

A Study on the Presentation of Chinese Culture in FLTRP Senior High School English Textbooks

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Abstract: One of the reasons for "Chinese culture aphasia" in English language teaching is the lack of Chinese cultural content in textbooks. To explore this issue and provide suggestions for future textbook compilation and teaching practice, this study, based on the "Analytical Framework for Cultural Presentation in Foreign Language Textbooks" developed by Zhang Hong and Li Xiaonan, together with the additional dimension of cultural forms proposed by subsequent scholars, adopts content analysis to investigate the presentation characteristics of Chinese culture in the 2019 FLTRP optional senior high school English textbooks (Volumes 4-7) from three aspects: cultural types, forms, and presentation modes. The findings reveal that: in terms of cultural types, modern culture predominates, while traditional culture and revolutionary culture are less represented; regarding cultural forms, figures, products, practices, and ideas are the main forms, with cultural communities and ecology receiving little attention; concerning presentation modes, explicit presentation is dominant (especially cultural texts), while implicit presentation through cultural understanding and language exercises is less common. It is recommended that textbook compilers increase the proportion of revolutionary culture, balance cultural distribution across sections, and strengthen multimodal presentation and cultural practice exercises to enhance students' cultural awareness.

Keywords: Senior High School English; FLTRP Optional Textbooks; Chinese Cultural Presentation; Cultural Types; Cultural Forms

1. Introduction

In recent years, a prominent issue in English language teaching under globalization has been "Chinese culture aphasia"—that is, many high school students are enthusiastic about Western festivals and familiar with their histories, yet

show little interest in and have limited knowledge of traditional Chinese festivals. Moreover, they are more adept at communicating about the cultures of English-speaking countries in English but struggle to express Chinese social and cultural concepts in English. For example, many students can fluently introduce Thanksgiving in English but do not know how to express the cultural connotations of "staying up late on Chinese New Year's Eve" or "the Dragon Boat Festival's mugwort." This phenomenon arises partly because teachers and students do not place enough emphasis on Chinese culture, failing to fully recognize the value of learning it. On the other hand, there is a shortage of English teaching resources in China that accurately reflect traditional culture. Some scholars believe that the lack of traditional Chinese cultural content in textbooks is a major reason why the problem of "Chinese culture aphasia" is difficult to solve.

To implement the latest concepts of culture teaching in the English curriculum, the *National English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools (2017 Edition, Revised in 2020)* (hereinafter referred to as the *New Curriculum Standards*) defines "cultural awareness" as students' understanding of Chinese and foreign cultures and their identification with excellent cultures. It explicitly states: "English courses should help learners learn excellent Chinese culture, including traditional Chinese culture and revolutionary culture, because cultivating cultural awareness helps students enhance their national identity and sense of belonging to their country. Senior high school English courses should emphasize the cultivation of students' cultural awareness. At the same time, senior high school education should, on the basis of compulsory education, expand the scope of learning about Chinese and foreign cultures, deepen students' understanding of cultural similarities and differences, strengthen their cultural confidence, and equip them with certain cross-cultural communication skills and the ability to spread Chinese culture" [1]. Textbooks are important

carriers of the curriculum [2], and English textbooks serve the function of transmitting linguistic knowledge and cultural content. The cultural content in English textbooks is not only a crucial basis for teachers to conduct culture teaching but also important material for students to absorb cultural knowledge, and its quality directly affects classroom teaching outcomes. Paying attention to the construction of Chinese culture in English textbooks is conducive to cultivating students' cultural awareness.

High school is a critical stage for students' rapid physical and mental development and a crucial period for the gradual formation of their outlook on life, worldview, and values. Therefore, it is extremely important to focus on cultivating students' cultural awareness at this stage. Senior high school English textbooks are not only a medium for imparting linguistic knowledge but also an important carrier for fulfilling the educational mission of culture and reflecting national educational guidance, enabling the organic integration of cultural inheritance and personality cultivation. Consequently, it is necessary for researchers to analyze the Chinese cultural content in senior high school English textbooks. The new edition of FLTRP's English textbooks published in 2019 has been increasingly used in high schools in many regions, such as Shandong and Sichuan provinces. In view of this, this study investigates the presentation of Chinese culture in the 2019 FLTRP senior high school English textbooks to help teachers gain a deeper understanding of the textbooks and grasp the characteristics of Chinese culture within them, thereby facilitating teachers' scientific and rational use of the textbooks, enhancing students' learning and expression of Chinese culture, and providing a reference for textbook compilers.

2. Literature Review

2.1 International Research

Research on cultural representation in textbooks began relatively early abroad. Allen & Valette divided culture into "big C Culture" and "small c culture": big C Culture includes humanistic achievements such as literature, art, music, architecture, philosophy, and scientific and technological achievements; small c culture includes people's customs, lifestyles, social organizations, and interpersonal relationships [3]. Later, the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (1996) divided culture into cultural

products, practices, and perspectives. Moran further added cultural figures and cultural communities, dividing culture into five categories: cultural products, cultural practices, cultural perspectives, cultural figures, and cultural communities [4,5]. Cortazzi and Jin, from a geographical perspective, classified the cultures contained in textbooks into native culture, target language culture, and international culture [6].

In terms of empirical research, Lee and Li carried out a study on the dimensions of cultural representation in different regional English textbooks. The study revealed that one set of textbooks emphasized British culture to a relatively high degree, while the presentation of other cultures was insufficient. By comparison, another set of textbooks showed greater diversity in the selection of foreign cultures and maintained a more balanced representation of different cultural backgrounds. Rahim and Daghigh used Byram's (1993) framework of intercultural communicative competence to compare the cultural content and intercultural content of local and imported textbooks, finding that the former was more comprehensive and extensive than the latter [7]. In addition to comparative analyses, some scholars have conducted diachronic analyses of the presentation of world cultures in English textbooks [8] or examined the cultural knowledge content and modes of cultural presentation in English textbooks [9].

The above studies indicate that although current international research on cultural representation in textbooks has achieved certain theoretical and empirical results, systematic in-depth investigation is still lacking.

2.2 Domestic Research

Theories of culture proposed by international scholars have provided a theoretical basis for domestic scholars' analysis of cultural representation, which is generally conducted from the two dimensions of cultural content and mode of presentation.

In terms of theoretical research, regarding the content of cultural representation in textbooks, Niu divided culture into five categories: material culture, spiritual culture, behavioral culture, conceptual culture, and social culture [10]. Some scholars have defined Chinese culture with reference to general definitions of culture. For example, Xiao defined Chinese culture from both narrow and broad perspectives: the former refers to Chinese writers, artists, music, education,

history, geography, etc.; the latter includes the nation's lifestyles, traditions, values, etc. [11]. Zhang and Yu, drawing on Byram's (1993) cultural classification, divided Chinese culture into traditional culture, revolutionary culture, and modern culture, further subdividing these into traditional arts and literature, traditional life, linguistic culture, social culture, historical events, national geography, national defense education, famous figures, and everyday life [12]. Regarding presentation modes, Zhang and Yu classified them as explicit and implicit. Explicit presentation includes videos, listening activities, and reading texts. Implicit presentation includes post-text exercises such as fill-in-the-blank, translation, discussion activities, and writing tasks. They used texts or sentences in exercises as coding units; when the same cultural content was presented both in text and images, it was counted separately as two presentation modes. They then refined the explicit and implicit presentation modes and assigned different weights [12]. Later, based on Cortazzi and Jin (1999) classification, Zhang and Li divided cultural presentation content into target language culture, mother tongue culture, international culture, and shared culture. Then, integrating Moran (2009) cultural classification and from the perspective of textbook thematic content, they developed the "Analytical Framework for Cultural Presentation in English Textbooks," providing a basis for subsequent research on cultural presentation in English textbooks [13]. Subsequently, Zhang and Li (2022), adjusting their previous classification based on Zhang and Yu (2020), divided the learners' mother tongue culture (Chinese culture) in the framework into traditional culture, revolutionary culture, and modern culture.

In terms of empirical research, regarding the content of cultural presentation, target language culture accounts for a larger proportion in foreign language textbooks, while Chinese culture accounts for a smaller proportion. Among Chinese cultural types, traditional culture and modern culture are predominant, while revolutionary culture is insufficient. In terms of the mode of cultural presentation, most textbooks primarily adopt implicit presentation, while some achieve a balance between explicit and implicit presentation. Ren analyzed the compulsory volume 1 of the PEP senior high school English textbook and found that the length of Western cultural texts was twice that of Chinese cultural texts, and the number of Western characters was

four times that of Chinese characters [14]. Wu and Chen analyzed the cultural content of domestic senior high school English textbooks and found that British culture was presented most frequently, followed by American culture. China was also a frequently appearing country, and culturally distinctive elements often appeared in the textbooks [15]. Liu drawing on the coding framework of Zhang and Yu, subdivided the three cultural types into 24 cultural domains, including traditional arts and literature, classical literature, etc., and combined this with the classification of cultural presentation modes by Li and Yang. She compared the presentation characteristics of Chinese culture in the 2019 editions of the PEP, FLTRP, and Beijing Normal University senior high school English textbooks. The study found that all three editions primarily focused on advanced culture and also valued traditional Chinese culture but lacked attention to revolutionary culture. In terms of presentation modes, the three editions mostly used direct and incidental presentation, with embedded presentation being less common [16]. Du et al. pointed out that the PEP senior high school English textbook attached great importance to Chinese culture, which accounted for the highest proportion among cultural types [17]. Based on the "Analytical Framework for Cultural Presentation in English Textbooks," Zhang and Li analyzed the content and modes of Chinese cultural presentation in the compulsory and optional textbooks of a certain domestic senior high school English textbook series, finding that the textbooks emphasized inner-circle country cultures and shared culture while also attending to the presentation of Chinese culture and international culture [18]. Following the *New Curriculum Standards* and using Byram's (1993) evaluation criteria for cultural content in foreign language textbooks, Chen employed a combination of thematic analysis and text analysis to conduct a quantitative study of four sets of senior high school English textbooks—PEP, Beijing Normal University, FLTRP, and Yilin—published in 2019. The results showed that the PEP textbook had the most concentrated arrangement of Chinese cultural content, with a relatively balanced distribution across units. All four sets primarily presented excellent traditional Chinese culture, with more content on advanced cultural achievements, but revolutionary culture content was relatively scarce. In terms of presentation

mode, the main forms were text exercises and topic introduction, and the proportion of cultural content presented as complete texts had significantly increased compared to older editions [19]. Zhuang, through a review of literature on Chinese cultural presentation in various editions of secondary school English textbooks in China from 2011 to 2021, found that the 2017 edition of senior high school English textbooks placed greater emphasis on Chinese culture in terms of content arrangement compared to previous editions. The presentation combined explicit expression, implicit infusion, and multiple modes. Among them, the PEP textbook predominantly used explicit presentation, significantly increasing the proportion of Chinese cultural content, which was mostly distributed in reading and listening/speaking sections. In contrast, the FLTRP textbook tended to integrate Chinese cultural content implicitly, but compared to other cultural types, its proportion remained relatively small. It was more distributed in writing and grammar sections, with fewer complete texts [20]. Similarly based on the *New Curriculum Standards* and drawing on the "Analytical Framework for Cultural Presentation in Foreign Language Textbooks" developed by Zhang et al. conducted a textual analysis of the compulsory senior high school English textbooks published by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press in 2020. The study showed that the presentation types of Chinese cultural content in these textbooks were mainly excellent traditional Chinese culture and advanced culture, with relatively little coverage of revolutionary culture. Regarding cultural forms, the textbooks focused on cultural products, practices, and figures, supplemented by cultural perspectives and communities. In terms of presentation modes, the textbooks presented Chinese culture through texts, cultural understanding exercises, and cultural expression activities [21]. Yang and Jiang added the dimension of cultural ecology, innovating beyond the previous cultural forms, and analyzed Chinese cultural content in the PEP senior high school English compulsory and optional textbooks from these six dimensions [22]. Huang, through statistical analysis of Chinese cultural content in the compulsory volumes of the 2019 PEP senior high school English textbook, found that the total frequency of Chinese cultural content in the three volumes was relatively balanced, but revolutionary culture content was significantly less than advanced

culture and excellent traditional Chinese culture [23]. Ren, using content analysis and focusing on culturally loaded words, selected Chinese cultural content from the 2007 PEP senior high school English compulsory volumes 1 and 2 and the 2019 PEP senior high school English compulsory volumes 1 and 2 as the research object. The study found that the 2019 edition showed a significant increase in Chinese cultural content, with implicit presentation as the main mode and explicit presentation as supplementary [24]. However, his study had limitations: due to time constraints, he only selected compulsory volumes 1 and 2 as representatives.

In summary, with the widespread use of new textbook editions, more and more scholars are focusing on Chinese cultural content in the new textbooks. Existing research mainly focuses on the proportion and distribution of Chinese cultural content in textbooks. However, most studies concentrate on the new PEP senior high school English textbooks, with relatively little research on the new FLTRP textbooks. Moreover, scholars have conducted in-depth analyses of the compulsory textbooks (Volumes 1-3), but analyses of Chinese culture in the optional textbooks are not comprehensive. Therefore, based on the more accurate and detailed "Analytical Framework for Cultural Presentation in Foreign Language Textbooks" improved by Zhang and Li (2022), and combined with the six richer cultural dimensions innovated by Yang and Jiang (2024), this study conducts a concrete analysis of the presentation of Chinese culture in the 2019 FLTRP senior high school English optional textbooks (Volumes 4-7), further exploring the topic on the basis of previous research results.

3. Research Design

3.1 Research Questions

This study primarily addresses two questions:

1. What are the characteristics of the content of Chinese culture presented in the FLTRP senior high school English optional textbooks?
2. What are the characteristics of the modes of presentation of Chinese culture in the FLTRP senior high school English optional textbooks?

3.2 Research Method

This study follows the analytical methods of previous research, using content analysis to comprehensively analyze the content of each

section of the optional textbooks, including six major sections: Starting Out, Using Language, Developing Ideas, Understanding Ideas, Presenting Ideas, and Project.

Before the study, we fully considered the issue of coding consistency. The other coder and I first discussed how to classify and apply the presentation content and modes of Chinese culture within the framework. Then, we randomly selected one unit from the textbook for independent analysis, compared the results, and for any inconsistencies, we re-determined our analytical perspectives and positions to ensure that our subsequent analyses would achieve consistent agreement and improve the accuracy of the formal analysis.

Subsequently, we recorded the coding of Chinese

cultural content appearing on each page of each textbook volume in an Excel spreadsheet. After all coding was completed, we conducted quantitative processing and intensity statistics.

4. Findings

This section presents the data analysis results concerning the research questions, specifically the presentation types, forms, and modes of Chinese culture in the 2019 FLTRP optional textbooks.

4.1 Types of Chinese Culture

Among the types of Chinese culture in the optional textbooks, all three types are covered. However, modern culture occupies the main part, with traditional culture and revolutionary culture as secondary parts (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution Intensity of Chinese Culture Types

Region	Cultural Type	Intensity	Intensity Proportion
Chinese Culture	Modern Culture	388	68.52%
	Traditional Culture	133	22.08%
	Revolutionary Culture	54	9.39%

As shown in Table 1, the total intensity of Chinese culture is 575 points. Modern culture accounts for 68.52%, traditional culture 22.08%, and revolutionary culture only 9.39%. This indicates that the optional textbooks emphasize modern culture (intensity 388), with relatively less emphasis on traditional culture (intensity 133) and revolutionary culture (intensity 54). This differs from the cultural type distribution found in previous studies of the compulsory textbooks, which emphasized traditional culture, with very little modern and revolutionary culture. Furthermore, the distribution of these three cultural types across the four textbook volumes is uneven. Traditional culture has an intensity proportion of 11 points and 7 points in optional volumes 1 and 2, respectively, and is often presented implicitly, including as a secondary culture in multicultural texts or in images/introductions. This is less than their proportions in optional volumes 3 and 4. Revolutionary culture suffers from a similar issue: its intensity in optional volume 4 is only 1 point, appearing as background cultural information in the Starting Out section, referring to Lu Xun's abandonment of medicine for literature during the national crisis.

4.2 Cultural Forms

Regarding cultural forms, the optional textbooks place the greatest emphasis on cultural figures, followed by cultural products, cultural

perspectives, and cultural practices. Cultural communities and cultural ecology account for a very small proportion, significantly lower than the intensities of the preceding forms (Table 2).

Table 2. Presentation Intensity of Cultural Forms

Form	Intensity	Intensity Proportion
Cultural Figures	163	28.35%
Cultural Products	136	23.65%
Cultural Perspectives	134	23.30%
Cultural Practices	123	21.39%
Cultural Communities	10	1.74%
Cultural Ecology	9	1.57%

Table 2 shows that cultural forms are dominated by cultural figures, followed by cultural products, cultural perspectives, and cultural practices, while cultural communities and cultural ecology account for a minimal share. The categories of cultural figures are comprehensive, including figures from literature (Lin Yutang, Mo Yan, Qian Zhongshu, Tao Yuanming), sports (Yao Ming, Li Na, members of the Chinese women's volleyball team), arts (Feng Zikai, Wu Guanzhong, Tan Dun, Yang Liping, Mei Lanfang), science (Deng Jiaxian, Yu Min, Qian Xuesen), philosophy (Laozi, Xunzi), biology (Yuan Longping), and military (Yang Jingyu). These are well-known ancient and contemporary figures familiar to students, close to their lives, and easily accepted by them. This is consistent with previous research findings: the FLTRP senior high school English textbooks demonstrate

richness and multi-disciplinary breadth in presenting Chinese cultural figures. Cultural communities appear only in optional volume 3, introducing the Lei family; they are not presented in the other three volumes, indicating that the balance of cultural communities in the optional textbooks needs improvement. Cultural ecology appears in an optional volume 1 group discussion activity, introducing native Chinese species through images, primarily aimed at enabling students to practice language using relevant vocabulary and expressions, which is insufficient to deepen their understanding and awareness of biodiversity. Cultural ecology in optional volume 2 appears in a video in the Starting Out section, content related to working and living in

Antarctica, with no separate textual description. Cultural ecology in optional volume 3 appears in the final Project section as a project-based practical activity, not as cultural input for students. Optional volume 4 does not include any cultural ecology content.

4.3 Modes of Cultural Presentation

Overall, the optional textbooks cover various presentation modes, achieving diversity. However, the proportions of each mode are not balanced. Chinese culture input through explicit modes accounts for a larger proportion, while implicit output through activities/exercises is far less than explicit input (Table 3).

Table 3. Intensity Proportion of Chinese Culture Presentation Modes

Presentation Mode		Intensity	Intensity Proportion	Total Intensity
Explicit	Single-Culture Text	195	49.39%	424
	Multicultural Text	89		
	Cultural Knowledge Section	48	8.35%	
	Image/Introduction	78	13.57%	
	Background Cultural Information	20	3.48%	
Implicit	Single-Culture Text	30	7.83%	151
	Multicultural Text	15		
	Background Cultural Information	3	0.52%	
	Cultural Expression	48	8.35%	
	Cultural Understanding	38	6.60%	
	Language Practice	11	1.91%	

Summarizing the content of Table 3, the optional textbooks, like the compulsory textbooks, place the greatest emphasis on cultural texts, with an intensity of 329 points, accounting for over 50%. The proportion of single-culture texts among all text types is the highest across the four volumes, indicating that the optional textbooks focus on presenting Chinese cultural content to students through coherent written or narrative forms. Next are images/introductions (intensity 78), which can present achievements of Chinese culture to students in a more vivid and intuitive way, attracting their interest. Cultural knowledge sections and cultural expression (intensity 48 each) also account for a certain proportion. Cultural knowledge sections introduce relevant cultural knowledge to students in a dedicated manner, providing a relatively systematic and comprehensive overview of the context of Chinese culture, allowing students to gain an in-depth understanding of the relevant content. For example, optional volume 2 uses a single-culture knowledge section to introduce the reasons for Shennongjia's inscription on the World Heritage List. Shennongjia, belonging to

traditional culture, is a gathering place for Yinshang, Qin-Han, and Jingchu cultures, rich in regional folk culture. Its unique cultural value is worth systematic study by students, which is conducive to enhancing their confidence in Chinese culture. Compared to cultural knowledge sections, cultural expression is more evenly distributed across the four volumes. For example, a single-culture expression activity in optional volume 1 appears in a group discussion exploring the reasons behind the success of the Chinese women's volleyball team, guiding students to understand the powerful strength of the Chinese team spirit and enhance their national pride. Multicultural expression involves a comparison of two artworks, one Chinese and one foreign, discussing students' impressions of Feng Zikai's "Spring Battlefield" and a painting by Spanish artist Picasso and the reasons for these impressions, helping students respect different cultures, understand cultural diversity, and form healthy aesthetic tastes and correct values from the similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign cultures.

However, the presentation of Chinese cultural

content through cultural understanding and language practice activities accounts for a very small proportion, especially language practice, with an intensity of only 11 points. "Cultural understanding practice activities are crucial; they can guide students to deeply explore the deeper meanings of culture and the underlying cultural perspectives and value orientations, while cultivating students' critical thinking skills and cultural awareness" [14]. At the same time, integrating Chinese culture into language practice helps students, in daily English communication, base themselves on their mother tongue culture, showcase the charm of Chinese culture, and promote its dissemination.

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

5.1 Conclusions

Based on the above coding and analysis of the data, the main conclusions of this study are as follows: (1) Chinese cultural content is basically concentrated in the Using Language, Developing Ideas, and Understanding Ideas sections, with a relatively balanced distribution, but it is less distributed in the Starting Out, Presenting Ideas, and Project sections. (2) In terms of the distribution of Chinese cultural types in the FLTRP senior high school English optional textbooks, modern culture is dominant, traditional culture is relatively less, revolutionary culture is rarely involved, and its distribution across the four volumes is uneven, with more implicit presentation. Consistent with previous research, the FLTRP textbooks, both compulsory and optional, pay relatively little attention to revolutionary culture. (3) Regarding the forms of presenting Chinese culture in the FLTRP senior high school English optional textbooks, cultural figures, products, perspectives, and practices are dominant, with cultural communities and cultural ecology as supplements. Cultural communities appear in only one volume, and cultural ecology is often presented implicitly. (4) Concerning the modes of presenting Chinese culture, the optional textbooks primarily use explicit presentation, among which single-culture texts account for the highest proportion, followed by images/introductions and cultural knowledge sections. Implicit presentation mainly involves cultural texts and cultural expression exercises, with fewer cultural understanding and language practice exercises.

5.2 Suggestions

Based on the above conclusions, this study proposes several suggestions: (1) Regarding the content of Chinese culture, it is recommended that textbook compilers appropriately increase Chinese cultural content in the Starting Out, Presenting Ideas, and Project sections. (2) In terms of cultural types, it is recommended to increase the content of traditional culture and revolutionary culture, especially the proportion of revolutionary culture. (3) Concerning cultural forms, it is recommended that each textbook volume include cultural communities and provide sufficient input on cultural ecology. (4) Regarding presentation modes, multimodal presentation should be adopted as much as possible, combining texts with videos and images to introduce the same cultural content. Cultural understanding and language practice exercises should also present rich cultural knowledge, rather than merely practicing linguistic knowledge, so that students can integrate Chinese culture into their English learning process subtly and unconsciously.

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