three parents in three interviews considered that the unsuitable grouping arrangement adversely affected the child to make friends, and further the child's language development and adapting process in day-care centre. The age difference between the child and other children in the same group directly resulted in the child's difficulty to enjoy same activities with other children, and thus to make friends with them. After the child was subsequently rearranged to an older group, he still had the difficulty to join in the new group in which the other children were already familiar with each other and all had their settled playmates. Therefore, the problem of making friends never vanished from the child, especially the timid child.

Two above-mentioned parents already suggested day-care teachers that they expected their children to make more friends and they hoped teachers could encourage their children to further join in other children's activities. One of these two parents also suggested that teachers should consciously encourage children to play with different group mates and teammates, not merely with their settled playmates. However, these two families' children were still lacking in friends in day-care centres, while children of the other three families already made several friends, by the time when the interviews were carried out.

## 8.6 Child protection and legislation of Finland

In all interviews, the interviewees answered that they were not familiar with the legislation on child protection and child welfare in Finland. None of the parents received any those kinds of information from day-care centres. Interviewees in five interviews considered that those pieces of information were very important for them to know, but they were bemused where to find out those pieces of information, especially in English language. Furthermore, all parents in six interviews agreed that it would be better if the day-care centre could provide them some basic and crucial information about the rights of a child in Finland and the legislation of Finland on child protection and child welfare.

R.: So how would you think, if the day-care centre could provide some information of this aspect, as to you, would it be some help?

P.9.: Hum, absolutely, absolutely it will be some help, absolutely will be, absolutely will be help, but, I think (if) the day-care centre provides these pieces of information, (it) certainly will not provide that comprehensively, it certainly, certainly has some pertinency, aiming at, according to something which is relevant to day care, probably which is relevant to some activities, Finns are namely, I think as being a parent, every parent absolutely will all, be concerned about these relevant, these welfare policies, including, some welfare of a child, and also these, some security of a child's rights and interests, so.

(I.6.)

Two parents in two interviews also considered that it was quite important to prepare a

guidance for foreign parents to easily access information about a child's entire developmental rights and interests and education in Finland, not merely restricted in a child's early childhood developmental stage. In addition, two parents in two interviews emphasised that they would like to know the lowest age limitation of a child who could legally be at home alone in Finland.

#### 8.7 Usefulness, adequacy and suggestions for day care start folder

The parents in five interviews evaluated the day care start folder as a very important English introduction of Finnish municipal day care, especially for foreign families that newly arrived in Finland and prepared their children to enter day-care centre for the first time. The parent in the other interview considered that the day care start folder was anyway useful, and the chapter on legislation in the folder was the most useful part for this parent personally. The parent further pointed out that the English language used in the folder was not good and thus needed to improve.

P.2.: Yes, I feel, for us, truly, these pieces of information are really very practical, very needed

P.1.: If (for families whose children) haven't entered day-care centre, (and) are willing to go to day-care centre, these pieces of information are very important.

(I.1.)

P.4.: This is very important, I, information

R.: Do you think this folder is, the information within is generally very important?

P.4.: Yes, but that is to say, there might be some differences between every day-care centre, but generally speaking, these pieces of information are still quite important, namely especially for those who newly entered day-care centre, like after I read, some of the issues were all which we had gradually found out afterwards, those should be.

(I.3.)

Correspondingly in the questionnaire, forty-six out of fifty-two questions were designed covering all main issues stated in contents of the day care start folder. As a result, the overwhelming majority of the answers from all of nine parents, concerning the usefulness of the information provided in the day care start folder, were "useful" and "very useful".

The parents in five interviews considered that the information provided in the day care start folder was comprehensive and basically adequate for families whose children newly entered day-care centre. In one parent's opinion, every parent was different, thus the emphases of individual parents might be diverse, besides the requirements of children might gradually vary as well after they entered day-care centre. One parent in another interview believed that foreign parents would probably also need the information, which Finnish parents usually needed.

P.8.: I feel that (the day care start folder) is written, fairly relatively comprehensive, hum. I need all of the information within this (day care start folder), hum.

(I.6.)

The parents in three interviews further contributed their suggestions concerning the improvement of the day care start folder. The parents in two of these interviews mentioned that they would like to obtain information about different types of day-care centres, such as public, private and bilingual day-care centres, which were available in the City of Espoo, thus they could choose the most suitable day-care centre for their children from more options. Moreover, the parent in the other interview emphasised that the introductory information on various types of day-care services, which for example included municipal, private, English, special day-care services and evening care services, should be added to the day care start folder. The reason was that it was very difficult for foreign parents to find the above-mentioned information, which was important for foreign families to arrange their lives in Finland:

P.7.: That is to say, could give, like this, that is to say after you knew, you are able to better choose your work, right? (You) are able to better arrange your future, (it) is quite good for the family. But I also feel these issues, not knowing, sometimes asking, you know Finns are not talkative, so he won't tell you. Only after you had encountered, you just got to know these issues.

(I.5.)

One parent of these interviews pointed out that the aspect of child education in Finnish day care was not embodied in the day care start folder. The parent would like to acquire more information on the general educational outline and curriculum of Finnish day care. This parent also emphasised that the entire day care start folder could possibly be rearranged into an open-and-shut listing form, which was convenient and practical for parents to read. Therefore, parents who usually did not have much time could at a glance obtain clear information from the day care start folder. Likewise, another parent of these interviews suggested that it would be best to mark the emphases and detailed notices more clearly in the day care start folder to remind parents.

Furthermore, one parent suggested in the interview that the municipal government of Espoo could establish an active and flexible channel to specifically help foreign parents to obtain information and materials on Finnish day-care services and further Finnish education system.

## 9 Discussion

### 9.1 Answers to research purposes and questions

Above all, the results of the current research are taken into consideration in accordance with the purposes of the research and the research questions.

#### 9.1.1 Problems and suggestions of Chinese parents

The problems, complaints and suggestions about which the Chinese participants concerned and revealed were dealt with as extra and worthy data collected and analysed in the current research. The pervasive influence of Chinese culture and concepts of Chinese early childhood education, which were distinctive from the ones in Finland, emerged frequently in the views of the Chinese parents. A large proportion of the Chinese parents' problems and difficulties were eventually caused by cultural difference. For instance in Chinese day-care centres, teachers commonly tell and show children how to play with a new toy and how to solve conflicts among the children. Moreover, Chinese day-care teachers often participate in children's play as a companion, and children also invite teachers as partners to join in their plays. (Liu & Elicker 2005, 134-135) However in Finnish day-care centres, staff members generally neither participate in children's play, nor guide children to solve their conflicts. Thus some of the Chinese parents doubts and worried about these different styles of Finnish day care.

In the light of the results, some of the Chinese parents experienced difficulties in day-care centre caused by cultural differences, which included the different educating styles and the different ways of solving conflicts among children. The conceptions, methods and styles of educating and caring children in Chinese day care, which these parents were used to in China, were distinct from and thus challenged by the ones in Finnish day care. Therefore, due to such differences between Chinese culture and Finnish culture, these Chinese parents encountered some difficulties in Finnish day-care centre. It would be best that day-care staff could communicate with Chinese parents about the main differences between Finnish and Chinese cultures, especially the differences in child education and care in day-care centre, in the beginning of their children's day-care life to reduce cultural shocks and difficulties that Chinese parents possibly experience in future.

On the basis of the results, the Chinese parents possessed two different sorts of views on learning by playing as an important educational method in Finnish day care. Some of the Chinese parents regarded that it was most important and hence the best approach for their children to grow and learn spontaneously, happily and healthily in a natural and unrestricted environment in day-care centre. Therefore, these parents supported the method of learning by playing implemented in Finnish day care. Nevertheless, the other Chinese parents doubted whether their children could authentically learn in a playful educational environment, which was based on the method of learning by playing in Finnish early childhood education. These parents mainly complained that day-care staff seldom participated in children's playing activities.

Besides, some of the Chinese parents suggested more intentionally organised children's games

in which day-care staff could participate and more intellectuality developing games for children in day-care centre. Some parents also proposed that their children's own interests and potentials should be developed with specific guidance and support of the day-care staff members who ought to know their children well. In addition, some of the parents would like to know about Finnish children's average levels of educational and intellectual achievements in their children's ages and Finnish day care's educational standards for better educating their children at home. The developmental level of a parent's own child in comparison with other children of the same age was also concerned by some Chinese parents.

The conceptions and methodology of early childhood education significantly differed between Finland and China. The education styles and the requirements of the Chinese parents, who were used to Chinese early childhood education, might be distinct from the arrangements of Finnish day-care staff. In contemporary China, children usually under much stress to achieve the high expectations set by their parents for bringing prosperity and glory to their families. (Chen-Hafteck and Xu 2008, 11) In her article on playing, Wenner emphasised that free and imaginative childhood play, which was opposite to games and structured activities, was the most essential activity type crucial for children's normal social, emotional and cognitive development. (cf. Wenner 2009, 22-24)

In free play among children, a child could develop curiosity, imagination and creativity, take initiative to attempt new activities and roles, practice social skills, communication and cooperation with other children, and improve persistence and negotiating abilities. Play is also beneficial to children's emotional health by supporting children working through stress and anxiety and coping with difficult situations. In addition, a child's learning experiences, such as language development, could be supported by playing as well. (cf. Wenner 2009, 24-29)

Thus, the researcher wondered whether providing more information about the method of learning by playing and its importance to Children's growth and development could possibly help the Chinese parents to deeper their understanding of Finnish early childhood education and thus reduce the divergence of the different education styles and requirements between Chinese parents and Finnish day-care staff. Otherwise, the researcher questioned whether Finnish day care should adapt the above-mentioned suggestions of the Chinese parents to improve their educational methodology, and provide information on Finnish children's average levels of educational and intellectual achievements and Finnish day care's educational standards to parents. In addition, it might still need further discussion on whether day-care staff should regularly communicate with parents about their children's developmental level, as well as in comparison with other children of the same age, for the sake of protecting children's rights.

Based on the results in the aspect of staring day care, Chinese parents indicated that it was not easy for them to apply for and obtain a place in a municipal day-care centre in Espoo, and that it was more difficult for their children to attend the particular municipal day-care centre, which the parents chose according to the criteria such as distance, group size, grouping arrangement, hygiene condition, tidiness and order of a day-care centre. Therefore, it would be advisable to facilitate the applying process for municipal day-care centres in Espoo and provide more alternatives for parents to choose the suitable day-care centre for their children.

Moreover, due to Chinese parents' demands for English information about the process of applying for day-care centre and their difficulties in lacking in mediums to obtain such information by themselves, some specific mediums could be established, or if possible some related and already existing mediums could be notified to Chinese parents to offer them more English information about the applying process. Furthermore, an active and flexible channel could possibly be established by the municipal government of the City of Espoo to specifically help foreign parents to obtain English information and materials on Finnish day-care services and Finnish education system.

According to the results, most of the Chinese parents informed that they did not know much information about Finnish religion, festivals, and religion teaching in Finnish day care, which was regarded as useful for them to know. Therefore, it would be advisable for day-care staff to provide more above-mentioned information to Chinese parents when their children start Finnish day care.

Moreover, most of the Chinese parents considered information about child protection, child welfare and related legislation in Finland as very useful and very important to acquire. However, the majority of the Chinese parents revealed that they did not know much about this issue, and they did not yet know where to obtain such above-mentioned information in English. It would be very helpful to the Chinese parents that day-care staff could provide some basic and important information about the rights of a child in Finland and the related Finnish legislation on child protection and child welfare. In addition, some of the Chinese parents also suggested that information about a child's entire developmental rights and interests and education in Finland should be offered to them as well. Although any kind of violence towards a child is completely illegal and forbidden in China as well, in real Chinese family life, parent's violence towards her or his child is still sometimes considered as an effective means of child disciplining and educating.

Most of the Chinese parents mainly spoke English in daily communication with day-care staff, thus staff members' initiative to speak English was crucial in opinions of Chinese parents. In addition, simple and clear communication in plain English between Chinese parents and day-care staff was of great importance. Consequently, it would be much convenient and beneficial for Chinese parents to acquire necessary information about their children and arrangements of day-care centre, if day-care staff took their initiative to communicate with Chinese parents in English in daily circumstances.

Furthermore, according to the results, the parents who basically depended on English in their daily communication revealed that it was difficult for them to obtain enough English materials and information about Finnish day care and daily arrangement of day-care centre from day-care staff, as well as from other places outside day-care centre. Accordingly, the day-care centre was expected by these Chinese parents to supply more English materials, which were already available from the municipal government of Espoo, or which needed to be translated from Finnish into English in future.

As regards the arrangement of parent's accompanying during the adapting process, Chinese parents revealed the problem that during the first week of the day-care life, their children rarely spoke Finnish language or got along with staff and other children when the parents were

present in the day-care centre. The children merely stayed alone and spoke Chinese language with their parents. Consequently, the second week of the child who must stay in the day-care centre without accompaniment of parents, was the genuine start of the child's individual adaptation to the day-care centre. In terms of the above-mentioned results, the arrangement of parent's accompanying in the beginning of the child's day-care life could probably be improved to authentically support the child to adapt to Finnish day care in a more reasonable way.

In addition, on the basis of the results, day-care staff was regarded by Chinese parents as a very important factor in their children's adapting process. Thus, the parents expected that day-care staff could treat their children warmly and patiently, and establish mutual trust with the children. It was also hoped that if necessary a child could be transferred to a new group of the day-care centre in time according to the child's growth and development. Besides, it would be much better to slow down the changing frequency of day-care staff members for adaptation of children, especially young children.

According to the results, all six Chinese families had been intentionally teaching their children at home Mandarin Chinese language, which was the children's mother tongue. However, some of Chinese parents worried about their children's Chinese language development, because the Chinese language environment in Finland was limited. In addition, based on the results, the majority of Chinese parents did not possess much information about supporting a child's mother tongue both in day-care centre and at home. Therefore, providing such related information to Chinese parents, as well as supporting their children's mother tongue both inside and outside day-care centre, would be very beneficial to the children who learnt Chinese language.

The views of Chinese parents towards Finnish language teaching in day-care centre were clearly split into two poles as shown in the results. The parents whose children had been regularly attending the lessons of Finnish as a second language in day-care centre did not hold negative opinions on this language lesson. In addition, these parents also recognised the Finnish vocabulary gap between their children and native Finnish children of the same age due to the different domestic language environments, although their children were quite capable to learn and communicate with adults and other children with Finnish language.

However, other Chinese parents whose children had no experience of attending Finnish as a second language lesson regarded such Finnish language lesson was neither necessary nor effective for their children's Finnish language development. Furthermore, these parents would rather believe that the best way for their children to master Finnish language was letting the children learn in the natural and normal day-care life, which was approved by some day-care staff as well.

Besides, in accordance with the results, all of the Chinese parents informed that they did not know much about Finnish as a second language teaching in day-care centre. Therefore, it would be interesting to find out the possible relations between the parents' views towards Finnish language lesson in day-care centre and their knowledge about such lesson. Did the child, who had never experienced the Finnish language lesson, authentically need such lesson to support the Finnish language proficiency, or the child could master Finnish language in a spontaneous

and playful process in day-care life? Was Finnish as a second language teaching genuinely useful for multicultural children's Finnish language development? At least, day-care centre could firstly offer more information about Finnish as a second language teaching for Chinese parents, and then let the parents consider whether such lesson was useful for their children or not.

In despite of the views that the Chinese parents possessed towards Finnish language teaching, the majority of the parents were much concerned with their children's Finnish language development in day-care centre. Based on the results, the parents in three families already suggested day-care staff to support and reinforce their children's Finnish language development.

In accordance with the results, the polarised opinions towards multicultural environment in Finnish day care were raised by the Chinese parents. Some of the Chinese parents hoped that more multicultural elements could be introduced to municipal day-care centre to support their children's growth. Moreover, some interesting and cultural-featured activities, which were aimed at vividly introducing both children and their parents to diverse and probably unfamiliar cultures around the world, were suggested by these parents as good recommendations for day-care centre.

However, some other Chinese parents considered multicultural environment in Finnish day-care centre as unnecessary and hardly possible to realise, and these parents were satisfied with their children's education in an almost pure Finnish cultural environment in day-care centre. Thus, a further investigation on Chinese parents' opinions towards multicultural environment in Finnish day care would be required. After all, the open attitude, interests and knowledge of day-care staff towards diverse cultures and children with different cultural backgrounds were very crucial in views of some Chinese parents.

#### 9.1.2 Knowledge and information Chinese families need

In the aspect of starting day care, according to the results, English information about the process of applying for day-care centre in Espoo was essential for Chinese parents to know as the first step to Finnish day care. In addition, information about the adapting process when a child started Finnish day care was considered by Chinese parents as useful and important to acquire.

In light of the results collected on child's language learning, information about supporting a child's mother tongue both in day-care centre and at home was very useful to Chinese parents. Moreover, Chinese parents also needed information about Finnish as a second language teaching in the day-care centre, which supported multicultural children's Finnish language proficiency.

In accordance with the results on communication and cooperation, Chinese parents who mainly communicated with day-care staff in English would like to acquire more English materials and information about Finnish day care and daily arrangement of day-care centre. In addition, information about the interpreter services for formal conversations between parents and day-care staff was also necessary for Chinese parents to know, especially before their first

formal conversation with day-care staff.

As to the aspect of cultures, religions and festivals, information about the main differences between Chinese and Finnish cultures, especially the differences in child education and care in day-care centre, was important for Chinese parents to obtain in the beginning of their children's day-care life, in order to reduce cultural shocks and difficulties that Chinese parents might possibly experience in future. Moreover, information about Finnish culture, religion and festivals, as well as religion teaching in Finnish day care, was regarded as useful for Chinese parents to acquire.

According to the results on playing, learning and friends, the majority of the Chinese parents regarded that information about learning by playing as an important method implemented in Finnish day care was very useful for them to obtain. In addition, the Chinese parents considered information about outdoor activities, climate and clothing as useful and important to know.

Based on the results on child protection and Finnish legislation, most of the Chinese parents found that it was very useful and very important to acquire information on child protection, child welfare and related legislation in Finland. In addition, information about a child's entire developmental rights and interests and education in Finland was also very important for some of the Chinese parents to know.

### 9.1.3 Usefulness and adequacy of the day care start folder

In terms of the results, the overwhelming majority of the Chinese parents evaluated the day care start folder as a very important and useful English introduction of Finnish municipal day care, especially for foreign families that newly arrived in Finland and prepared their children to enter day-care centre for the first time. Moreover, most of the Chinese parents assessed that the information provided in the day care start folder was comprehensive and basically adequate for families whose children newly entered Finnish day-care centre.

As to the parents' concerns about the improvement of this folder, some of the parents suggested that it would be better to add introductory information about different types of day-care centres and day-care services available in the City of Espoo into the day care start folder, so that the parents could be able to choose the most suitable day-care centre for their children according to their family situations from more alternatives. In addition, information about the general educational outline and curriculum of Finnish day care was also an aspect, which was demanded to add to the day care start folder by one Chinese parent.

## 9.2 Summary, limitations and further directions of the research

In conclusion, the results showed that the participating Chinese parents basically concerned about the information on starting day care; a child's language learning; communication and cooperation with day-care staff; cultures, religions and festivals; playing, learning and friends; child protection and legislation and so forth. The Chinese parents perceived the day care start folder as useful and adequate. They also put forward some important problems and suggestions

on Finnish day care, such as problems caused by cultural differences, different opinions on learning by playing and Finnish as a second language-teaching, difficulties to obtain enough English information about Finnish day care, and the lack of mediums for foreign families to receive help concerning Finnish day care. In addition, the researcher gave some of suggestions in order to solve the problems and difficulties of the Chinese parents. The thesis report was given to the Otaniemi day-care centre and reserved in Laurea University of Applied Sciences. Besides, an article based on the current research was written, for the sake of sharing the outcomes of the research with more readers outside the college and spreading the voices of these Chinese parents in the field of early childhood education and care in the City of Espoo.

The limitations of the current research must be pointed out here. Due to the difficulty of finding participants, the amount of Chinese parents in the research could be considered as limited. Although the researcher presented many views of the Chinese parents and provided some suggestions for solving their problems, whether the Chinese parents' difficulties and suggestions for Finnish day care could be heard by the day care system and the municipal government of Espoo, and whether some further improvement could possibly be carried out were still remain uncertain.

For further directions of the current research, more Chinese parents could participate and share their views about Finnish day care. Besides, the researcher could employ other research methods as alternatives, such as questionnaires, to check the results of the current research and probe new knowledge. Similar research on foreign parents from other minority cultures could also be an option.

## 10 Ethicality and trustworthiness

### 10.1 Ethical consideration

Kvale (1996, 125) suggested, “The interviewer must establish an atmosphere in which the subject feels safe enough to talk freely about his or her experiences and feelings.” Therefore, sensitive balance between cognitive knowledge seeking and the ethical aspects of emotional human interaction should be kept by the interviewer throughout the interview.

Kvale (1996, 127) underlined that in different cultures “different norms may hold for interactions with strangers concerning initiative, directness, openness, and the like.” The interviewer should be empathetic to the world of the interviewee, understand the interviewee’s culture, religion and worldview, which might be different from the interviewer’s own. If the interviewer and the interviewee shared any common language, culture, religion and so on, it could be an advantage to facilitate the interview and hence the research. However, even the interviewer and the interviewee shared the same or similar background, the interviewer should not assume the interviewee using the same thinking and expressing pattern as the interviewer herself. It was important to observe and discover the interviewee’s unique ways of thinking and expressing during the interview, and utilised them as a tool to effectively understand and communicate with the interviewee of her or his world. “The research interviewer uses him- or herself as a research instrument, drawing upon an implicit bodily and emotional mode of knowing that allows a privileged access to the subject’s lived world.” (Kvale 1996, 125)

Hall and Hall (2004, 10) emphasised that “The evaluation should involve ethical decision-making through all its stages, with due adherence to professional codes and guidelines, and sensitivity to the resolving of dilemmas.” The sensitive consideration of the researcher on ethical issues, as well as the ethical supervision of college tutors, had been carrying out in every phase in this evaluative research. Any predictable ethical risk should be solved or at least minimised before contacting any Chinese parent, and any existing ethical risk should be explained clearly to every Chinese parent before her or his decision on participation in the research. Moreover, any unexpected ethical problem or dilemma emerging during any phase of the research process must be handled without delay.

#### 10.1.1 Informed consent

Kvale (1996, 112) stated, “Informed consent entails informing the research subjects about the overall purpose of the investigation and the main features of the design, as well as of any possible risks and benefits from participation in the research project.” In this research, the overall purposes of the research, general situations of the thematising and designing phases of the research were clearly explained to every Chinese parent who participated in the research. The potential risk to any participant, which should be minimised in the beginning phases of the research, was formally explained to every Chinese parent as well. The benefit of the research, which should be maximised during the thematising and the designing phases, was also explicitly introduced to every Chinese parent. The rights of final decision on participation belonged to every Chinese parent, and the participation was fully voluntary and without any outside pressure exerted.

A formal letter of informed consent necessarily provided a written explanation to participants, and the researcher also obtained the consent signature of every participant. The consent letter (see Appendix 1) briefly introduced the research to Chinese parents, and explained the participant's rights to these parents in detail. Several days before the interview, the day care start folder was hand out to the Chinese parents who already agreed to participate in the research. It aimed to ensure that the participants had enough and unhurried time to read through the whole folder and thus generated their own views and opinions towards the day care start folder.

### 10.1.2 Confidentiality

Kvale (1996, 114) emphasised that "Confidentiality in research implies that private data identifying the subjects will not be reported." In this research, the issues concerning confidentiality and privacy were elaborated to all participants before getting any informed consent from them. Kvale (1996, 114) suggests, "The protection of subjects' privacy by changing their names and identifying features is an important issue in the reporting of interviews." However, such changes should never impact the meaning of data gathered in interviews and questionnaires. In case there would be any possibility of recognisable information published in the thesis report, a formal and explicit written agreement of the specific recognisable participant was essential for releasing the certain identifiable information. In addition, if any participant insisted on using her or his identifiable information in the research report, her or his demand should be always respected after clear explanation on the potential risk of her or his decision.

### 10.1.3 Consequences

"The ethical principle of *beneficence* means that the risk of harm to a subject should be the least possible. The sum of potential benefits to a subject and the importance of the knowledge gained should outweigh the risk of harm to the subject and thus warrant a decision to carry out the study." (Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects 1992, 15 from Kvale 1996, 116) As most of evaluative researches, this research aimed for the well being of Chinese parents, their children and the personnel in municipal day-care centres in the City of Espoo by assessing and improving the product and service conducted in the previous project work. Therefore, the potential benefits in this research outweighed the predictable risk, which was nearly non-existing in the entire research process.

## 10.2 Trustworthiness

Reliability is defined by Jupp (2006, 262) as the extent to which a measuring instrument gives consistent results. Denscombe (2003, 300) also describes reliability in the way that the same data is generated by repetitiously employing a research instrument on every occasion, and a reliable research instrument is able to produce consistent results. This evaluative research is a qualitative research, and interview was utilised as the main data collection method. Thus the reliability was more or less challenged by the nature of qualitative research and the method of interview. Interview as a way of creating new knowledge and information by conversation of the interviewer and the interviewee could be rarely possible to completely repeat again in

reality, even though all of circumstances of an interview remained the same. Therefore, the data gathered in every interview was unique and valuable.

The repeatability of the whole research and the sameness of the results generated might be questioned, but the researcher also implemented the methodology of triangulation to strengthen the reliability of the entire research. In addition to the method of interview, an accessorial questionnaire was also employed to gather data. The detailed data collected from questionnaires supplemented the abundance of the narrative data gathered from interviews. Most importantly, data of questionnaires was also checked with related data of interviews by the researcher to ensure the reliability of the research.

In accordance with the definition given by Jupp (2006, 311), validity evaluates the extent to which the research conclusions could offer an accurate description of the occurrences or a correct explanation of the phenomena and their causes. Validity indicates the correct methods, which generate accurate and honest results. Validity also refers to the correct data, which covers the crucial issues and reflects the truth and reality of the phenomena studied in a research. (*cf.* Denscombe 2003, 301)

By the time when the thesis plan was approved by the college and the research permission was obtained from the City of Espoo, the researcher visited Otaniemi day-care centre and discussed with Benita Carpelan-Turkki, the director of both Otaniemi day-care centre and Servin-Maija day-care centre, about the current circumstances that the day care start folder had been used in practice and about the Finnish version of the day care start folder development by staff of Otaniemi day-care centre. Therefore, the researcher obtained first-hand information on the usage of this folder in reality, which assisted the later design of interview themes and the questionnaire.

This research is a small-scaled research, and the amount of participants is not large, thus the validity might be challenged by the limited research scale. In addition, the research was undertaken by only one researcher who conducted the interviews and the questionnaires, collected, transcribed and analysed the data. Due to the limited research resources and language utilised in the research, there was no other student or tutor to check the raw data in the phases of data collection, data transcribing and data analysis.

However, in order to guarantee the correctness and the accuracy of the researcher's understanding of the participants' narrative in the interviews and their answers in the questionnaires, the results of the research was sent back to every participant to check. In addition, the research language was transferred from Mandarin Chinese in the interviews and the questionnaires to English during the phases of data analysis and thesis report writing. Thus, the participants also examined the correctness and the accuracy of the researcher's translation, especially the participants' own statements that were used as quotes in the English results of the research. Finally, the researcher received the feedback from the parents of three families. These parents checked the results of the research, and considered them as all right.

In consideration of the participants' language preference and the researcher's language capability, Mandarin Chinese as the mother tongue of both the participants and the researcher was used during the data collection phase. The consent letter and the questionnaire were

written in Mandarin Chinese for the participants and in English for college tutors, and the interviews were totally taken in Mandarin Chinese. The Chinese parents as interviewees could express their thoughts freely and easily and discuss with the researcher without language restriction, and they could also fill the questionnaire without language difficulty, thus the validity of the data gathered in this research was enhanced.

The researcher had some knowledge on Finnish language, and in the beginning of the research she personally translated the entire original results of the thesis “Eri kulttuureista suomalaiseseen päivähoitoon” from Finnish to English for her better comprehension of this evaluated thesis. However, due to the tight research time and the researcher’s limited Finnish language proficiency, it was a pity that she could hardly review much of the Finnish literature and understand it deeply. In addition, it was difficult to find out abundant English literature and information on early childhood education and care in the City of Espoo and in Finland, related previous studies and projects in Finland, as well as Chinese people as a minority group in Finland.

## List of references

- Bell, J. 1999. *Doing your research project a guide for first-time researchers in education and social science*. Third edition. Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press
- Chao, R. K. 1994. Beyond parental control and authoritarian parenting style: understanding Chinese parenting through the cultural notion of training. *Child Development*, 65(4), 1111-1119.
- Chen, J-L. & Kennedy, C. 2005. Factors associated with obesity in Chinese-American children. *Pediatric Nursing*, 31(2), 110-115.
- Chen-Hafteck, L. & Xu, Z. 2008. Pulling the river: the interactions of local and global influences in Chinese early childhood music education. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 109(3), 9-16.
- City of Espoo, pocket statistics 2008. Research and Development, City of Espoo.
- Denscombe, M. 2003. *The good research guide for small-scale research projects*. Second edition. Open University Press
- Early childhood education and care policy in Finland. 2000. OECD.  
<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/48/55/2476019.pdf>
- Espoo annual report 2007. Communications, City of Espoo.
- Hall, I. & Hall, D. 2004. *Evaluation and social research introducing small-scale practice*. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Holstein, J. A. & Gubrium, J. F. 1995. *The active interview*. Qualitative research methods series 37. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage
- Hulei, E. Zevenbergen, A. A. & Jacobs, S C. 2006. Discipline behaviors of Chinese American and European American mothers. *The Journal of Psychology*, 140(5), 459-475.
- Jupp, V. 2006. *The Sage dictionary of social research methods*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage
- Kvale, S. 1996. *InterViews an introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage
- Liu, J. & Elicker, J. 2005. Teacher-child interaction in Chinese kindergartens: an observational analysis. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 13(2), 129-143.
- Miettinen, H. & Tarvainen, L. 2007. *Eri kulttuureista suomalaisen päivähöitoon*. Laurea Otaniemi, Laurea University of Applied Sciences

Morgan, D. L. 1998. The focus group guidebook. Focus group kit 1. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage

National curriculum guidelines on early childhood education and care in Finland. 2004. STAKES. [http://varttua.stakes.fi/NR/rdonlyres/78BC5411-F37C-494C-86FA-BE409294709B/0/e\\_vasu.pdf](http://varttua.stakes.fi/NR/rdonlyres/78BC5411-F37C-494C-86FA-BE409294709B/0/e_vasu.pdf)

Silverman, D. 2005. Doing qualitative research. A practical handbook. Second edition. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage

Socca. 2008a. Moniku-hankkeen tausta. Html web page. [www.socca.fi/moniku/tausta.html](http://www.socca.fi/moniku/tausta.html) (Downloaded on 14 August 2008).

Socca. 2008b. Suomi toisena kielenä. Html web page. [www.socca.fi/moniku/suomi.html](http://www.socca.fi/moniku/suomi.html) (Downloaded on 16 August 2008).

Socca. 2008c. Kasvatuskumppanuus. Html web page. [www.socca.fi/moniku/kumppanuus.html](http://www.socca.fi/moniku/kumppanuus.html) (Downloaded on 16 August 2008).

Socca. 2008d. Hyvien työkäytäntöjen kehittäminen ja levittäminen. Html web page. [www.socca.fi/moniku/tyokaytanto.html](http://www.socca.fi/moniku/tyokaytanto.html) (Downloaded on 16 August 2008).

Socca. 2008e. Monikulttuurisuus pääkaupunkiseudun varhaiskasvatuksessa toimintamalli. Html web page. [www.socca.fi/moniku/toimintamalli.html](http://www.socca.fi/moniku/toimintamalli.html) (Downloaded on 16 August 2008).

Triandis, H. C. & Suh, E. M. 2002. Cultural influences on personality. Annual Review of Psychology 2002, 53(1), 133-160.

Wenner, M. 2009. The serious need for play. Scientific American Mind, 20(1), 22-29.

芬兰华人及中国留学生之家 (Suomen kiinalainen yhdyskunta, KINA.cc). 2009. 芬兰华人统编. Htm web page. [www.kina.cc/fi/kina.htm](http://www.kina.cc/fi/kina.htm) (Downloaded on 10 May 2009).

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Consent letter for participants (English translation)

## CONSENT LETTER

Dear parent,

My name is Wei Zhao, and I am a student of Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Otaniemi campus. My major is Social Services - Multicultural Social Work. At the moment, I am undertaking my thesis research on the evaluation of the former Laurea students' thesis "Eri kulttuureista suomalaiseen päivähöitoön" (From different cultures to Finnish day care) and its day care start folder for multicultural parents in Otaniemi day-care centre. My thesis counsellor in Laurea is Soile Juujärvi. I have already received the permission for my thesis research from the City of Espoo.

The purposes of my thesis are:

- Evaluating the results of the thesis "Eri kulttuureista suomalaiseen päivähöitoön" and finding out how its attached day care start folder is experienced as a working method in the opinion of Chinese parents in Otaniemi day-care centre;
- Improving the day care start folder as a working method for multicultural families and personnel in Otaniemi day-care centre and possibly for other day-care centres in the similar situation.

My original goal was to interview the Chinese parents in Otaniemi day-care centre to find out what kind of knowledge do Chinese families need about Finnish early childhood education when their children start day care, and whether Chinese parents can obtain enough information to meet their needs about Finnish early childhood education from the day care start folder. However, it would be better to interview more Chinese parents in Tapiola area to obtain more trustworthy results for the thesis research.

Therefore, I sincerely invite you to participate in the interview and kindly ask for your permission to use the gathered data in my research. The semi-structured individual interview usually takes about 1-2 hours. The audiotape recorder will be used in the interview to record the conversation, and the record will be only used by myself for this research. For protecting your right of confidentiality, the audiotape will be destroyed after the ready-made thesis report is accomplished. In addition to the interview, an auxiliary questionnaire would need to be filled in after the interview.

I may contact you again after the interview for the aim of clarifying some issues mentioned in the interview. You have rights to review the transcribed data of your interview at any time and to revise it according to your perspectives. Besides, the confidentiality is guaranteed to you

and your family that you will be kept anonymous and no any personally recognisable information will be revealed in the thesis report. As a participant of the interview, you also have rights to ask questions and receive proper answers about the research. You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time too.

Please affix your signature to the end of this letter if you consent to the contents above and to participate in the interview. Both you and I will preserve a signed consent letter with both your signature and my signature.

Thank you for your time!

Wei Zhao  
Tel.: 0405389192  
Email: Wei.Zhao@laurea.fi

---

Date

---

Signature of the participant

---

Signature of the researcher

## Appendix 2: Interview themes (English translation)

### INTERVIEW THEMES

1. What kind of knowledge do Chinese families need about Finnish early childhood education when their children start day care?
  - Practical issues in the everyday routine of day care  
(Contact information, course of a day/daily programme, lunch/eating, outdoor activities/exercise, Finnish climate, seasons and clothing, afternoon nap/resting during a day, conception of time, permitted hours, conception of health, Finnish religion, Finnish culture and festivals)
  - Principles that guide the early childhood education work  
(Legislation concerning day care, day care's basic facts, child welfare (child protection), a child's rights)
  - Professional skill of personnel  
(Personnel's professional skill, professional outlooks, work forms e.g. small group work and self-care, bring a child to and pick up a child from the day-care centre)
  - Learning by playing
  - Educational partnership  
(Cooperation between the day care and the parents, customer-oriented communication, the starting of day care)
  - Individual as a group member  
(A child's individuality, soft landing → starting the day care, supporting a child's own mother tongue both in day-care centre and at home, Finnish as a second language teaching)
  - Cultural differences
  - The same education for all, ethical operation: equality and tolerance
  - Education and care
  - Interaction between people and environment, multicultural environment

2. Can Chinese parents obtain enough information to meet their needs about Finnish early childhood education from the day care start folder?

(What kind of knowledge do Chinese families need more about Finnish early childhood education when their children start day care?)

What do Chinese parents think about the significance of the issues mentioned in the day care start folder in general?

3. (Questions that Chinese parents concern)  
Can the child get into the day-care centre easily?

What kind of problems the child and the family confront when starting day care and afterwards? How long does it take for the child and the family to get used to the day care?

Does the child have friends in the day-care centre? Has any friend invited him/her to the birthday party? Has he/she invited his/her friends to the birthday party?

## Appendix 3: Questionnaire (English translation)

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON DAY CARE START FOLDER****INSTRUCTIONS**

- A. If your child is in Otaniemi day-care centre, please answer the question 7-10 according to the day-care start folder.  
If your child is in another day-care centre, please answer the question 7-10 according to the circumstances of your child's day-care centre.
- B. The questions stated as "Have you already known..." refer to the time when your child(ren) started Finnish day care and before you read the day care start folder.  
The questions stated as "I find this information..." refer to the time after you read the day care start folder.
- C. PLEASE PUT AN X IN THE APPROPRIATE BOX  OR WRITE INFORMATION ON THE BLANK LINE \_\_\_\_\_

**PARTICIPANT'S BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender: Female  Male
3. How many years have you been living in Finland? \_\_\_\_\_ years
4. Number of child(ren): \_\_\_\_\_
5. Child(ren)'s age(s) and how many years has each child been in the day-care centre:
  - First child: \_\_\_\_\_ years old, \_\_\_\_\_ years in the day-care centre
  - Second child: \_\_\_\_\_ years old, \_\_\_\_\_ years in the day-care centre
  - Third child: \_\_\_\_\_ years old, \_\_\_\_\_ years in the day-care centre
  - Fourth child: \_\_\_\_\_ years old, \_\_\_\_\_ years in the day-care centre
  - Fifth child: \_\_\_\_\_ years old, \_\_\_\_\_ years in the day-care centre
6. Which day-care centre your child(ren) is/are in? \_\_\_\_\_

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

7. Have you already known the contact information of the day-care centre?  
Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

## DAILY PROGRAMME

8. Have you already known the opening hours of the day-care centre?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

9. Have you already known the available substitutive care when the day-care centre is closed during the summer time?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

10. Have you already known the daily programme of the day-care centre?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

11. Have you already known how your child(ren) should be brought to and picked up from the day-care centre?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

12. Have you already known what the daily taking care time in community day care includes?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

13. Have you already known that you should inform personnel of the day-care centre when your child(ren) is/are absent because of sickness, vacation and so on?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

## STARTING DAY CARE

14. Have you already known that day care personnel and you should together make a contract and a plan for your child's personal day care as soon as possible when (s)he starts day care?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

15. Have you already known about the adapting process to the day care for both your child and you when (s)he starts day care?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

#### CO-OPERATION

16. Have you already known about the cooperation between day care personnel and parents?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

#### EATING

17. Have you already known the importance of regular meals and snacks for a child?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

18. Have you already known that the day-care centre offers breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack for children?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

19. Have you already known how and from what kinds of raw material the food is prepared?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

20. Have you already known that a special diet can be arranged for a child because of allergy, health or religion?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

21. Have you already known that a child also learn tastes, eating habits and eating manners when (s)he has breakfast, lunch and snack in the day-care centre?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

## BEING OUTSIDE AND EXERCISE

22. Have you already known that outdoor exercise is taken for several hours every day in the day-care centre, no matter what the weather is like?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

23. Have you already known the importance of outdoor exercise for a child's learning, growth and health?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

24. Have you already known that outdoor exercise can be taken elsewhere than in day-care centre's playground, for example in forest?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

## RESTING DURING THE DAY

25. Have you already known the importance of the afternoon sleeping/resting for a child managing a long day in the day-care centre?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

26. Have you already known the importance of the afternoon sleeping/resting for the developing of a child's central nervous system?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

27. Have you already known that a child can bring his/her important soft toy to the day-care centre?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

## HEALTH

28. Have you already known that your child cannot be brought to the day-care centre when (s)he is sick?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

29. Have you already known what to do as a parent when your child is sick?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

30. Have you already known that before going back to the day-care centre a child after illness must stay at home in a day without fever and his/her temperature does not rise again?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

31. Have you already known that the reason for the rule mentioned in question 30 is the danger of infection?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

## CLIMATE, SEASONS AND CLOTHING

32. Have you already known that a child's indoor shoes or slippers should be comfortable and not slippery?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

33. Have you already known about the climate and the seasons in Finland?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

34. Have you already known what clothing your child(ren) should wear in outdoor activities according to the weather and the climate?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

35. Have you already known that it is good to bring some extra clothes to the day-care centre?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

36. Have you already known that your child(ren) should wear rain clothes in outdoor activities when it rains in any season?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

#### PLAYING

37. Have you already known that learning takes place by playing in Finnish day care?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

38. Have you already known the importance of playing for a child's learning, development and growth?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

39. Have you already known the role and responsibilities of personnel in the day-care centre to support children's playing?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

40. Have you already known that your opinion and proposal about the playing environment are important?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

41. Have you already known the importance of a child's spoken language for his/her thinking, interaction and learning?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

#### LANGUAGE

42. Have you already known the importance of supporting a child's mother tongue both in the day-care centre and at home?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

43. Have you already known the ways of supporting a child's mother tongue both in the day-care centre and at home?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

44. Have you already known about Finnish as a second language teaching in the day-care centre to support multicultural children's language proficiency?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

#### FINNISH CULTURE, RELIGION AND FEASTS

45. Have you already known that Christianity is important in Finnish culture?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

46. Have you already known that holidays, when the day-care centre is closed, are determined by religion in Finland?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

47. Have you already known about the religion teaching in Finnish day care?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

48. Have you already known that a child has rights to know about his/her own religion and face the issues associated with religion?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

49. Have you already known that you have a right to decide whether your child(ren) participate(s) in Christian religion teaching?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

#### CHILD PROTECTION

50. Have you already known about Finnish legislations on child protection and child welfare?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

51. Have you already known about a child's rights in Finland?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

52. Have you already known that any violence directed to a child is not accepted?

Not at all  A little  Quite  Very much

I find this information:

Not useful at all  A little useful  Useful  Very useful

## Appendix 4: Data coding and categorising (English translation)

First level Themes	Second level Categories	Third level Sub-categories
1. Starting day care	Applying for day-care centre	Difficult to apply for municipal day-care centre
		Parents' criteria of choosing day-care centre
		Difficult to obtain enough English information about the applying process
		Lack of mediums for foreign families
	Adapting process to day-care life	Parents' experience of the adapting process
		Dissatisfaction, problems and suggestions for the adapting process The crucial role of the day-care staff
2. A child's language learning	A child's Chinese language learning	Limited Chinese language environment in Finland
		Chinese language teaching at home
	A child's Finnish language learning	Agreement and disagreement on Finnish as a second language lesson
		A child's Finnish vocabulary gap
		Parents' concerns about their child's Finnish language learning
3. Communication and cooperation	language between parents and day-care staff	Languages parents use
		Parents' expectations for day-care staff to speak English
		Difficult to obtain enough English information from day-care staff
		Parents' experience of interpreter
	Communication and cooperation	Parents' experience of communication with day-care staff
		The importance of effective communication between parents and day-care staff
		Parents' complaints and difficulties in communication with day-care staff
		Characters and weaknesses of Chinese parents in communication
		Parents' expectations of their child's feedback from day-care staff
		Suggestions of organising open days for parents
Parents' concerns about cooperation with day-care staff		

Continue in the next page

First level Themes	Second level Categories	Third level Sub-categories
4. Cultures, religions and festivals	Cultural differences	Parents' attitudes towards Finnish culture
		Parents' experience of difficulties caused by cultural differences
	Multicultural environment	Agreement and disagreement on introducing multicultural elements
		Suggestions of cultural activities for children and their parents
		The importance of Day-care staff's attitudes towards multicultural children and their cultures
	Religions and festivals in Finland	Parents' expectations of obtaining more information
		Parents' attitudes towards their child's participation in religious activities
5. Playing, learning and friends	Learning by playing	Parents' awareness of educational differences between Finland and China
		Parents' opinions on learning by playing
		Parents' doubts about learning by playing
		Parents' expectations of organising more games and their child's development of interest
		Parents' expectations of obtaining information on Finnish early childhood education
	Outdoor exercises	Suggestions of more activities outside the day-care centre
		The importance of the size of the day-care centre's courtyard
		Parents' worries about outdoor playing
		Parents' concerns about their child's safety
	Climate and clothing	The importance of information about climate, seasons and clothing in Finland
		Parents' expectations of obtaining advices from day-care staff
		The importance of rain clothes in outdoor activities
	Friends	The importance of friends
		Parents' experience of the periods when their child had no friend
		Disadvantages on a child making friends
		Suggestions for day-care staff to help a child make friends

Continue in the next page

First level Themes	Second level Categories	Third level Sub-categories
6. Child protection and legislation of Finland	The importance of obtaining information	
	Difficult to obtain English information	
7. Usefulness, adequacy and suggestions for day care start folder	The importance and usefulness	
	The adequacy	
	Parents' suggestions	

End

Appendix 5: An example of coding synonymous Chinese words and phrases and translating into English

