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Think Globally, Teach Locally: Representation of Chinese Culture in the Chinese Textbooks of Ireland

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to investigate what and how Chinese culture is represented in the Chinese textbooks via critical discourse analysis (CDA). To address the raised research questions, the qualitative data of semi-structured interviews with the teachers who use these textbooks in the Irish context were scrutinized. It was found that these Chinese textbooks tend to provide general cultural knowledge to capture Irish students' attention, and fall short of developing their global communicative competence (GCC). Furthermore, the integration of real-life materials into Chinese textbooks, together with practices and perspectives, is perceived as vital to the development of language skills and global citizenship education. Viewed thus, more efforts are needed to design Chinese teaching and learning materials and activities to cater for the increasing needs of Irish students, tertiary or secondary. The study is intended to shed light on the writing of Chinese teaching materials for foreign language learners locally and globally.

Keywords

Chinese culture representation, global communicative competence, Chinese textbook, critical discourse analysis

1 Introduction

As China has become more competitive in the global context, the teaching and learning of Chinese as a Second Language (CSL) or Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) goes popular. The Chinese language has been incorporated into the national education systems in more than 70 countries. Over 4,000 overseas universities, 30,000 middle schools and 45,000 Chinese educational organizations now offer Chinese language courses, and more than 25,000,000 people are learning Chinese outside China (Zhong, 2021). As a key medium for representing cultural values, beliefs, or stereotypes or misunderstandings,

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(Canale, 2016; Weninger & Kiss, 2013; Xiong & Peng, 2020), textbooks have created a new research environment, where teachers and researchers, home and abroad, are producing a more effective response to the shortage of high-quality textbooks.

Despite the growing interest in and expectations for textbooks, doubts are voiced about their intended outcomes. Questions such as what kind of culture should be represented and how it should be represented in textbooks have drawn global discussion (e.g., Davidson & Liu, 2020; Lee & Li, 2020; Sun & Kwon, 2020). This study set out to explore the cultural contents represented in the textbooks used in Ireland.

2 Literature Review

Over the past decade, great change has taken place in Chinese teaching and learning worldwide. Different views on how to embed cultural elements in language textbooks are presented, ranging from culture representation and intercultural communication to extensive resources-based and activity-oriented educational modes (Bori & Petanović, 2016; Jalalian Daghigh & Abdul Rahim, 2020; Gurney & Díaz, 2020; Tajeddin & Bahrebar, 2017). To have a clear picture about the recent development in Chinese teaching and critiques, the literature review is conducted from two perspectives: 1) Chinese teaching in relation to cultural representation; 2) Integration of culture into CSL/CFL textbooks.

2.1 Chinese teaching in relation to cultural representation

Not until recently has the world focused on accelerating the development and production of Chinese textbooks with reference to cultural representation. In the 1950s, the widespread pedagogy for CSL/CFL teaching was Grammar-Translation Method. Influenced by applied linguistics in 1970s, Audio-Lingual Method, combined with a focus on syntax was introduced to CSL/CFL. During the 1980s, functional approach was glamorized to enhance communicative competence. In the late of 1990s, Byram proposed the model of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) as a response to the development of communicative competence. ICC is composed of five dimensions, namely, *savoir*, *savoir apprendre*, *savoir comprendre*, *savoir etre*, and *savoir s'engager* (Byram, 1997), viewed as the ability to “enable one to effectively and appropriately interact in a language other than one’s native language with others from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds” (Tran & Duong, 2018, p.2). Based on this model of linguistic competences, dialectical approach has gained popularity recently, emphasizing the ongoing process that allows for a complex, dynamic, historically and contextually situated conceptualization of ICC (Martin, 2015).

Exposing learners to a single culture is no longer considered sufficient as intercultural language teaching and understanding gains momentum. From the new century on, language form and function plus culture are highly valued in CSL/CFL teaching and learning (Liu, 2021, 2014), suggesting that students learn the language forms in class and use the language in the cultural context. Experiential teaching and immersive teaching are taken as an effective way to implement the integration of “language-function-culture” (Qin, 2017; Zu, 2017). Zhou and Wang (2020) highlighted the importance of integrating culture into language class and maintained that at the beginning level, the proportion of culture teaching ought to be larger than language teaching to maintain the learners’ interest in Chinese. Lin (2017) reviewed Chinese culture teaching in the US context and pointed it out that culture teaching was largely marginalized and deserves more serious investigation.

For the purpose of global citizenship education, Ireland prioritizes foreign language teaching as a major strategy to maintain its status in the international community. Chinese has been listed as one of the eight languages that will have a major impact on the country’s future and will become an entrance exam subject in Leaving Certificate Examinations (equivalent to the university entrance exam 高考 in China) from 2020 (Embassy of PRC in Ireland, 2017). The aim of having Chinese in the Irish curriculum is to

develop learners' sense of global citizenship, foster an appreciation of linguistic and cultural diversity, offer students opportunities to develop global communication capacity, linguistic and intercultural awareness in a wide range of real-life context (NCCA, 2019). There is little doubt that students' global readiness is set as the top priority in Irish education, secondary and tertiary.

Unfortunately, there is a shortage of cases which integrate language and culture in classroom teaching, as the current tendency is still to teach linguistic features while ignoring relevant cultural themes or factors. Based on content analysis of nine sets of most-widely used Chinese language textbooks, Zhou (2010) discovered that there are many language exercises, but the elements of culture are not fully reflected. The lack of interesting, interactive and task-based exercises makes it difficult for students to learn and use relevant cultural knowledge and skills in the learning experience and interaction.

As the largest English-speaking country in the European Union after the Brexit, Ireland promotes the teaching of foreign language as a major strategy to maintain its status in the international community. For the purpose of global citizenship education, Ireland prioritizes foreign language teaching as a major strategy to maintain its status in the international community. Irish students are expected to develop their potentials to negotiate cultural meanings and conduct intercultural communication appropriately and effectively.

As can be seen from the above, the objectives of Chinese teaching need to be shifted from the development of linguistic competence to communicative competence and then ICC. In the face of ongoing global challenges, ICC and culturally appropriate materials in Chinese teaching and learning in the West warrants an in-depth study.

2.2 Integration of Culture into CSL/CFL Textbooks

The increasing popularity of teaching CSL/CFL has witnessed textbooks for language learners proliferating over the last decades. A number of studies have explored the cultural representation in CSL/CFL textbooks (Hua, Hu & Liu, 2021; Qin, 2017; Xiong & Peng 2020; Zhou, 2010) and the studies on the culture representation in CSL/CFL textbooks have demonstrated a diverse and integrated paradigm. Due to the long and complicated history and the culturally distant ideology, how Chinese culture is represented in the Chinese language textbooks for western learners remains obscure to many.

Studying a second or foreign language provides learners with an intercultural experience that requires negotiation between the new linguistic / cultural codes and the ones they are familiar with (Kubota, 2004). As an inseparable feature of language, cultural representation plays an essential role in the development of global citizenship. Although the importance of culture representation in Chinese language teaching and learning is widely recognized (Lee & Wang, 2021; Xiong & Peng, 2020), the research focus of culture teaching is placed on the issue of “why teach culture”, rather than “what to teach?” and “how to teach”, thus failing to provide concrete guidance for teaching practice.

Taking an integrated critical social semiotic approach, Xiong and Peng (2020) investigated the image-text semiotic relations and their cultural meaning potentials in textbook content with reference to two sets of textbooks published in China-New Practical Chinese Reader (NPCR) 《新实用汉语课本》 and US-Integrated Chinese (IC) 《中文听说读写》. Three types of image-text relations were identified: denotational/pedagogical/linguistic relations, denotational/pedagogical relations, and denotational relations. IC was found to provide learners with more opportunities to engage in critical and comparative reflections on Chinese cultural values; whereas the cultural meanings invoked by the pictures in the NPCR were perceived as “most denotational”, thus “missing opportunities for deeper cultural interpretations.” In view of this, the development of cultural content in Chinese language textbooks is highlighted with the emphasis on “intercultural authenticity,” which refers to the real-life scenario in the context of intercultural communication.

From an intercultural perspective, Ouyang and Zhou (2016) systematically compared the similarities

and differences of representing Chinese culture and learner's own culture in four sets of Chinese and American CSL/CFL textbooks. Content analysis was used to scrutinize the extent and means of mutual cultural representation at both the national culture level and sociocultural background level. Chinese textbooks compiled in the US were found to display a fuller array of strategies in cultural comparison and a higher degree of realism in mutual cultural presentation, and may better fulfill the objective of developing learners' intercultural competence than the textbooks published in China. Specifically, the characters' activities in the former textbook were set in the US, whereas the scenarios in the latter Chinese textbook were set in China. Hence, a question arises: how to improve cultural representation in textbooks and localize the teaching materials, and eventually create meaningful intercultural opportunities geared to the actual needs of those Chinese language learners.

Following this research, Ouyang (2020) conducted a further comparative content analysis on the cultural representation between the second edition of NPCR and the third edition of IC in terms of the cultural topics and their proportions. Both sets of textbooks provide a wide range of cultural topics including humanities, technologies, festivals and customs, geographical environment, leisure activities, drinking and food culture etc.; however, the two textbooks demonstrate significant variations in terms of proportion and weight. To be specific, NPCR emphasizes the famous literature with poets, poems and the four classic masterpieces accounting for 50% of the cultural content, and the other half involves Chinese opera, science development, calligraphic, architecture and history. By contrast, IC devotes 71% of the cultural content on Chinese history, including different dynasties and historical figures, e.g., Qin Shihuang and Sun Yat-sen, and a brief introduction of architecture and technology. Self-evident, NPCR attaches great importance to the big "C" culture and tends to focus on Chinese civilization, especially the ancient Chinese civilization.

As cultural artifacts, textbooks are supposed to provide students with linguistic knowledge and to open a window onto a specific culture. Rich cultural representations within textbooks are expected to develop language learners' ICC (Gong et al., 2021). A thoughtful incorporation of culture in textbooks may help them communicate effectively in intercultural situations and assist them in becoming tolerant and receptive to values of other cultures. Beyond any doubt, cultural representation in language textbooks may help learners to become more engaged in L2 learning and allow them to share world knowledge and personal experiences without jeopardizing their own culture.¹

It is important to note that general cultural representation in language textbooks proves to be superficial or idealistic (Kim, 2020; Lee & Li, 2020; Zhou 2010; Zu 2017). From a critical perspective, Hilliard (2014) and Xiang and Yenika-Agbaw (2019) argued that some language textbooks represent culture with a "tourist gaze", that is, focusing on topics such as food, landmarks and transportation, portraying the target culture as exciting, fresh and positive from a tourist's view point and lacking in-depth cultural information as well as cultural activities targeted for the development of students' intercultural communicative skills. The cultural representation in those textbooks appears to be fragmentary, showing only behavioral norms, without the true experience of deep culture.

One of the most serious critiques relates to the cultural representation of ideological content in some CSL/CFL textbooks. Such ideological integration was observed by Li and Guan (2020) and Wang (2016). It is observed that Chinese language textbooks from China, to varying degrees, involve Chinese moral and civic education. From the standpoint of "*Telling a Good Chinese Story*", the construction of Chinese cultural image is targeted (Zhang et al., 2020). Arguably, these Chinese language textbooks seem to serve multiple functions, teaching Chinese language and grammar on the one hand, and instilling Chinese ideologies into the learners' mind on the other.²

To sum up, culture representation in relation to Chinese teaching and learning proves to be sensitive and challenging on the ground that culture specific values and stereotypical images may be represented in the language teaching materials. Doubtless, the integration of Chinese culture into textbooks may facilitate students to learn not only the language, but also the culture and society. Given that culture

representation in Chinese textbooks is reckoned as legitimate and valuable, respect for cultural diversity should be considered in writing Chinese teaching materials for foreigners, locally and globally. Hence, more efforts are needed to design and compose Chinese textbooks to cater for the increasing needs of international learners, secondary and tertiary.

Based on the literature above, three research questions are raised to drive the study: RQ1: What cultural contents are represented in the Chinese textbooks? RQ2: How do these Chinese textbooks provide opportunities for Irish students to enhance their global communicative competence? RQ3: What are the Chinese teachers' views on the culture representation in the textbooks?

3 Methodology

3.1 Research design

This exploratory study aims to explore what and how Chinese culture is represented in the Chinese textbooks via critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA takes language as a form of social practice and concentrates on the ways social and political domination are produced by text and talk (Fairclough, 1995). As language is viewed as "social practice determined by social structures" (Fairclough, 1989, p.17), CDA aims to disclose the underlying power and ideology in language. In other words, CDA seeks to explore the hidden relationship between language and ideology. Three levels of a new series of Chinese for Junior Cycle Short Course (CJCSC) textbooks³ are selected, as they are the most-widely used textbooks in Ireland with an innovative design. Cultural elements embodied in these textbooks are unpacked and examined to see whether they are congruent or in conflict with the multicultural context and whether these elements provide opportunities for students and teachers to be engaged in the Chinese language learning. Cultural representations in the CJCSC textbooks will be the focus of data analysis.

3.1.1 Participants

Teachers from schools and universities using the CJCSC textbooks in Ireland were invited for the in-depth interviews. Twelve participants had their voices heard, reflecting teachers' views on cultural representation in the textbooks. Three participants were local Irish teachers, and the rest were Chinese teachers sponsored by the Government of China. Nine out of twelve Chinese teachers were female, and three male. Their ages ranged from 27 to 56. Five teachers have gained their doctoral degrees and the rest masters (For more detailed information, please see Appendix A). For ethic reasons, pseudonyms are used for all participants.

3.1.2 Data collection and analysis

Data from this qualitative research were collected from in-depth interviews and teachers' self-reports. The interviews were conducted with the semi-structured interview guides, and the interview data were coded and categorized. Seven steps were used to code and analyse qualitative data.

Step 1: Listen to the recording repeatedly and achieve a better understanding of the interviewees' intentions (Ryan, 2006; Willis, et al., 2007).

Step 2: Transcribe the interviews verbatim and code the transcripts with identifiers. Then put a transcript aside and continue to code another one. If the identifier is similar to (or the same as) others, group them together.

Step 3: Develop broader descriptive categories. Sort the categories identified into central categories (Willis, et al., 2007).

Step 4: Code, sort and scrutinise data. Then reduce the number of categories by topical headings (Ryan, 2006).

Step 5: Select a topical heading to represent the main theme and develop a systematic analysis of the data, exploring meanings embedded within the interviews.

Step 6: Describe, interpret and theorise the data. Then double-check the similarities and differences (Ryan, 2006; Willis, et al., 2007).

Step 7: Check for consistency in the findings, probing the possible reasons for cultural representation, and identifying any particular features/patterns in the study, and reporting.

The textbook data were analyzed in terms of cultural representation, cultural input and Chinese cultural traditions. On the basis of the underlying analytical notions or broader descriptive categories, sort the categories identified into central categories such as cultural representation: Chinese character and its development, Chinese tea, red packet, Chinese zodiac, Chinese calligraphy and painting. Then reduce the number of categories by topical headings such as *views on culture representation, conflicting cultural issues, real-life materials*. Finally, select a topical heading to represent the main theme such as *Entanglement with conflicting cultural issues* (please see 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3), and develop a systematic analysis of the data, exploring meanings embedded within the Chinese textbook.

In answer to RQ1, critical discourse analysis (CDA) was employed to find out what and how cultural contents are represented in the Chinese textbooks used in the Irish context. With respect to RQ2, semi-structured interviews were conducted to investigate how these Chinese textbooks provide opportunities for Irish students to enhance their global communicative competence. To address RQ3, personal interviews with the teachers who use these textbooks were scrutinized to explore the Chinese teachers' views on the culture representation in the textbooks.

4 Findings

The semi-structured interviews with twelve teachers made it possible for Chinese teachers working in Ireland to have their voices heard, especially their attitudes and views about culture representations in the Chinese textbooks used locally. The recurring themes emerged in the qualitative data are presented as follows: 1) Different views on culture representation; 2) Entanglement with conflicting cultural issues; 3) Integration of real-life materials into Chinese textbooks; 4) Teachers' agency to deal with cultural issues in the Irish context.

4.1 Different views on culture representation

Data from in-depth interviews disclosed that irrespective of nationality, gender and age, all participants believed that while learning the Chinese language, Irish students needed more cultural input. They came to recognize that over the past decade, the objectives of Chinese teaching have shifted from the development of linguistic competence to ICC. Lee recalled that "when I embarked on teaching Chinese language ten years ago, I was told to put an emphasis on teaching basic skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Quite often, I was reminded of not falling into the trap of turning the language course into cultural lectures. At present, almost every teacher manages to learn how develop students' ICC in the classroom".

Apparently, the cultural representation in the textbooks was assessed in a positive light. For example, the CJCS includes an array of topics: Chinese character and its development, Chinese celebrities e.g., Jacky Chan, Chinese names of Ireland, Chinese tea, red packet, Chinese zodiac, Chinese calligraphy and painting, Chinese education, the Forbidden City, the five elements and Yin/Yang, Chinese dressing, high speed train in China, and Chinese martial arts.

Figure 1

Cultural Content Illustration from the Selected Textbook: Chinese for Junior Cycle Short Course (CJCSC) (Book 1, Lesson 2, p.16)

Some teachers hold the view that language and culture go hand in hand, and linguistic competence alone does not guarantee a smooth and successful intercultural communication. For Liu, the influence of culture is all-pervasive. “Who can claim that cultural factors have no influence on Chinese language teaching and learning?” Hence, ICC should be targeted in the teaching and learning process.

Virtually all participants agreed on the objective to develop students’ ICC. As Gao stated, “We may help our students develop a comprehensive picture about Chinese cultural traditions, the most representative Chinese symbols, myth/legends, philosophical thoughts, arts and aesthetics, and the common practice of Chinese people’s daily life”.

Nonetheless, in-depth interviews revealed an inconsistency between teachers’ views about the integration of Chinese culture into their textbooks and their teaching practices. Mary maintained that,

Cultural teaching cannot and does not need to show the whole culture to students, but to give students selected contents, let them have a little taste, so that they can develop their interest to find the source of culture. Culture teaching and learning should provide students with opportunity and space for growth. It should broaden their global vision on the one hand and cultivate students’ interest in cultural research on the other.

In response to the question “how does the Chinese textbook provide opportunities for Irish students to enhance global communicative competence?” Ruben commented,

All the textbooks have some explicit cultural materials, activities, and discussions which may help develop students’ cultural knowledge and global awareness. The authors have designed a range of interactive activities and provided role-plays for global communication.⁴

Noah contended that “incorporating authentic material into textbooks such as introducing Chinese celebrities and products (say Chinese tea) appears far from perfect. And the lack of follow-up activities for students to explore and reflect cultural differences may fail to provide sufficient opportunities for students to develop their GCC”. Namely, person and product alone, lacking practices and perspectives, may miss the opportunity for students to experience growth in terms of GCC.

To what extent, can the follow-up activities engage students with intercultural experiences? This depends largely on teachers’ pedagogy. Today, the central principles of teaching CSL/CFL, such as cultivating ICC, taking students as the center, advocating interaction and “learning by doing”, have become the consensus in the context of Ireland. Yet, how to cope with cultural representation in Chinese language teaching and learning constitutes an ongoing debate.

4.2 Entanglement with conflicting cultural issues

Several teachers experienced conflicting issues in Chinese cultural representation while teaching the Chinese language. They feel puzzled about the current trends, academic or cultural, relating to value education in Ireland and China. In China's education system, teachers are encouraged to promote the core value principles such as patriotism, equity and harmony, explicitly or implicitly; whereas in the Irish context, teachers prompt students to consider their responsibilities to themselves and to others, and appreciate virtues such as empathy, generosity and compassion. Teachers are instructed not to provoke challenging questions about the meaning and purpose of life. In the context of Irish culture, diversity of culture is emphasized. Students learn to respect and to be respected in intercultural communication. Hence, teachers are expected to provide cognitive encouragement instead of provocative questions which may run the risk of disturbing students' sound judgment. In doing so, students are expected to build their sense of identity and belonging, which helps them flourish within their communities and function well as citizens in a multicultural society.

Despite their passion or enthusiasm for Chinese language and culture teaching in Ireland, some teachers reported struggling with conflicting issues as in the case of value education. In Chinese culture, harmony is highly valued. However, harmony is not appreciated in Ireland, and conflict is not devalued as it may lead to progress. For example, a conflict about online or offline education may lead to a better solution: blended learning pedagogy. As knowledge is socially constructed, a conflict may lead to some progress. It is crucial to note that Irish schools and colleges encourage students to appreciate different cultures and respect divergent voices.

As such, misreading and misinterpretation may arise as in the case of Mulan. In Chinese culture, she was portrayed as royal to the nation with patriotism and dedication. In contrast, she was perceived as developing from self-denial to self-confidence and self-realization in Ireland. How to negotiate the embedded cultural meaning poses a challenge to students and teachers alike. "How do we language teachers decide what values should be taught? Should we adopt an implicit or explicit approach to value education in the Irish context?" Questions like these make some Chinese teachers critical and uncertain.

Simon warned that textbooks need to take some cautions to tell stories with Chinese cultural values. Take the story of "Avanti Borrowing Pot" for an example. Avanti 阿凡提 borrowed a pot from his landlord and returned it with another small pot. When the landlord asked why returning two, Avanti replied that the pot gave birth to a baby pot. Soon, Avanti borrowed the biggest pot from the landlord and never returned it. When the landlord asked why, Avanti replied that the pot died. If a pot can give birth, of course, it can die. In Chinese culture, Avanti's cleverness is appreciated, but in the eyes of Irish children, Avanti is cunning and unreliable. For them, "little trick" does not equalize wisdom.

The above examples suggest that when integrating cultural contents into textbooks, efforts are needed to consider culturally different perspectives of Western learners. Regarding cultural values, teachers may encourage students to identify the common ground of different cultures, and reduce cultural prejudice or bias. Teachers should prompt students to explore their own beliefs, religious or non-religious, in the light of what they learn.⁵

4.3 Integration of real-life materials into Chinese textbooks

The most striking point emerged from the semi-structured interviews is the integration of real-life materials into the textbooks. Jack perceived the integration as a "must", because "real-life materials can meet the intercultural and intellectual curiosity of Chinese language learners." Rod remarked that "Irish students are curious to know more about the modern social changes in China. The real life and the most current development are the targets in their Chinese textbooks." James added that "up-to-date news tends to motivate Irish students to become more engaged in the learning process."

Chinese teaching and learning can be seen as a process of meaning negotiation. In the context of Ireland, authenticity may connect learners to real world experiences, and may develop the cognitive potentials of Chinese learners. The participants agreed on the value of integrating real-life materials into Chinese textbooks. This proves to be cost-effective as such investment turns out to be productive in relation to intercultural communication. Antoni quoted a student's remark "I learn Chinese language and culture, and I wait hungrily for an opportunity to visit China and broaden my horizon".

From Julie's standpoint, the integration of real-life materials pertinent to contemporary Chinese society should be encouraged because the current economic prosperity and social progress, including problems in China may strongly motivate Irish students to find out more about China through the Internet and new media. If they exhaust themselves to learn Chinese language alone, they may feel frustrated, as their intellectual needs are not met. For this reason, Ali-pay, high-speed railway, Beidou Navigation Satellite System (北斗导航), Micius (墨子号), the world first quantum science experiment satellite, and the buzzword of "involution" (内卷) and "lying flat" (躺平) in relation to contemporary Chinese culture might be put in the textbooks for Irish students.

For Jack, the integration of real-life materials into contemporary Chinese textbooks may enable Irish learners to benefit enormously from a wide range of topics such as poverty alleviation targets of China, high price of housing, healthcare issues, green transportation, etc. Setting students close to contemporary Chinese culture may allow them to keep a close eye on the economic prosperity and scientific achievements in China. The integration of real-life materials into Chinese textbooks helps to provide a microenvironment where Irish students can develop their language skills and global mindset.

For Mary, "the integration of updated real-life materials can facilitate learners to assess their progress and problems in the learning process, and help teachers to make a pedagogically sound judgment about their students' GCC development".

Clearly, the integration of real-life materials into Chinese textbooks matters. Chinese textbooks should offer Irish students opportunities to develop their global awareness, thus carefully meeting their needs, and eventually facilitating them to experience a sense of satisfaction and academic achievement. This option is vitally practicable for Irish students, learning and living outside China.

4.4 Teachers' agency to deal with cultural issues in the Irish context

The participants reported facing challenges of integrating cultural contents into Chinese language teaching and learning. As a number of Chinese language teachers in Ireland come from China, they commit themselves to a high-quality Chinese teaching in Ireland. As such, teachers' agency to deal with cultural issues in the Irish context needs to be exercised.

Agency in this context refers to "one's socio-cultural negotiated ability or willingness to act within specific socio-cultural contexts" (Hall, 2005, p.212). Psychologically speaking, a teacher is an agent, who needs to develop beliefs about himself or herself as a learner and understand his or her own cognitive capabilities (Oxford & Gkonou, 2018). In the study, some Chinese teachers deemed themselves to be capable of accomplishing what they were required to do. They appeared to exhibit a strong sense of agency, knowing that positive results were derived from their long-lived efforts.

When asked about their approach to cultural contents in Chinese language class, Nadia reflected, "I ask my students to compare their home culture with Chinese culture. I also use videos to illustrate an aspect of the Chinese culture."

The voice of Nadia was echoed by Sara "Using video clips to make comparison between Chinese and Irish culture is probably the approach I use most. I ask students what they notice to be very culturally different or their own experience including what they have read or heard about Chinese culture". In support of Sara, Patrick remarked "I talk about my own experiences and tackle the stereotypes about Chinese culture".

Emily displayed her passion and inclination to prompt culture teaching. She remarked that “In the post-pandemic era, it is vital to reshape teaching concepts, update teaching design, and integrate cultural contents into Chinese teaching in Irish context”. She was prepared to deliver a talk about Chinese culture in relation to the textbook compilation via story-based approach.

James viewed online Chinese teaching as a new field different from the off-line teaching. As he observed, “We are living in the digital world, which maximizes the opportunity to use online resources”. He designed an online Chinese course to explore information-rich graphics for intercultural communication, and he believed that info-graphic communication may facilitate Irish learners to better understand Chinese speakers’ potential meanings, thus leading to a new ecology in Ireland. As expected, the up-to-date knowledge about the contemporary China in terms of economic prosperity, scientific achievements, and social progress can be spotted or traced in his new course.

Recognizing that little emphasis was placed on global citizenship education in Chinese language textbooks and global communicative competence in the syllabi, Adam reported trying his best to use authentic materials from the Internet and real-life experiences as supplementary teaching materials in the Irish context. He managed to develop students’ global citizenship by exposing them to different cultures and the related values. For him, global citizenship is not merely an option, but a central tenet of effective language education worldwide. He forged ahead with his self-confidence.

As people with different languages and cultural backgrounds in the world become more and more closely connected, it is crucial to take effective measures in Chinese teaching to improve students’ global employment competitiveness. For Chinese language teachers in Ireland, more research is needed to assess and clarify the relationship between language learning and employment competitiveness across cultures. Teachers of Chinese language are encouraged to continue with the great work and agency they have already exhibited, and devise more means of conducting an effective Chinese language teaching pedagogy across cultures.

In short, the study exhibited a consensus of Irish Chinese teacher’s attitudes to and beliefs about integrating cultural contents into Chinese textbooks. Most of the participants held positive views about world citizenship education; and reported facing urgent needs to think globally and act locally in Chinese teaching and learning. To achieve the success of teaching Chinese language and culture in the Irish context, teachers’ agency needs to be exercised in the classroom and beyond.

5 Discussion

This study was designed to explore the culture representation in Chinese textbooks, coupled with views and attitudes of Chinese teachers in the context of Ireland. The results showed that Chinese teachers presented divergent views and attitudes regarding the culture representation in the textbooks used in Ireland. Although they disagree with each other on the culture content to be taught, they do agree on the integration of real-life/modern materials into Chinese textbooks, which proves to be second to none in the international Chinese education. The real-life materials are expected to be pertinent to the contemporary Chinese culture, such as high-speed train, BDS (北斗导航), and poverty alleviation targets in China.

Not surprisingly, Chinese textbooks used in Ireland are found far from perfect on the ground that global citizenship and global awareness are emphasized in the Irish education system. One of the Irish central concerns is GCC, which refers to the capacity to learn, work and live with others effectively in global context. GCC is considered as necessary in their global competitiveness.

It is worth noting the phenomenon of “younger age” of Chinese language learners. Currently, among the foreign Chinese learners, the primary and middle school students have exceeded 50%, reaching 60% in some areas (Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2020). The younger age means a new development stage of Chinese language education. The young learners tend to acquire Chinese language with curiosity, most likely to establish language sense, and develop intercultural empathy and identity (ibid.). As the past

textbooks were mostly prepared for adults, a new plan for international Chinese education should be formulated. More efforts are needed to study the features of teenager's CSL/CFL learning and develop new textbooks for the "younger age" of Chinese learners.

Closely related to the phenomenon of "younger age" of Chinese language learners are the online learning resources, which are highly likely to create an alternative solution to Chinese learning outside the classroom. The Internet has been available for more than 20 years, but we need to recognize that the "Internet" is not just a conveyor of "belt of knowledge", but an "interactive community". As digital natives (Branden & Gorp, 2021; Lee & Wang, 2021), the younger generation demonstrate adequate abilities to use technology, exhibit high self-efficacy and possess a high level of digital fluency (Aslan, 2021). Digital technologies may facilitate digital natives to study whenever and wherever they want as in the case of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). Hence, Chinese learning resources should be jointly built and shared.

With regard to the vision for the future of improved Chinese culture instruction, the combination of conventional textbook and digital-course should be targeted, thus creating a novel ecology for Chinese culture instruction in the Irish context. In the digital era, multimodality in the textbooks would be integrated into the teaching and learning process. Working together, the conventional textbooks and digital-courses will better cater for the increasing needs of Mandarin Chinese learners in the Irish context.

To gain an insight into the real needs of Chinese learners, satisfaction survey should be implemented. Only in this way can we find a better way to cater for the increasing needs of the younger generation. In so doing, the lack of communication and community sense among learners within a course or a programme can be minimized.

The challenges of Chinese culture teaching for non-Chinese native speakers and native speakers of Chinese teachers will arise. Native speakers of Chinese teachers need to cultivate their awareness of intercultural communication and learn how to bridge the gap between Chinese culture and Irish culture by telling Chinese stories in a way acceptable to Irish students. They also need to further their teacher training with reference of Irish culture, especially Irish education traditions and avoid culture blind spots. For teachers of non-Chinese native speakers, they need to broaden their horizon by conducting comparative cultural studies in relation to Chinese culture, including Chinese philosophy and philology. Irish teachers are preferably encouraged to conduct cultural studies from the perspective of intertextuality.

Regarding the limitations of the study, it is virtually impossible to eradicate subjectivity in the data analysis due to the following reasons: firstly, the data that the authors collected to illustrate the point is not sufficiently abundant due to the limited number of participants; secondly, the study does not involve other forms of discourse, such as self-reflections of other Chinese teachers, home and abroad. Future research may involve a wider range of discourses for analysis.

6 Conclusions

This study sets out to investigate what and how Chinese culture is represented in Chinese textbooks used in the Irish context. It was found that these Chinese textbooks tend to provide general cultural knowledge such as Chinese character and its development, Chinese tea, Chinese zodiac, and Chinese martial arts to capture students' attention and develop their ICC. Regarding the opportunities to enhance the students' GCC, the activities designed in these textbooks to engage students in global citizen sentiments rely heavily on teachers' pedagogy, and may fall short of encouraging global citizenship, especially GCC. Furthermore, the integration of real-life materials into Chinese textbooks, together with practices and perspectives, is perceived as vital to the development of language skills and global citizenship. As expected, divergent views and attitudes of Chinese teachers in relation to textbook compilation are voiced, ranging from "a real-life materials" to "lacking practices and perspectives."

Worthy of note, the integration of culture into CSL/CFL textbooks tends to be realized via visual materials such as video clips and films. In the digital era, the integration of Chinese culture into textbooks proves to be imminent. Hence, more efforts are needed to design Chinese teaching and learning activities to cater for the increasing needs of Irish students, tertiary or secondary.

Taken as a whole, this study helps us learn that culture representation plays an important role in Chinese textbook compilation, enlightens us to respect diversity in relation to cultural values, challenges us to decide what values should be taught and to whom. In the global context, how to promote Chinese teaching and learning can be viewed as much an opportunity as a challenge. Viewed in this way, the Chinese language education needs a global vision and the confidence to invest in that vision. Teachers, tertiary or secondary, should know how to teach language and culture by concentrating on the important elements such as affective commitment and cognitive curiosity in intercultural communication, and filtering out the irrelevant, thus fully releasing the huge creative potential of Chinese teachers in the local context of Ireland.

Notes

1. This is because shared world knowledge and personal experiences enriched by L2 cultural learning might lead to the critical reflection about their own culture, thus running the risk of jeopardizing their own cultural beliefs.
2. For example, patriotism appears to be a sensitive term for westerners. For this reason, the Chinese for Junior Cycle Short Course has deliberately avoided the term.
3. The textbooks in question are *Chinese for Junior Cycle Short Course* (CJCSC) and *Chinese for Leaving Certificate* (CLC). They are compiled in Ireland, and will be published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press in China (2022). The cultural topics are designed in the light of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), which involve both traditional and modern aspects of Chinese culture, including Characters, Festivals, Family, Travel, Economy, Handicraft, Traditional Chinese Medicine and Student Life in China. The course of Junior Cycle is the first three years of post-primary level education in Ireland, introduced in 2014 as part of the Irish Junior Cycle educational reform. The course subject is designed to occupy approximately 100 hours in comparison with a minimum of 200 hours for the regular Junior Cycle curriculum subjects. The Leaving Certificate is the graduate certificate following Senior Cycle study in Irish post-primary level education. It is awarded on the basis of satisfactory completion of examinations organized by the State Examinations Commission, and the results are commonly used as the reference for entry into third level education in Ireland.
4. For example, teachers may ask students to talk about the most important holiday in different cultures, and cultivate the cultural awareness of students. With reference to the global challenge or crisis (such as global warm and carbon emission), ask students to seek a better solution worldwide.
5. For example, in the face of Covid-19, teachers may encourage students to make their own best judgment. It is vital to leave it open for students to develop their independent mind in the Irish context.

Appendix

Participants of the Semi-structure Interviews

No	Name	Nationality	Length of teaching	Sex	Degree
1	Y	Irish	6 Ys	F	PhD
2	P	Chinese	1 Y	F	PhD
3	B	Chinese	15 Ys	M	PhD
4	M	Chinese	23Ms	F	PhD
5	A	Chinese	12 Ys	F	PhD
6	Z	Irish	7 Ys	F	Master
7	X	Chinese	6 Ys	M	Master
8	L	Irish	5Ys	F	Master
9	X	Chinese	12 Ys	F	Master
10	XS	Chinese	6 Ys	F	Master
11	C	Chinese	7 Ys	M	Master
12	G	Chinese	12Ys	F	Master

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国际视野，本土教学：爱尔兰中文教材中的中国文化呈现

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摘要

本研究的目的是通过批判性话语分析 (CDA) 研究中国文化在爱尔兰的中文教科书中的内容呈现和表现形式。为了解决这一研究问题，我们对在爱尔兰使用这些中文教科书的教师进行了半结构化的定性访谈。研究发现，这些中文教科书倾向于提供一般文化知识来吸引爱尔兰学生的注意力，而未能培养他们的全球交际能力。此外，将现实生活材料与中文教科书相结合，以及提供文化实践的机会对语言技能和全球公民教育的发展至关重要。因此，教师需要更重视设计中文教学材料和活动，以满足爱尔兰高等教育或中学学生日益增长的中文学习需求。该研究旨在为本土和全球外语学习者编写中文教材提供启示。

关键词

中国文化呈现，全球交际能力，中文教材，批评话语分析，爱尔兰

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