Multilingual Media Practices in Transnational Families

Bilingual family communication in the digital flux

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Digital languaging in the family

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Family Language Policy:

A Multi - Level Investigation of Multilingual Practices in Transnational Families

Project website: https://familylanguagepoli.wixsite.com/familylanguagepolicy

Project twitter: https://twitter.com/FLPproject2017

Aims

- Examine how mobility and on-going changes in sociocultural contexts impact on family language policies

- Understand how FLP is shaped, established, negotiated and enacted in day-to-day interactional and digital practices

Research Design

Multi-level investigations:

- National survey

- Community profiling

- Family observations and interviews

Multi-ethnolinguistic communities

- Chinese

- Polish

- Somali

Overview

- Conceptualizing media practices
- A review of media practices in transnational families
- A brief introduction of WeChat – the Chinese multimedia platform
- The case of Chinese/English transnationational families
  - How children use WeChat to communicate with families?
  - What role does WeChat play in children's heritage language practices?
  - What role does WeChat play in children's multiliteracy practices?
- Concluding comments

Conceptualising digital practices

- Digital devices are omnipresent in our everyday life
- Change our language/literacy practices and experiences in communication
- Read and write in multimodalities
- Create and make sense of world through
- Children are the fastest digital growing population
- Strengthen the ties between family members
- Facilitate the development of heritage language and culture

Conceptualising digital practices

- The theory of polymedia (Madianou and Miller 2012; 2013)
  - ➤ Media as environments of affordances
  - ➤ Mediated personal communication
  - ➤ Emphasize on how technologies and media are used to express emotions and manage personal relationships
  - ➤ 3 conditions: access, affordability and literacy

- Filipino transnational families

  - ➤ Relationship developments and changes in social media
  - ➤ Migrants in the UK and left-behind families

Media practices in transnational families

- Role of technical mediation in family life, emotions and communication as well as the role of languages in digitally mediated processes (Palviainen, 2020)
- Family dynamics (Kang, 2012)
- Social media and popular culture as social capital (Little, 2019)
- Mediational repertoire – mediagram (Lexander & Adroutsopoulos, 2020)
- Children as 'broker' (Kats, 2010)
- "Grandparenting" and "doing family" in the digital age (Nedelcu, 2017)
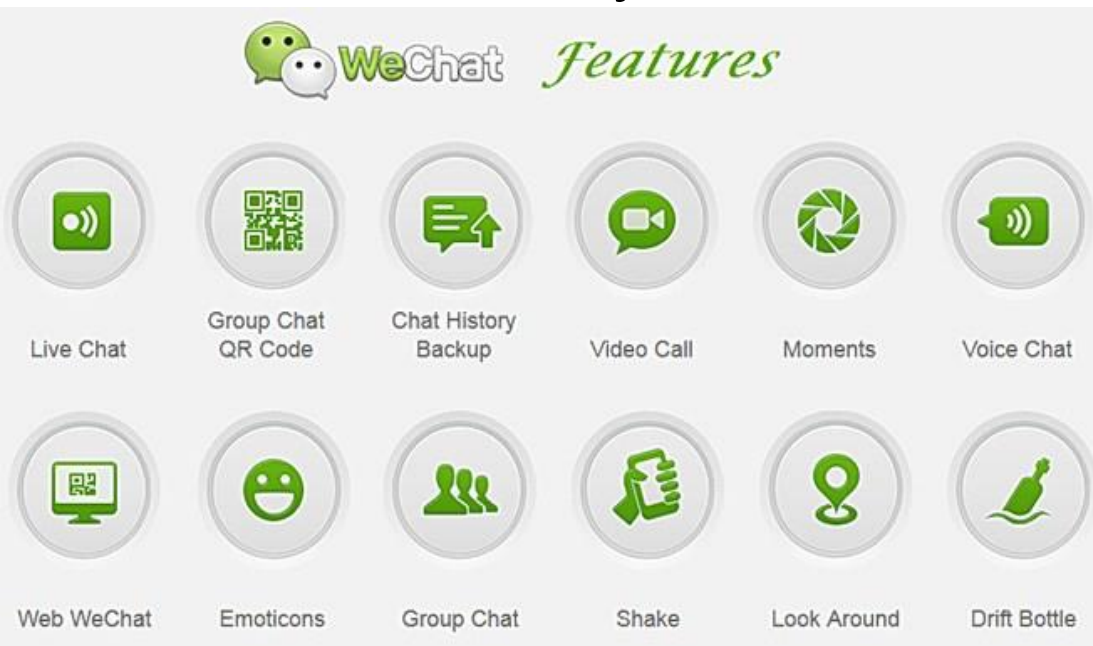
Media practices in transnational families
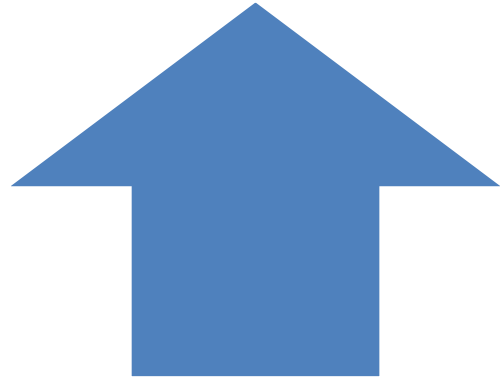
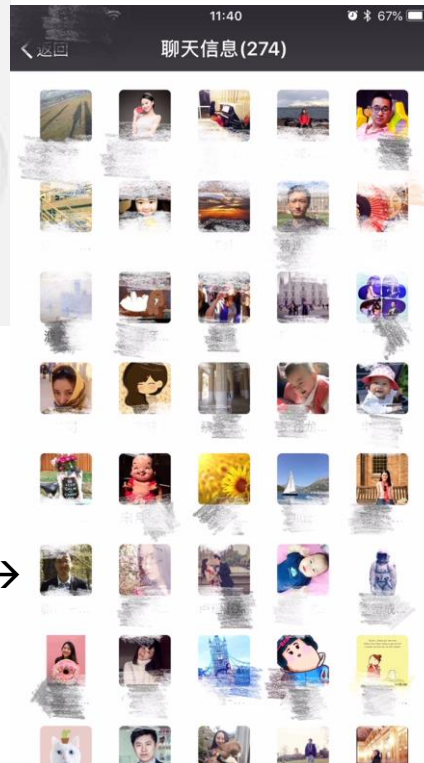Affordances of technologies

Relationship b/w family members

The role of language development in family communication

The role of literacy practices through media in facilitating intergenerational language transmission

▪ **Social media and online networking**

"WeChat as a lifestyle"

An academic WeChat group with 274 group members →

Wen, Z.; Geng, X.; and Ye, Y.(2016). "**Subjective well-being and the use of WeChat**"

Che, H. and Yang, C. (2014)."**WeChat users' motivations, trust, attitudes, and positive word-of-mouth**"

Mao, C. (2014). "**Friends and Relaxation: Key factors of WeChat use**"

What we do:

"Community life online"

- ▪ **'Chat-groups' observation**
- ▪ **Online individual and group interview**
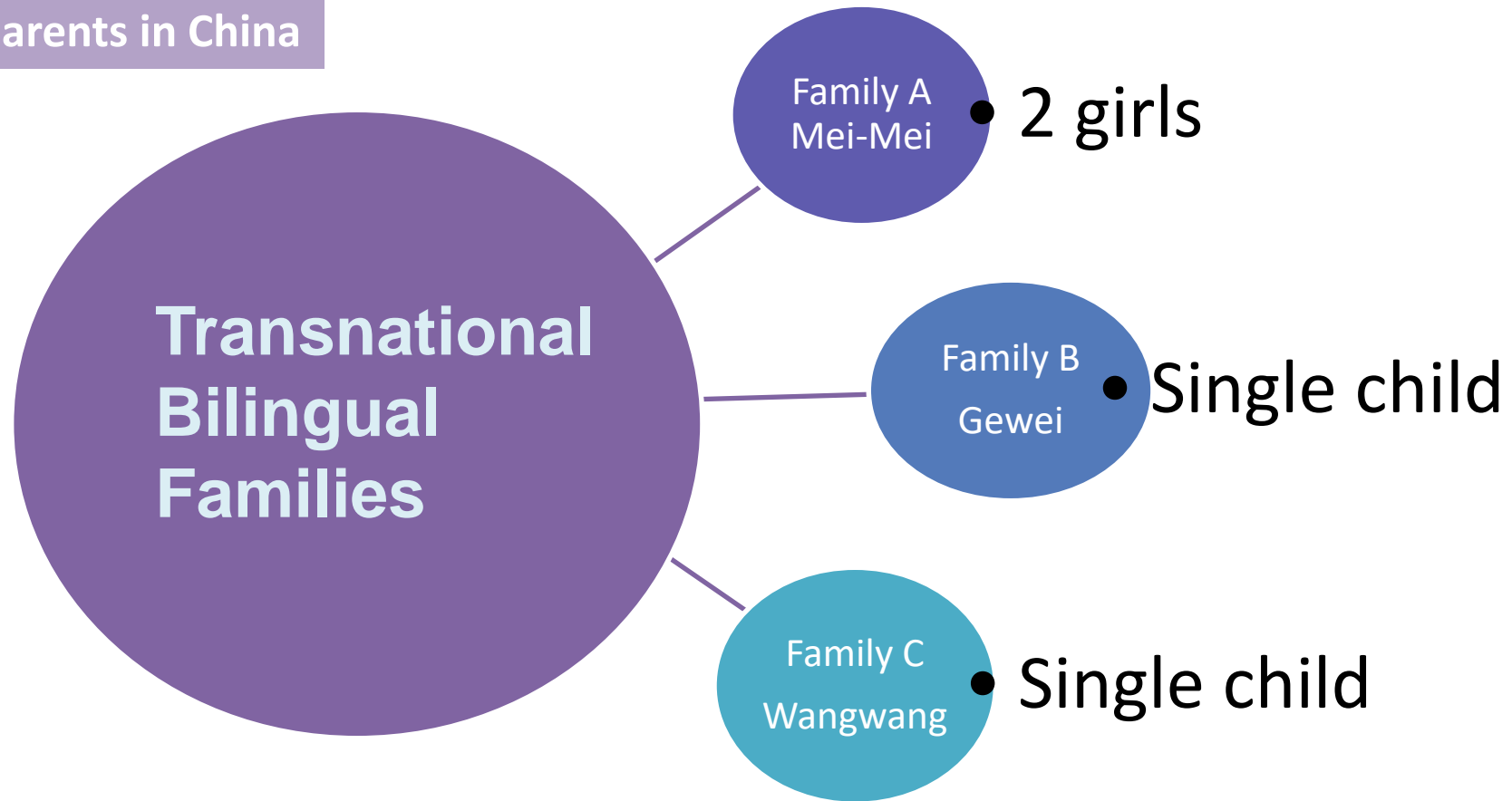- ▪ **Documents collection**

WeChat

Research Questions

- How digital practices are used in families?
- What roles do media practices play in children's multilingual and literacy development?

The Study

Frequent communication with grandparents in China

Transnational Bilingual Families

Family A Mei-Mei — 2 girls

Family B Gewei — Single child

Family C Wangwang — Single child

Mei-Mei's messages to mum and grandpa

- 8 years old

- Born in England to Chinese parents

- Bilingual first language speaker: English and Chinese

- Year-3 girl in England

- Learns Mandarin Chinese weekly at community school
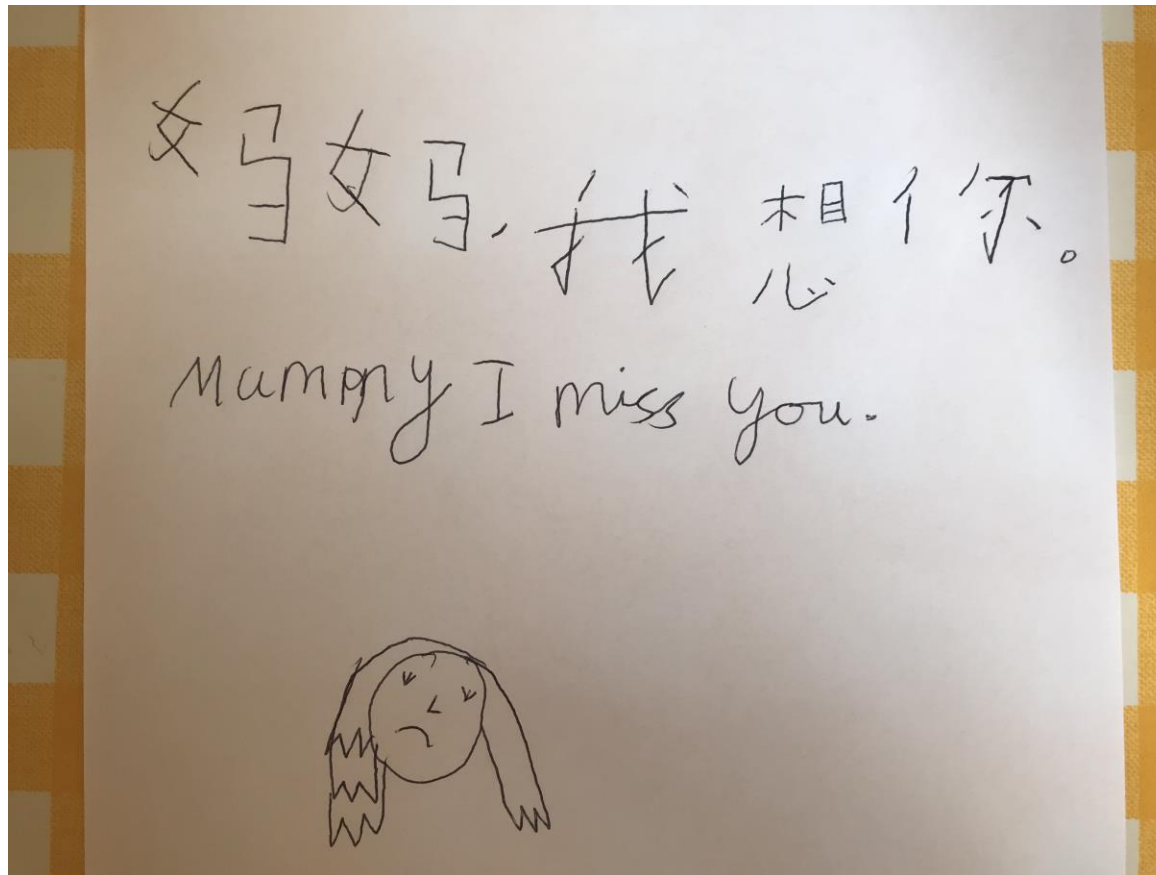
- E-books

- Educational software

Parallel text

Emergent Literacy Practices

- **Reading started since birth with two languages**

- **Early recognition of orthographic differences**

- **Knowledge of Chinese characters**

- **English alphabet**

- **Non-digital literacy experiences**

Emergent digital Literacy Practices

- Different input system
- Limited digital Chinese scaffolding
- Emoji

Emergent digital Literacy Practices

Fri 8 Jun, 16:07

WHERE ARE YOU!

😭 I AM SAD😭❄️I MISSYOU❄️

🌟

Oh dear mummy is on my way home now, see you in a bit

Ok

- Capital letters
- Emojis

Emergent digital Literacy Practices

- Different input system
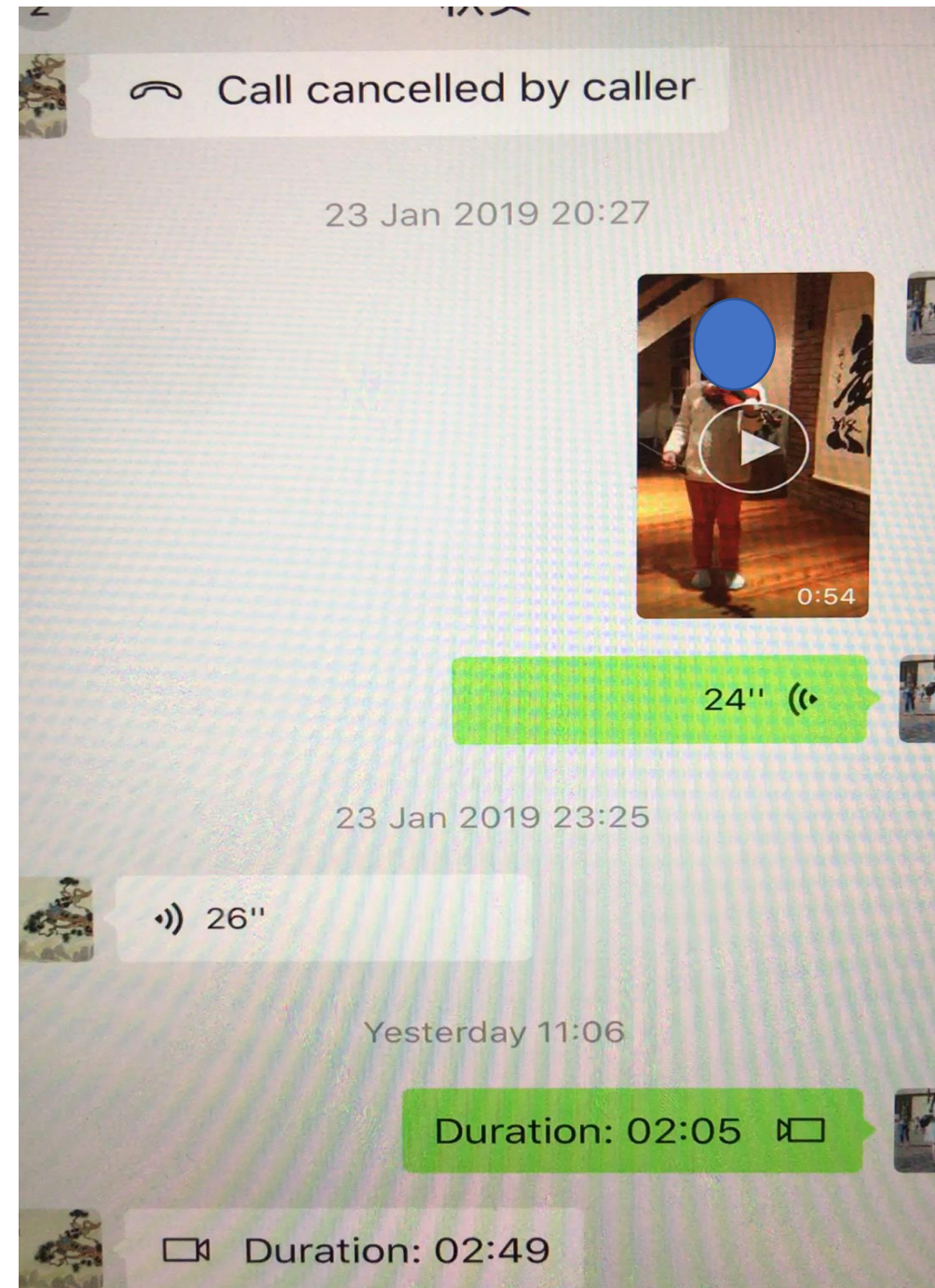- Limited digital Chinese scaffolding
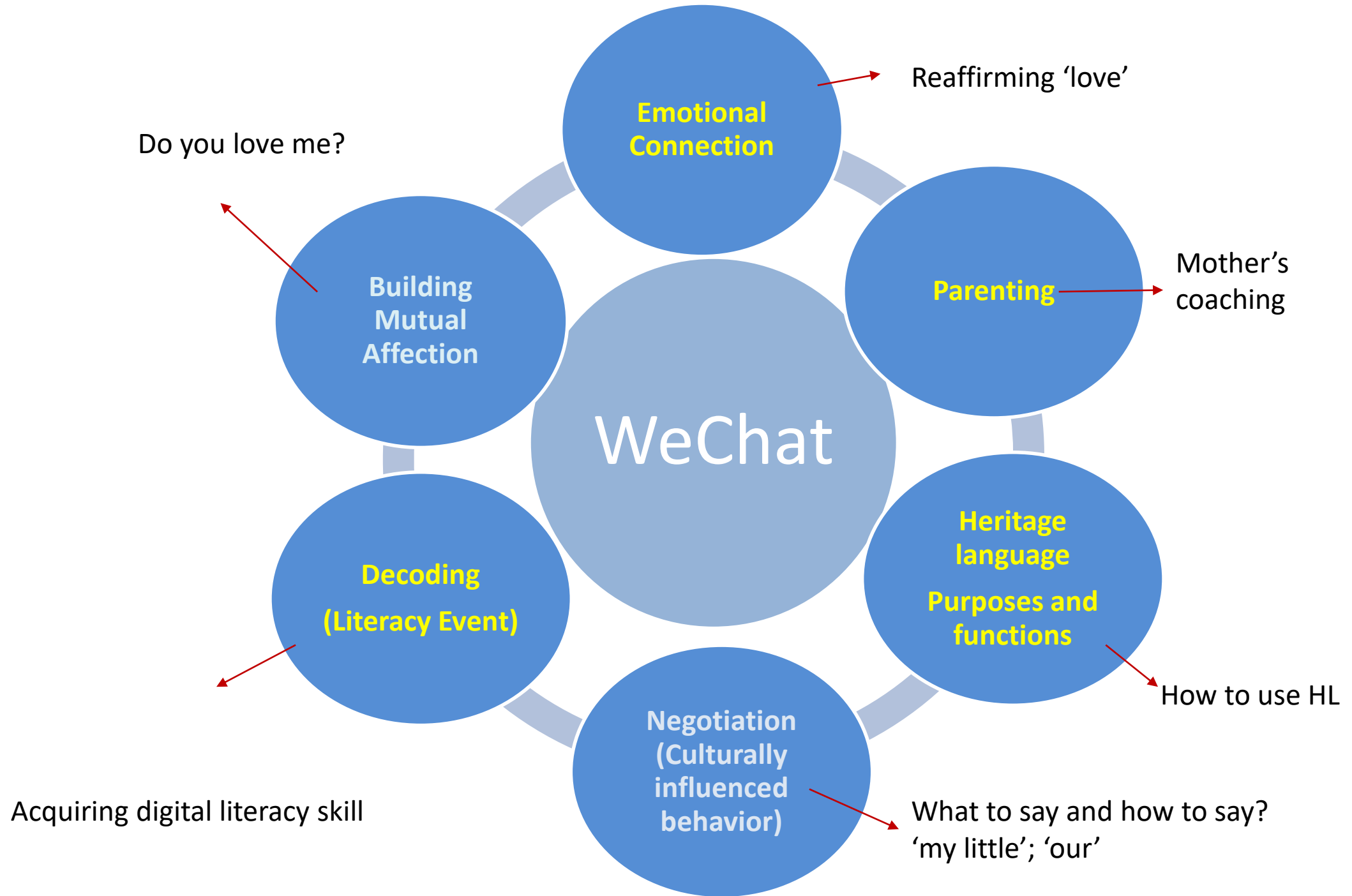- Emoji

Chatting with Grandpa on WeChat in Chinese

(*Mei-Mei sent her Granddad a video clip of her playing 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' with her violin, and then she left him an audio message*)
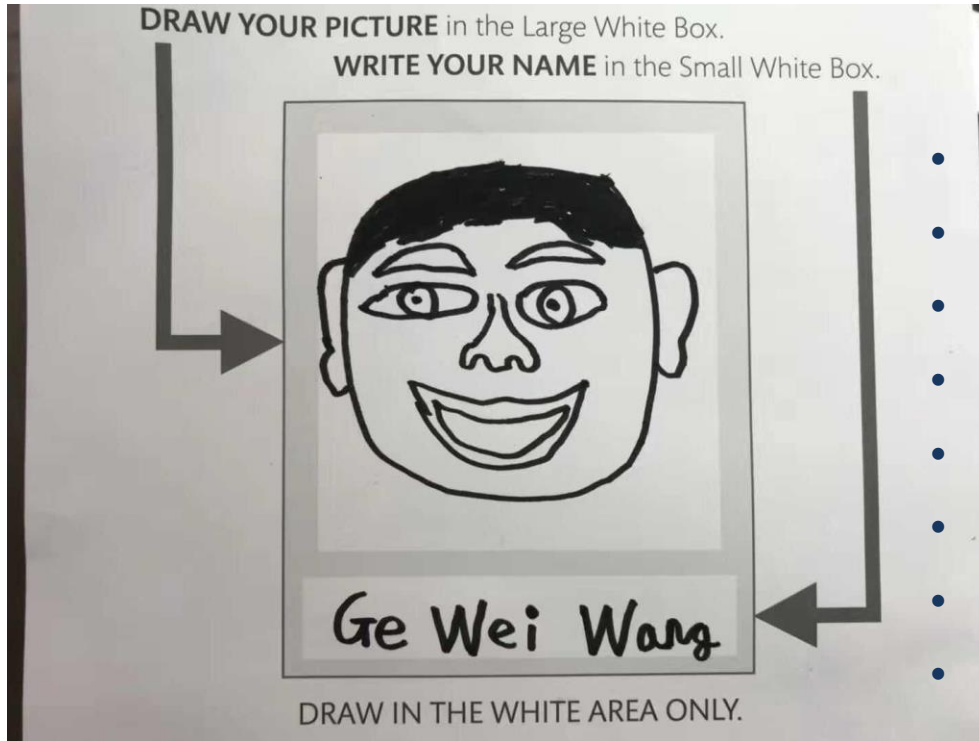
Mei-Mei: Grand-papa, I'm only <u>a little good at playing violin</u>, I practice a lot, and I'll be good. (*Mum: you'll play better and better*)
Mei-Mei: I'll be better and very good. ..Do you know, grand-papa, <u>I love you very much</u>. ... Grand-papa, <u>do you love me</u>?

Grandpa: Grandpa <u>loves</u> <u>my little</u> Mei-Mei very very much. I love your playing of Little Stars (Chinese version of ''twinkle twinkle little star). Look at you, you play so well with <u>good postures</u>. Keep on with your good work, grandpa thinks <u>our little</u> Mei-Mei will be <u>a great violinist</u> later!

Emotional Connection → Reaffirming 'love'

Do you love me?

Building Mutual Affection

Parenting → Mother's coaching

WeChat

Decoding (Literacy Event)

Heritage language Purposes and functions → How to use HL

Acquiring digital literacy skill

Negotiation (Culturally influenced behavior) → What to say and how to say? 'my little'; 'our'

DRAW YOUR PICTURE in the Large White Box.
WRITE YOUR NAME in the Small White Box.
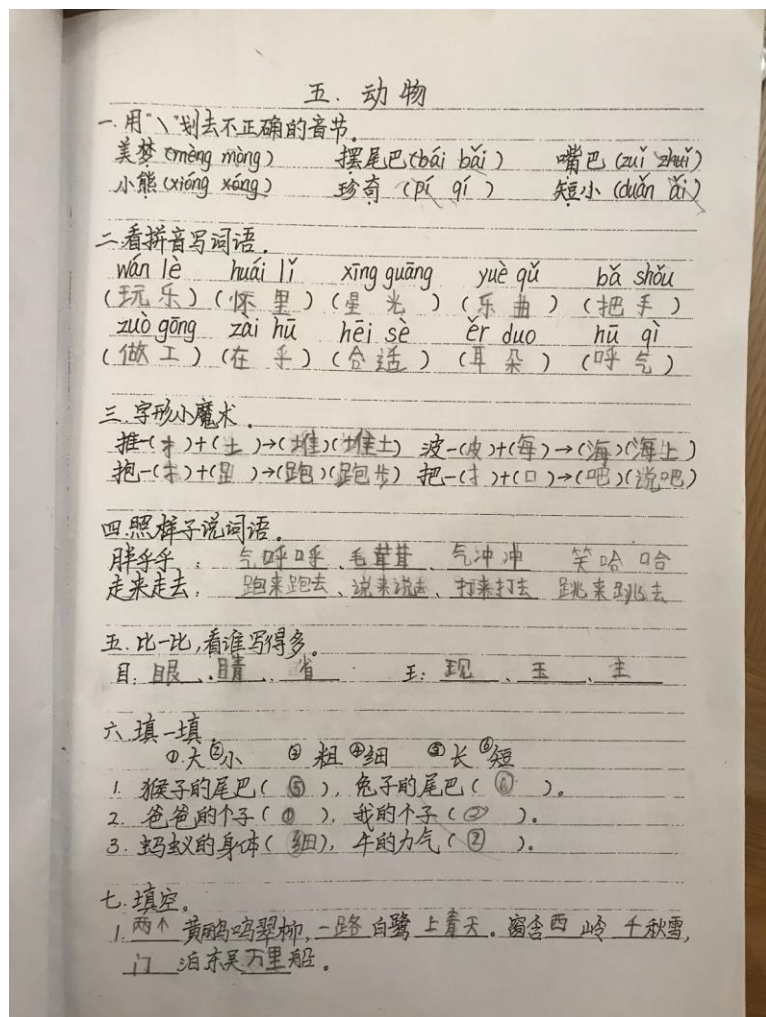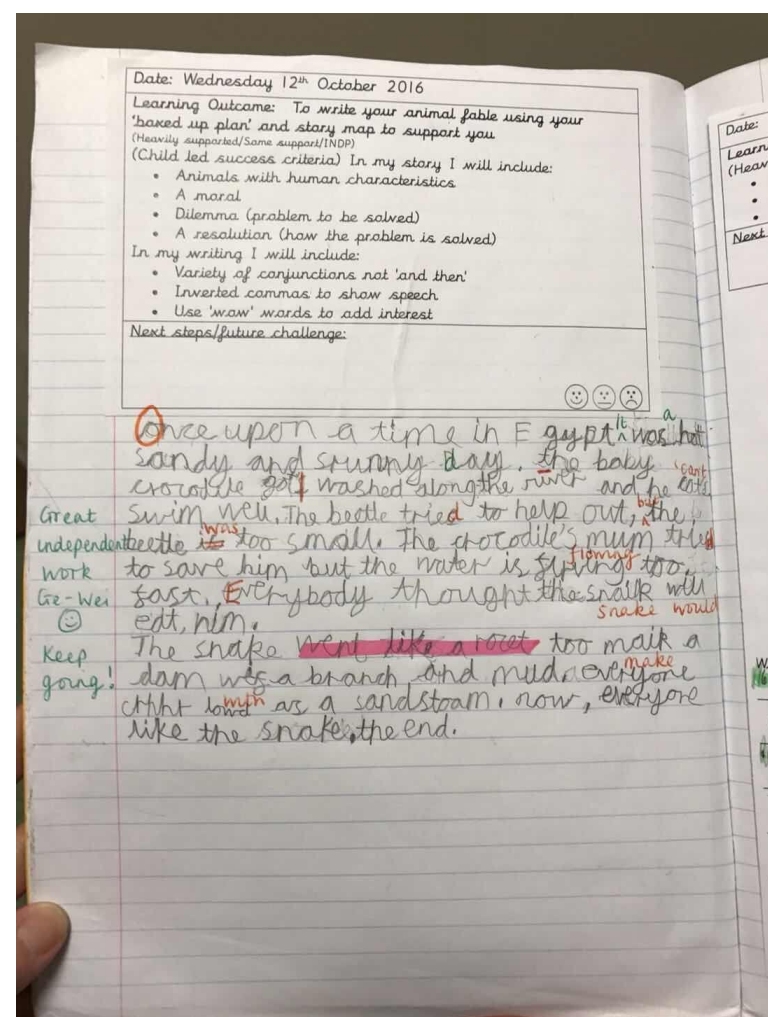
Ge Wei Wang

DRAW IN THE WHITE AREA ONLY.

Gewei

- 10 years old
- Born in China
- Chinese family
- First language Chinese
- Came to the UK at 6 as a beginner reader
- Limited digital practices
- Limited Educational software
- Parents believe in non-digital literacy
- EAL in UK school

Code Breaker
Word copying

Text participant
Invented spellings
Developmental stage

Emergent Literacy in Chinese

小提琴

Multimodal literacy practices

Non-Digital- Digital

- Reciting
- Memorising
- Reading
- Patterns of rhythm
- Prosody
- Reading fluency

WeChat

I kicked in 3

How many balls did you manage to kick in?

Pic. OMG

You are super

Ok, now it's time to practice your violin

Bye

- GW -Typical Heritage language (HL) learner
- WeChat facilitates and supports literacy development
- Video clipping motivates children
- Demonstrate their HL skills

Digital literacy practices

- Engagement with a wider range of senses
- Visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, tactile
- Dynamic with symbols
- Different text forms
- Non-linear (hyperlinks)
- 'Seductive details'
- Promote early literacy

Wang-Wang: a language/cultural broker for grandparents

- 3.4 years old

- Born in England to Chinese parents

- Bilingual first language speaker: English and Chinese

- 8 months in childcare – for socialization

- 2 years in nursery

- 2 starts 2-3 word telegraphic talk

- 2 ½ began translating

- 90% books and reading in Chinese

- Watch only Chinese cartoons before 3

- Frequent media communications with grandparents

Wang-Wang: a language broker for grandparents

- Wang: *this bear sits on this chair, having lunch*
- 妈妈 (M)：宝贝你用中文翻译一下，不然姥姥听不懂的。

  Baby, you need to translate it into Chinese, otherwise, grandma won't understand it.
- W: 姥姥，这个小熊坐在椅子上，然后要吃早餐了。

  Grandma, this little bear sits on this chair, he wants to have breakfast.
- 妈妈 (M)：*lunch*是早餐吗？

  Is **lunch** breakfast?
- W: *lunch*是中午吃的。

  Lunch is the meal for midday
- 妈妈 (M)：那(*lunch*)应该是什么呢？

  Then what's is *lunch* (meaning in Chinese)
- W: 是午餐。现在吃早餐，*breakfast*.

  It's called lunch. Right now he is having breakfast, *breakfast*

W: xiaoai (this is xiaoai)
GM: what about this?
W: Mr Bull
GP: tractor
M：   Baby, can you translate Mr Bull for grandpa in Chinese?
W: (looking for help- or thinking how he should say it)
GM/F: how do you say it in Chinese
F: gongniu xiansheng
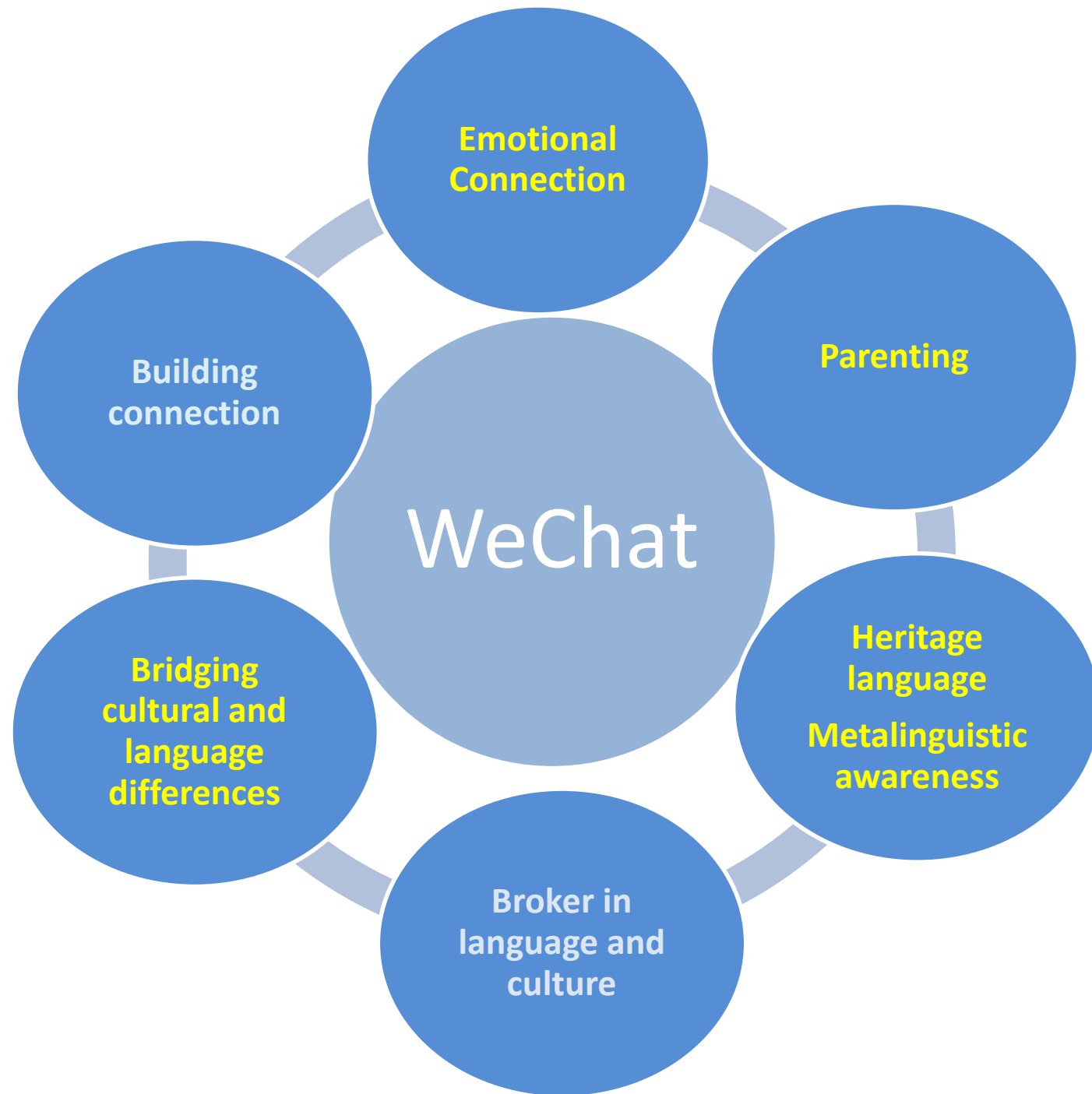W：   gongniu xiansheng
GP: he has made a fast progress in Chinese.

M: show what you have done in school (2.02)
GM: show GP your bracelet
W: (puts his wrist in front of the phone)

Conversation continues about school

Conclusion

- Visible FLP via digital practices
- Heritage language is implicitly learned and developed through socialisation process
- Social and cultural norms are also negotiated through language learning
- Social media functions as a tool bridging language and cultural differences
- Indirectly facilitate connections between generations

Thank you!

谢谢！