A Textbook-Based Study on Cultural Knowledge Acquisition in Learners of Chinese as a Foreign Language

Feng Gao
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A TEXTBOOK-BASED STUDY ON CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION IN LEARNERS OF CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

A Thesis Presented
By
FENG GAO

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in Partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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East Asian Languages and Cultures
A TEXTBOOK-BASED STUDY ON CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION IN LEARNERS OF CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

A Thesis Presented
by
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ABSTRACT

A TEXTBOOK-BASED STUDY ON CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION IN LEARNERS OF CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

SEPTEMBER 2020

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Language teaching usually focuses on linguistic knowledge, such as vocabulary and grammar, but that is not the whole picture for language learning. To build effective intercultural communication networks, language and culture study is fundamental. Language is the medium of cultural messages.

This paper explores Chinese learners’ culture learning through their language courses. Based on cultural information provided in the textbooks (Integrated Chinese Level I & Level II), I designed a cultural knowledge questionnaire to collect data and analyze learners’ culture competence and problems when learning culture. After multiple rounds of modifications, the questionnaire was distributed to different levels of Chinese language learners, Chinese native speakers, and other language speakers at a public university in western Massachusetts. The questionnaire was also distributed to intermediate level Chinese students at a public university in Virginia. The results show
differences among different levels of students and different questions, but no difference in heritage students’ performance nor in different universities. The data analysis of the questionnaire also provides insights for textbooks editors, Chinese instructors and educators. Culture learning is a continuing process that requires enough accurate and up-to-date cultural knowledge in textbooks as well as effective and appropriate teaching by instructors.

In order to make the issue clear, I divide the article into the following chapters:

Chapter One: Introduction. Briefly introduces the definition of culture, the relationship between culture and language, and importance of intercultural communication competence. It serves as the background of the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review. Briefly reviews the literature about the necessity, challenges, and achievement of culture teaching in Chinese as a foreign language.

Chapter Three: Methodology. Describes the methodology and process applied in this study.

Chapter Four: Results and Discussion. Analyzes and interprets the results of the study and discusses related issues about culture teaching based on the study results.

Chapter Five: Implications. Discusses possible and valuable implications for textbook improvement and culture teaching.

Chapter Six: Conclusion.

Keywords: Chinese, cultural teaching, cultural knowledge, assessment
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The rise of China on the global economic and political stage has piqued interest in studying and learning Chinese language and culture. Many higher education institutions have started providing Chinese courses for different language levels and content in these years, and many Chinese programs successfully refresh people’s opinions to Chinese language and culture and they also contribute to help learners become global citizens in the tide of globalization. The establishment and development of Chinese courses has strategic cultural significance.

However, according to the Western perspective, Chinese as a second language has been listed by the American Foreign Service Institute as one of the most difficult languages to learn, together with Arabic, Korean, and Japanese. This categorization of language is based on the institutional contact hours needed to reach a certain proficiency level by a native English speaker. “To reach a proficiency level of 2 requires 480 contact hours for a Category 1 language such as French, German or Spanish, but 1,320 contact hours for a Category 4 language such as Chinese or Japanese” (Walton, 1991, cited in Feng, 2004). It is important to note that almost triple the time is needed to reach the same proficiency level in category 4 languages (such as Chinese) (Feng, 2004, p. 11). It is well known that learning a foreign language involves more than just the linguistic code. That may be one of the reasons why Chinese is hard for English speakers. The mode of thinking, which is the foundation of language and culture, is different between the western world and the eastern world.
Over time, culture, a historically ignored element of language learning and teaching, has been emphasized as much as linguistic features in the teaching of second languages. Culture is part of language, and language is only a tool that can be taken as a medium for the goal – communication. The language profession has made great progress in the area of research and practice in Chinese culture teaching within language teaching; however, the practice of culture teaching is still in need of further development. There is not much research focusing on the outcomes of culture teaching within language teaching; however, if we truly take culture as a central role in the classroom, there should be an assessment to evaluate students’ cultural proficiency.

This study, based on culture information provided from textbooks (*Integrated Chinese* Level 1, Parts 1 & 2; Level 2, Parts 1 & 2), aims to get a better understanding of learners’ cultural knowledge acquisition in Chinese as a foreign language class. It is intended as an evaluation of culture teaching that can contribute to the neglected field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language. The research question is: How well do learners perform on assessments of their culture acquisition after taking Chinese courses? Or, in another way, can they acquire enough cultural knowledge through regular language courses? In order to answer the research question, a written questionnaire with contextualized multiple-choice and open-end questions was designed and adopted to assess learners’ cultural knowledge. Before data analysis, the following hypotheses were developed:

1. Higher-level students perform better than lower-level students.
2. Students will have better performance (higher percentage correct) on some questions, and worse performance (lower percentage correct) on some questions.
3. Heritage students perform better than students without a Chinese language or culture background.

4. Students who receive continuing cultural education with language teaching perform better.

1.1 Definition of Culture

It has been widely accepted by foreign language educators that the teaching of language skills should not be separated from the teaching of knowledge about the culture and people of the country whose language is being studied (Seeley, 1984; Feng, 2004). Vocabulary and grammar rules are taught from the beginning of the language course, and there is a lot of research and universally accepted definitions and rules about them. However, the important role of culture has not been acknowledged in language teaching for a long time. Culture carries numerous meanings and connotations, which may not be the same when talked about by different people. “Defining culture helps us understand how culture is related to learning a foreign language and how we can best address the issue of culture in the classroom” (Christensen, 2009, p. 20). Therefore, exploring the definition of culture leads us to a deeper understanding of the relationship between culture and language and how to integrate them in intercultural communication.

Xianlin Ji delivered a speech at Beijing Foreign Studies University, stating that it has been said that there are more than 500 definitions of “culture” around the world, which means it is very difficult to make a perfect definition. Social science is different from natural science. The concept of culture cannot be defined with a sentence. However, there are still many people writing papers, trying to define it, but they are only adding to
the 500 definitions, which does not solve the problem. Therefore, in his opinion, in the broad sense, whether psychologically or physically, whatever can benefit people can be defined as culture (Zhou & Lin, 1997, p. 15).

**1.1.1 General Definition of Culture**

Hinkel (1999, cited in Xing, 2006) asserts: “It may not be an exaggeration to say that there are nearly as many definitions of culture as there are fields of inquiry into human societies, groups, systems, behaviors, and activities.” In the last several decades, scholars from many fields have attempted to interpret the concept of culture in relation to their own disciplines of study. Examining the definitions of culture in the literature, there are numerous ways to define and describe this elusive concept. Sapir, widely believed to be one of America’s most influential anthropologists and linguists, defined culture in the following way:

The cultural conception we are now trying to grasp aims to embrace in a single term those general attitudes, views of life, and specific manifestations of civilization that give a particular people its distinctive place in the world. Emphasis is put not so much as on what is done and believed by a people as on how what is done and believed functions in the whole life of that people, on what significance it has for them. (Sapir, 1956)

Culture has been seen in a more cognitive way as a “set of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, communicating, and acting” (Goodenough, 1970, cited
in Feng, 2004). According to Goodenough, cultures are recognized as groups of people with different systems of values. An individual must act in the way the rest of the people in the group operate under their system of standards. This determines the individual’s behavioral patterns, shapes their beliefs and attitudes, and sets a limit to what they can properly do or say (Cornfield, 1966).

Samovar and Porter (2003) defined culture as “the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relationships, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving” (cited in Feng, 2004, p. 24). They further characterized culture as learnable, transmittable, ethnocentric, and changeable (Feng, 2004, p. 24).

Walker (2010) defined culture as performance. The operational concept of culture is what we do, and how we know what we have done. The flow of social life occurs in a sequence of discrete performance frames of specified times, places, roles, scripts, and audiences. We understand the intentions of specific behaviors of others because our culture provides possible performances in which to situate that behavior.

The distinctive features of greetings, apologies, expressions of concern – the behavior that makes up the flow of daily life – are not remarkable enough to encourage notation or declaration. We live our lives as automatically as we speak our native languages, which is why the culture of everyday life – especially our own – is largely invisible. Walker also defines culture in the following categories: revealed culture: cultural knowledge that a native is generally eager to communicate to a nonnative; ignored culture: cultural knowledge a native is generally unaware of until the behavior of
a nonnative brings it to light; and suppressed culture: knowledge about a culture that a native is generally unwilling to communicate to a nonnative (Walker, 2010, p. 108).

Instead of defining culture as something conceptual, Gardner thought it would be useful to divide the world into three realms:

The physical world: the world of material natural objects and the elements as well as various forms of living matter.

The world of man-made artifacts such as tools, works of art, and less tangible things like words and ideas.

The social world, which includes other persons in one’s family and community and, increasingly, the rest of the world as well. (Gardner, 1984, p. 260)

Scholars have different definitions of culture based on their research fields. There is no universal concept, which is similar as the situation when defining the concept of culture in the field of language teaching. Many scholars provide their points of view.

1.1.2 Definition of Culture in Language Teaching

One of the prevailing views when dealing with culture in a foreign language classroom is that the term “culture” has two principal canons: “Culture” with a capital C, which represents the achievements of high civilization, such as literature, art, history, philosophy, and the like; and “culture” with a lowercase c, which signifies lifestyles and ways of living, attitudes, insights, and behavioral patterns of a people (Chastain, 1988).
The big and small culture definition came into being out of years of practical experience in language teaching. Contrary to “big C,” which emphasizes facts and knowledge, “small c” learning is seen as a process of exploration, interaction, and the negotiation of meaning in the target language, as well as the interpretation and discovery of hidden meanings and patterns, which is the central aspect of the language learning process.

Researchers in intercultural communications generally distinguish culture as objective or subjective. Objective culture (referred to as Culture with a capital C) corresponds to what Standard 2.2 of the Standards for Foreign Language Learning (National Standards, 2012) refers to as “products.” This term includes art, literature and music, but also political, economic, social and linguistic systems, and institutions such as family, marriage, and religion. In fact, most textbooks at both the high school and university level contain information about it. In contrast, subjective culture (referred to as small c culture) receives less attention in textbooks and foreign language classes and yet is far more significant. Subjective culture consists of an invisible component (assumptions, values, and beliefs) and a visible component (behaviors) (Durocher, 2007).

Brooks identifies five types of culture for foreign language teachers to consider in their teaching: biological growth, personal refinement, literature and fine arts, patterns for living, and the sum of a way of life. He emphasized that the fourth type of culture, patterns for living, should capture most of the attention in the teaching of culture in foreign language classrooms. Paige et al. (2003) define culture learning as the process of acquiring the culture-specific and culture-general knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for effective communication and interaction with individuals from other cultures. It is a process that engages the learner cognitively, behaviorally, and affectively (p. 177).
This definition states that culture learning is not seen exclusively as a set of static, information, but as a process that is dynamic, developmental, and ongoing.

The culture definitions mentioned above in the culture teaching field suggest that cultural knowledge should be included and taught in language teaching, which could be summarized into two groups: factual cultural knowledge and social cultural knowledge.

1.1.3 Culture Teaching in Chinese Language Classes

Over time, culture, a historically ignored element of language learning and teaching, has been emphasized as much as linguistic features in the teaching of second languages. Culture is part of language, and language is only a tool that can be taken as a medium for the ultimate goal – communication. The language profession has made great progress in the area of research and practice in Chinese culture teaching within language teaching; however, the practice of culture teaching is still in need of further development. There is not much research focusing on the outcomes of culture teaching within language teaching; however, if we truly take culture as a central role in the classroom, there should be an assessment to evaluate students’ cultural proficiency.

Nowadays, Chinese instructors not only focus on traditional Chinese concepts and culture, but also integrate current cultural elements that represent the essence of Chinese culture and differ significantly from other cultures. Students explore the culture by answering questions like “Why do Chinese people say it in this way?” or “What is the implicit or explicit meaning of this Chinese description?” They learn about the
achievements of Chinese culture and the core of behavioral culture. For example, Xu (1996) offers six guidelines for Chinese culture:

1. Use a respectful and friendly tone.
2. Use “we” instead of “me”.
3. Use the general-to-specific or big-to-small pattern to organize information.
4. Use analogies to explain complex and strange aspects.
5. Use analogies to aid persuasion.
6. Make plentiful use of visuals (p 130)

1.2 Relationship between Culture Learning and Language Teaching

Language and culture are inseparable from and interwoven with each other. Neither culture nor language can stand on its own in the research of language pedagogy. Much research over the years has discussed and explored the relationship between language teaching and culture learning.

Seelye (1984) states: “It is becoming increasingly apparent that the study of language cannot be divorced from the study of culture, and vice versa” (p. 26). Learning a language involves not only learning the vocabulary and grammar, but also learning how to transfer linguistic codes into authentic communication in different contexts. Vocabulary and grammar rules can be taught in the limited class time, but the accurate use of linguistic knowledge can best be acquired by imitation and practice in real cultural contexts, including target cultural knowledge such as views, values, attitudes, beliefs, and
so on, which affect the proper use of linguistic skills. Culture is shaped from thoughts and actions (Feng, 2004).

Language must be taught along with culture. Language is the medium for expressing culture. It is the process of accepting, comprehending, and negotiating meaning and interaction. Language must be learned in the process of completing interactive and meaningful tasks that people perform in real life (Feng, 2004, p 3). Culture is involved at every point toward mastery of a language. The language cannot be understood independent of a cultural setting; thus, culture and language cannot be separated in discussion or implementation of curricula (Walker, 2010).

A typical assumption in second language education is to add a cultural component to the basic four skills like spreading icing on a cake. In contrast, Kramsch (1994: 13, cited in Feng, 2004) argues that cultural context should be the core of a second language curriculum. By this she means that the cultural context of language ought to be made explicit through social interaction in the classroom, the use of stories, discourse, literary texts, and authentic texts. Without such a change in thinking, misunderstandings can easily arise because learners may acquire particular language forms without realizing their cultural significance (Feng, 2004, p.165).

It is necessary and important for learners to understand when and how to communicate successfully with native speakers using their linguistic and cultural knowledge, especially “small c” culture, which may cause unexpected problems in a contextual situation. Putting a pile of cultural facts or history, geography, arts, and literature into textbooks does not produce a good lesson on culture (Zhang, 2006). The basic goal of any language learning is to gain the skills for communication. When
communicating with others in the world, we need to decode not only their language but also their behavior and views of world that are affected by the cultural environment. Social culture meanings are implicit and yet far more important. For example, the word “red” represents not only a color on the color spectrum, it also has symbolic significance in Chinese culture. As Feng (2004) states, in Chinese culture, it represents good fortune and luck. That is why Chinese New Year is celebrated with new red clothes, red firecrackers, red money envelopes, red couplets, and others. In this case, it is not proper to wear red when attending a funeral or any other sad events. The central characteristic of the language is its representational and symbolic power.

1.3 Intercultural Communication Competence

There has been increased recognition of the significance of culture in foreign learning, and there is also increased awareness of foreign language communication as intercultural communication with distinct features (Baker, 2015). Intercultural communication competence refers to linguistic and sociocultural proficiency in intercultural communication: in the ways that “People from different groups interact with one another, learn and grow together; build relationship and become transformed, shapes, and molded from each other’s experiences” (United Church, 2011).

It involves the ability to know the what, when, and how of properly producing a message, and to whom the message should be addressed in a given social situation. In sum, learners’ communicative competence refers to their knowledge and ability to use appropriate sociocultural speaking rules in all contexts of communication.
Kramsch (1994) states that culture is difference, variability, and always a potential source of conflict when one culture enters the contact with another. For intercultural trainers, learning culture means integrating the assumptions, values, and beliefs (the invisible) of another culture into one’s own world view, thus enabling one to adapt personal behavior (the visible) to the norms of the target culture (Durocher, 2007). Communication and culture are strongly tied together. Learning a language requires internalizing the culture. Language and culture study are fundamental to building intercultural communication networks. Misunderstandings are not due to a lack of understanding about what is said, but about what is implicated.

Robinson proposed the concept of the “color purple” model, which means the “learner’s current meaning, based on past experience, [as] ‘blue’; and the new second cultural objectives [as] ‘red.’” The blending of these colors produces the color purple. Just as purple contains both red and blue, the learner preserves the native and target cultures. In the process of becoming “purple,” learners get into the language classroom to enhance their intercultural communication competence in order to communicate easily with the target people (Robinson, 1991, cited in Feng, 2004, p37).

Seelye (1984, p. 38) proposes seven goals as well as seven abilities demonstrated by students as the end results of language-with-culture education, such as the ability to integrate language and social variables, the ability to understand cultural connotations of words and phrases, and the ability to evaluate statements about a culture. Achieving all the goals within four years of language study is difficult. It is a process to get learners involved into culture learning gradually. In addition to exploring and getting familiar
with the target culture, leaners start realizing culture differences and expressing themselves appropriately.

Savignon and Sysoyev (2005) provide eight strategies for establishing and maintaining intercultural contract, including initiating and maintaining intercultural contract; anticipating and identifying sources of intercultural misunderstanding; making generalizations, analogies, contrasts, and comparisons between two cultures; analyzing and reviewing authentic cultural material (literature, video, mass media), and so on. The most important overriding skill is understanding the context within which the communication takes place. Without context, even native speakers cannot communicate successfully. Context is to a large extent culturally determined. Learners should be provided with more opportunities to experience culture.

Intercultural communication competence requires learners not only to get linguistic knowledge of a foreign language, but also to acquire culture information, especially the sociocultural knowledge. It is a process of becoming aware of other culture, being able to interpret signs and analyze other culture, and communicating with members of other societies. Successful intercultural communication is based on various characteristics of intercultural competence, such as knowledge of different communicative practices in different sociocultural settings, the skills to be able to employ this knowledge appropriately and flexibly, etc.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review shows that activities in teaching and researching the cultural dimension and intercultural competence in language teaching developed rapidly in the last decades. By reviewing some of the research done in this area, we can come to a historical understanding of the issues involved and focus on the issue of culture teaching in foreign language classrooms.

2.1 Needs Analysis of Culture Acquisition in Language Teaching

Culture teaching is an inseparable content of language teaching. This study identifies three needs that apply to the importance of culture teaching in Chinese as a foreign language class.

Firstly, the political and economic needs are obviously important for learners to acquire cultural knowledge. The rising prominence of China on the international stage, especially on the global economic and political stage, and worldwide enthusiasm for studying Chinese have piqued interest in its language and culture and provided precedent support for the study and research of Chinese as a foreign language in the U.S. With China’s development of political and economic status, there is an increasing need for learners to get a further understanding about Chinese culture.

Secondly, ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) Standards set “culture” as one of five Cs, which are the important goals of foreign language learning. In 1996, ACTFL published its Standards for Foreign Language
Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century. The central part is the goals of foreign language study, or the five Cs: communication, culture, connections, comparisons, and communities:

Through the study of other languages, students gain a knowledge and understanding of the cultures that use that language and, in fact, cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs. (ACTFL World Language Guidelines, 1996)

When national standards (1996) discuss teaching methods for culture, they link the understanding of learners’ cultures and native cultures through the notion of comparisons: students demonstrate an understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures being studied and their own (Standard 4.2) and the relationship between the two. It urges teachers to create tasks that help students get more knowledge than just language, and lays a foundation for successful interactions with members of other cultures with a more objective view of their own customers and ways of thinking. Ten years after the first edition of the standards, it was renewed with some adjustments based on the current learning situation, including three of the five Cs in the revised National Standards dealing directly with culture:

Cultures: Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures

Standard 2.1: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationships between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.
Standard 2.2: Students demonstrate an understanding the relationships between the products and perspectives of the culture’s studies.

Connections: Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information
Standard 3.2: Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available.

Comparisons: Developing Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture
Standard 4.2: Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own. (National Standards, 2006)

With the publication of ACTFL standards, many foreign language institutes and programs started to apply the standards as guidelines of their teaching objectives, including Chinese programs. Chinese instructors try to design their curriculum with five Cs integrated in lesson plans, and Chinese learners try to take the standard tests to know about their language proficiency level, such as ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), ACTFL Writing Proficiency Test (WPT) and other tests. The standards are important to foreign language educators if they dedicated to the proficiency-based teaching; and the standards are also important to foreign language learners if they want to be clear about their current language level and the direction for the next learning phase.

Last but not least, learners’ learning purpose is another important reason to cultural knowledge teaching. Learners in Chinese classrooms, with different linguistic
and cultural backgrounds learn the language with different purposes and motives. Investigating their learning purpose helps instructors understand their real needs, and therefore facilitate their language achievements. Mastery of the linguistic code alone as a method to know the world cannot solve communication problems. Kramsch (2003, cited in Feng, 2004) claims that “our purpose in teaching culture through language is not to make our students into little French or little Germans, but in making them understand why the speakers of two different languages act and react the way they do” (p. 32).

Students sit in the classroom to learn the vocabulary and grammar rules day by day; however, their ultimate goal is to use the language in their specific areas to have contextually and culturally appropriate communication, such as in business, English teaching, chemistry, hospitality, or other areas they focus on. “Communication in real situations is never out of context, and because culture is part of most contexts, communication is rarely culture-free” (Cortazzi and Jin, 1999, Cited in Wright, 2000). Vygostsky (1978) presented an information-processing theory: Learning is a constructive process. In other words, “knowing” is viewed as an ongoing social activity within the dynamic culture of the classroom, not just as a command of a body of facts. Learners should explore why Chinese people say it this way and what the implications of saying it this way (Feng, 2004, p.20). In addition, it is also necessary for learners to understand the nonverbal communication involved in daily life, such as body language, object language, and environmental language.
2.2 Difficulties and Challenges of Culture Teaching in Language Classes

For many years, the teaching of culture in foreign language departments has been lagged that of language teaching itself. A study on teachers’ and educators’ beliefs and practices (Byrd, Cummings, Watzke, & Montes, 2011) surveyed 415 world language teachers and 64 teacher educators (all members of ACTFL during fall 2006 and spring 2007) about their focus on culture teaching and the motivators of and barriers to maintaining cultural knowledge. These teachers and educators are from various K-12 schools and higher-level colleges and universities around the world, who completed a survey specific to their current teaching placement. Both groups highlighted the lack of funds and time as a primary barrier to maintaining their cultural knowledge.

Omaggio Hadley (2001) cites three primary reasons why the integration of culture and language teaching remains a challenge: (1) teachers do not feel they have time to teach culture in an already overcrowded curriculum, (2) teachers fear that they do not know enough about culture, and (3) teachers neglect the teaching of culture because it involves dealing with student attitudes. Chang and Fletcher (2016) look at the difficulty through their case study of the global development of the Confucius Institute: (1) shortage of training teachers, (2) lack of teaching materials for different levels of students, (3) obvious difficulty compiling teaching materials suitable for every region around the world based on their different culture and atmosphere, and (4) political and cultural conflicts. Because of these inadequacies, culture has not been visibly present or properly taught in language classrooms to the present day.

First and foremost, there is not enough time in a language class but there is much to teach and learn. Students spend much time and energy on language
pronunciation, grammar, and lexicon, which uses up all the class time (50-75 minutes/class), and even the time after class. Neither students nor teachers have extra time to pay attention to cultural connotations and some other cultural knowledge. However, in this way, learners cannot use the language properly because of limited opportunities to use their target language daily.

Culture can be defined broadly, so it is difficult for teachers to select aspects that should be included in the curriculum at various levels of instruction. Lafayette (1997) came up with a set of 12 cultural goals as a guide toward better understanding and evaluation of culture, which is a guide for language teachers to accomplish their goals with present or potential classroom activities. It contains the geographical features, historical events, and active everyday cultural patterns, centering on student activities, their way of life, their views of society, family, school days, after school, education, friends, leisure and sports, etc. The exhaustive list covers many culture themes that should be integrated into the language curriculum. It is an impossible mission for teachers to introduce all the cultural knowledge since they have much to do with limited time.

Class time limit is one reason, teacher’s cultural knowledge limit and culture teaching strategy limit are the other main reasons for the insufficient cultural teaching in language classes. Understanding cultural attitudes and beliefs and knowing how to teach them are two challenging tasks that deserve more professional attention. Language teachers are supposed to be not only masters of language but also masters of culture, and at all levels. It is not surprising that due to minimal coverage of culture in teacher education programs, teachers may lack the background knowledge that can connect practices and products to perspectives (Schulz, 2007). Byrd (2007) examined 20 L2
course syllabi and found that, overall, little time was devoted to the study of how to teach culture. Sixty percent of the educators in his study allowed for less than 10% of the total course time to teaching prospective teachers how to teach culture, and another 20% only dedicated between 10% and 20% of the L2 methods course to teaching how to teach culture (pp. 109–110).

Most teachers’ culture lessons are not well integrated with language instruction and lack the depth that ought to truly illustrate the relationship between culture and language (Schulz, 2007, p. 13). Providing teachers of Chinese with a profound understanding of Chinese culture and effective methods for teaching it is a new issue that must be constantly reinforced and perfected in the training process.

Culture teaching has been emphasized for decades; however, there is no agreement on whether or how it should be formally assessed. Evaluation and assessment of cultural proficiency is commonly viewed as a difficult and complicated task. It is even more difficult to assess cultural proficiency than linguistic proficiency because there is less effort to make specific procedures for evaluating intercultural competence. It is also because researchers and teachers have not paid enough attention to the importance of cultural instruction and assessment.

If we truly wish to give culture a central role in our classrooms, it must also have a central role in the evaluation of our students. We cannot teach culture or integrated culture and language effectively unless we assess cultural proficiency and integrate language and culture testing. It is also important and necessary to assess learners’ cultural awareness through performance projects focusing on problem solving. Without testing
either the learners’ cultural knowledge or their skills, the teaching of culture becomes marginalized.

Last but not least, the influence of textbooks cannot be underestimated in foreign language learning. Textbooks impart language and cultural knowledge to learners, for whom they are probably the only resources for language learning. If the textbooks are not good enough to express or spread the culture accurately or lack quality and quantity, it would be a disaster to language teaching and learning.

Feng (2004) undertook a study on cultural content and its manner of presentation in *Integrated Chinese I*, which is a popular textbook widely used in high schools and colleges in the U.S. Compared to vocabulary and grammar, culture information is only arranged in the corner of the picture, and it is far from accurate, authentic, and diverse. The study results indicate that even though the authors made efforts to present cultural information in dialogues, it was far from efficient and conscious. Over 70% of the textbooks’ locations for interactions are set in the U.S., and this element has a cascading effect on other culture elements under study. Target cultural information is thus not as fully integrated into textbooks as it should be.

### 2.3 Culture Teaching in Language Classes

The literature review about research on culture teaching shows that there is ample evidence that the teaching of culture plays an increasingly important role in foreign language classrooms. There are many papers concentrating on various issues involved in culture teaching.
2.3.1 Goals of Language and Culture Education

Jarvis (1977, cited in Feng, 2004, p. 30) divides educational goals for teaching culture into three categories: cognitive (knowing), skill (doing), and affective (feeling). A language learner has to have the cultural knowledge (cognitive), the know-how to use it (skill), and the will, attitude, and determination to be culturally competent (affective).

Hymes (1974) wittily summarizes the goals in the acronym SPEAKING, which stands for setting (setting and place), participants, end (purpose), act sequence (form and content of an utterance), key (tone and nonverbal clues), instrumentalities (choice of channel and code), norms of interaction and interpretation, and genre. In other words, the goal of culture teaching is to achieve cultural competence, which is a person’s ability to “behave adequately and in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes and expectations of representatives of foreign culture” (p. 137).

Seelye (1997) proposed the following as his “super-goal”:

All students will develop the cultural understandings, attitudes, and performance skills needed to function appropriately within a segment of another society and to communicate with people socialized in that culture. (p. 100)

Seelye then offered six instructional goals related to culture: interest, who, what, where and when, why, and exploration, which are sub-goals indicating how to attain culture competence. Finally, students can gain the skill to locate and organize information about the target culture.
Lafayette and Schulz claimed that there are three broad realistic goals for foreign language learners:

(1) Students should acquire knowledge, i.e., factual information about selected patterns of the target culture that enables them to recognize, recall, and describe cultural information.

(2) Students need to develop understanding, i.e., the ability to explain selected cultural information or patterns in terms of their meaning, origin, and interrelationships within larger cultural contexts (this goal presupposes factual knowledge, but also implies critical thinking in attempting to see the logic of a pattern in its own cultural context).

(3) Students need to develop appropriate unobtrusive and inoffensive behaviors in real or simulated cultural situations (Lafayette & Schulz, 1997, pp. 581-581).

2.3.2 What Culture Should Be Taught

Chen (1987, cited in Feng, p. 43) pointed out five areas of culture on which foreign language classrooms need to focus. First, classes should introduce the customs of daily life and social interactions, for example, greeting, thanking, apologizing, making telephone calls, etc. These interactional patterns may vary significantly between cultures. Second, students should be introduced to modes of thinking that are reflected in language structure. For example, Chinese moves from bigger to smaller units, as in descriptions of time and address. Devoting attention to such modes of thought enables language learners both to grasp linguistic structures and gain insight into the cognitive world of native
speakers. Third, the psychological aspects of culture are important. Fourth, words and phrases that have resulted from historical developments and differ from nonnative norms (e.g., concepts such as matchmaking and love) must be introduced. Fifth, the distinctive historical development of the Chinese written language requires specific attention. These five cultural aspects provide background knowledge crucial for learning and communicating in the Chinese language.

Zhao (1989) divides cultural content into knowledge culture (zhishi wenhua 知识文化) and communication culture (jiaoji wenhua 交际文化). Knowledge and facts can be remembered and learned. Communication culture, on the other hand, cannot be remembered and learned in the same way. It can only be learned through the process of exploration, interpretation, and interaction. Zhao further lists 12 language and cultural areas that need special attention when learning Chinese language, such as words and terms that have no direct translations, that display different rates of use, or that have positive or negative cultural connotations.

In 1994, Steele and Suozzo listed four areas for language study to explore. The first area, “people,” is the largest. The second area is “society,” which includes institutions that affect people’s lives in society and are a concern in beginner language classes. Examples include banks, schools, airports, bus/train stations, houses, etc. The third area is the “country.” Here big “C” culture would be explored. The fourth area is “connotation,” in which not only the denotations of language but, more importantly, the connotations of words and sentences will be studied to promote awareness of the issue and “form a pedagogical bridge from language to culture” (Steele & Suozzo, 1994, p. 77-78).
Xing (2006) made a list of culture content for language teachers to teach different levels’ of students; for example, elementary level: Chinese names (formation, meaning, implication), Chinese characters (formation, development), color terms, food and drink, Chinese zodiac, simple habitual activities (greeting, praising, expressing gratitude, etc.); intermediate level: Chinese festivals and their implications, family life (e.g. marriage, family relationships, etc.), education, food and its characteristics. The topics can be associated with simple abstract concepts that students can easily relate to their own lives and compare with their own culture; at the advanced level, students should be prepared to explore Chinese culture in a deep way: influential historical events and figure, childbirth, social issues, etc.

Cultural knowledge is an important component of foreign language learning and teaching. What to teach has been a heated topic for many years. It is an option for learners to learn culture with extra time and energy outside of the classroom; however, to some learners, learning culture becomes a burden in this situation because they do not have strong intention or enough time to complete any extracurricular cultural learning tasks. Integrating cultural teaching and linguistic teaching in the same curriculum design means a lot to learners. Therefore, it is better for the instructor to choose a good textbook with proper topics. They create lesson plans with cultural knowledge that is integrated with vocabulary and grammar teaching to different levels students. It is helpful for student to build the cultural cognition step by step, even gradually to be internalized with repeated learning and refreshment.
2.3.3 How to Integrate Culture into the Language Curriculum

Culture and language cannot be separated in discussions or implementation of curricula. The basic curricular issue is which cultural information should be integrated with language materials. The cultural instruction should be guided by two basic principles. First, cultural learning activities should be planned as carefully as language learning activities. Second, culture components should be tested as rigorously as language components, lest students assume that cultural knowledge has little or no impact on grades and consequently is not worth their attention in or out of the classroom (Lafayette & Center, 1978, p. 9). To provide a systematic method for teaching culture, Seelye (1984) contributed an approach with seven goals:

(a) the sense, or functionality, of culturally conditioned behavior,

(b) interaction of language and social variables,

(c) conventional behavior in common situations,

(d) cultural connotations of words and phrases,

(e) evaluating statements about a society,

(f) researching another culture, and

(g) attitudes toward other cultures.

Any classroom activity, says Seelye, should relate in a reasonable way to one of these goals. As a result of this instruction, “all students will develop the cultural
understandings, attitudes, and performance skills needed to function appropriately within a society of the target language and to communicate with the culture bearer” (p. 49).

Gorden developed a way to help students to be more sensitive to cross-cultural miscommunication through “minidrama.” The minidrama consists of three to five brief episodes, each of which contains one or more examples of miscommunication. Each episode is followed by a discussion led by the teacher. The minidrama format exposes the students to a “process of self-confrontation.” The students are led to experience the miscommunication because of the lack of cultural knowledge. Then, students may realize that “this could happen to me, too.” Finally, learners have a chance to get more information about the reality of the society and culture in the target language environment (Seelye, 1993, p. 70).

Seelye (1993) also illustrates three other main techniques for teaching cultural concepts: culture assimilators, culture capsules, and culture clusters. “Culture assimilator” describes a situation that happened in real life, provides four choices based on learners’ understanding of the other culture, and then offers the correct answer about the culture connotations. A culture capsule consists of a paragraph or so explaining one minimal difference between American and a target custom, along with several illustrative photos or relevant realia, which are presented in class in a five-minute talk. Three culture capsules within the related topic become a culture cluster.

Besides the techniques above, Lafayette (1978) presented packaged techniques for teaching culture, such as:

1 Audio-motor unit:
This consists of a series of oral commands to which students are instructed to react physically. When the commands contain culturally related material, this highly motivating technique immediately demonstrates the cultural phenomena through the physical response (Lafayette, 1978, p. 5).

2 Learning activity packages:

Originally designed as self-instructional units for individualized programs, learning activity package (LAPs) can be developed easily to teach culture. They can provide an excellent source of supplementary materials for those students who learn more rapidly than the rest of the class. Each LAP usually consists of a set of instructions for teachers and students, a set of objectives, a pre-test, several learning activities, self-tests, and a post-test (Lafayette, 1978, p. 9).

Storme and Derakhshani (2002) proposed a three-stage model of culture teaching within foreign language education:

1) Preparatory Stage: Foster the development of openness toward the target culture.
   A. Assess learners’ attitudes toward the target culture.
   B. Examine the nature of culture and its determinative role regarding self-identity.

2) Teaching Stage
   A. Maximize the integration of culture and language.
   B. Focus on culture as a process and a value system with corresponding social
conventions and institutions.

3) Evaluation

A. Classroom evaluation: integrate the testing of cultural content and skills with the testing of language skills.

B. Assess learners’ cultural proficiency.

Abrams (2002) designed a curriculum with a culture portfolio, which requires students to make contributions to their culture study for the whole semester. Although the portfolio was designed for German classes, it can inspire instructors in other languages. In the portfolio, students collect information regarding a topic of interest to them (e.g., housing, historic holidays, language, transportation, music, art etc.). They collaborate with one or two classmates to explore more about the topic. There are different tasks (with detailed guidelines) for different stages of learning. At the end of the semester, learners present their research results to the class, and conduct a self-review required as part of the portfolio. Abrams (2002) also uses internet-mediated projects to explore cultural stereotypes. The results of post-project questionnaires and interview indicated that learners have fresh new ideas about target language culture. The activity requiring learners to report what they know about target culture gives teachers insights into learners’ attitudes toward it, even stereotypes about the target culture. The students examined the culture from several perspectives rather than only from their own. They found that some cultural aspects talked about in the American media were either nonexistent or underemphasized. Some of the stereotypes were not true. Learners thought this kind of interaction made the project more interesting and beneficial. It stressed learning about
things today and how people are, rather than writing a paper on historic times. Teachers should provide more opportunities for learners to develop personal contacts with native speakers, which has been an effective way to develop sociocultural competence.

Culture and language are inseparable. They are interwoven with each other. It is necessary for learners to absorb the cultural knowledge with the linguistic knowledge simultaneously. However, there are difficulties and challenges for culture teaching in language classes, including the class time limit, the teacher’s cultural knowledge limit and culture teaching experience limit, etc. All of these make the culture teaching became marginalized for years even both the students and teachers know that culture is an important component in language teaching. It is hard to overcome these difficulties, but the language instructors and educators keep making efforts to contribute to the culture teaching in recent years, and they provide valuable theories and principles about what to teach and how to teach culture. However, there is no evidence that is based on culture teaching in the language class to indicate whether the culture teaching is conducted completely and effectively in language teaching nowadays, and how well students perform in culture acquisition test after their language learning. This research aims to six this gap and focus on the reality of Chinese culture teaching in regular language class.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY: DESIGN OF THE CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE QUESTIONNAIRE

If we truly wish to give culture a central role in the classroom, we must set up a central role for the evaluation of culture. We cannot teach culture or integrate culture and language teaching effectively unless we assess cultural proficiency and integrate language and culture testing (Storme & Derakhshani, 2002, p 658). For this study, a questionnaire was designed about cultural knowledge in textbooks, which serves as an evaluation of students’ culture proficiency after their Chinese language courses. The questionnaire consists of two parts: part one is background information; part two is cultural knowledge test (a complete copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix A). There is also a survey question with open answers at the end of the cultural knowledge test, which is designed as an opinion poll aiming to discover students’ opinions about cultural topics that they are interested in or would like to learn more about in class.

Before the questionnaire was distributed, a pilot study was conducted. Five students enrolled in the Chinese language courses were invited to take the questionnaire to ensure the adequacy of the information presented in the questions, and to estimate the time to finish it. Four Chinese native speakers (two science and two liberal arts majors) were invited to take the survey. The purpose of the pilot study was to (a) estimate the time needed to finish the survey questions, (b) examine the adequacy and level of difficulty of the language, and (c) determine the accuracy and degree of difficulty of questions on cultural information.
The questionnaire was sent to three professors in the Chinese program for revise and improvement. According to the professors’ advice and findings of the pilot study, revisions and corrections were made. For instance, one question was taken out of the quiz (about Chinese cooking) and two were added (about social culture). Some questions were rewritten and rephrased to avoid confusion. After the final review and approval, the final version of the questionnaire that was ready to be distributed to participants. It takes 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Each item is in Chinese, with a general description in English. There were 11 questions with answers in Chinese, four with English translation as support, and the remaining seven based on the language and characters learned at the beginning level, which indicates that learners should recognize and understand them.

3.1 Textbook Review

This study is based on Integrated Chinese, which is a popular series of textbooks. It integrates four important language skills in one book with grammar and exercises for each lesson. It models for students how certain topics of conversation are carried out in the target language. In some lessons, contextual settings are provided. As a result, students can start speaking or engaging in conversation relatively quickly. It also contains cultural knowledge and information through each lesson: some culture content is contained in the text, and some pictures about culture on different topics; “Culture Highlight” is the main cultural knowledge resource in the textbook.
Textbooks are organized with two levels (two parts for each level). Each level contains 20 lessons (10 in Part 1 and 10 in Part 2). Each lesson has dialogues and/or narratives. There are vocabulary lists, grammar explanations, and exercises. Some lessons include culture notes, drawings, and photocopies of authentic material, such as business cards and paper currency. Topic headings include Greetings, Family, Dates and Time, Hobbies, Visiting Friends, Making Appointments, Asking Directions, Birthday Party, seeing a Doctor, Dating, etc., which are related to small culture (behavior culture).

3.2 Design of Cultural Knowledge Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed based on cultural knowledge in textbooks. After reviewing and collecting all the culture content from four volumes of *Integrated Chinese*, some were selected to be integrated with contexts and compiled in the questionnaire. The standards for culture content selection were as follows: (1) cultural knowledge that is in texts currently used in China, (2) cultural knowledge that is well known by native speakers as common sense, (3) cultural knowledge (especially behavior culture) that is involved in everyday scenarios for Chinese learners studying abroad in China, which is very important in daily life to avoid misunderstanding or misinterpretation.

The fundamental purpose of the questionnaire was to assess students’ Chinese cultural knowledge acquisition after taking language courses in terms of the following: (1) whether students reach the goal of understanding both language and culture; and (2) whether students are able to socialize with native speakers outside the Chinese classroom.
contextually, culturally, and properly. In another words, it evaluates how well learners could response in relation to their understanding and interpretation of Chinese culture.

3.2.1 Background Information

The background information part of the questionnaire was used to elicit participants’ demographic information, such as age, gender, educational background, and Chinese learning experience:

1) Personal information:
   Gender, age, class standing (freshman, sophomore, junior etc.)

2) Language background:
   Chinese courses they have taken, study or visit abroad experience, self-evaluation of Chinese competence, etc.

3) Chinese culture competence:
   Self-evaluation, learning resources

Data collected by the background questionnaire helped in learning participants’ demographic information as well as to assign participants to different groups. It was also designed to study whether variables such as sex, class rank, major, experience abroad, and interest influence gain-score differences. Statistical analysis variables of data are presented as mean ± SD and were analyzed using ANOVA followed by the Student’s t test (two-tailed). A P value <.05 was considered to be statistically significant. All statistical analysis was performed using the SPSS software (SPSS, Inc).
3.2.2 Cultural Knowledge Questions

The cultural knowledge test was designed with a made-up character, Sam, who is an American student studying in China as an exchange student. There are 11 main questions; four are divided into additional questions, for a total of 26 questions. The formats of the questionnaire are multiple choice, short-answer, and matching. The questions involve both “Culture” with a capital C and “culture” with small c.

Big C culture questions were designed to test whether learners acquired factual cultural knowledge and understood words and phrases with cultural connotations; small c culture questions were designed to test learners’ cultural behavior knowledge and competence with communicating in Chinese. For some questions, there are options to test whether learners could make a distinction between proper expressions and expressions that are grammatically correct but used inappropriately or unnaturally in the given context. The scenarios were designed in different settings (on campus, in the workplace, etc.). The complete analysis and resources of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

Here is the list of cultural knowledge tested in the questionnaire:

Small culture questions:

1. Greeting: greeting people you are meeting for the first time
2. How to address different people politely
3. How to ask for different people’s ages
4. How to respond to compliments
5. How to ask the names of people you are meeting for the first time
6. How to ask for directions properly

   Big Culture questions:

   1. Culture of Chinese names
   2. Chinese traditional value: hierarchy of men and elderly people
   3. Chinese traditional value: from general information to specific information
   4. Chinese traditional culture: four treasures of the Studio, Great Four Inventions
   5. Cultural taboo: gift giving
   6. Food culture: eating noodles on someone’s birthday, words with “eat” (吃 chī),
      flavors, Chinese tea, Chinese culinary styles
   7. Colors: red, black, white (words with cultural connotations)
   8. Numbers
   9. Chinese zodiac
   10. Chinese dragon culture
   11. Chinese traditional entertainment: mahjong
   12. Chinese art: Peking Peking Opera
   13. Chinese traditional value: collectivism (round table)
   14. Chinese traditional clothes: qipao (Chinese gown)
   15. Chinese traditional holidays and special events (foods and activities)

Example 1:

   There are Four Treasures of the Studio in Chinese calligraphy, please circle them:

   Ink stick pencil writing brush ink stone paper ruler paperweight
The culture information about Chinese calligraphy is explained in *Integrated Chinese* (Level 1, Part 1, Lesson 7: Studying Chinese). Since the questionnaire was distributed in the spring semester, all the enrolled students had finished learning this lesson when they completed the questionnaire. It is about Chinese brush writing, which plays an important part in traditional culture.

Example 2:

There are ___ (how many?) animal signs in the Chinese zodiac, each representing one year in the cycle. Grandma was born in the year of the _________. This animal has been a very important representation of China for many centuries.

This is a question about the scenario of Grandma’s birthday celebration in China. There are questions referring different cultural contents when celebrating birthdays, including how to ask people’s age properly, how to a select birthday gift, some typical celebration activities, and more. This question is about the Chinese zodiac of 12 representative animals, which plays an important role in China. People have preferences for some animals. Usually, there will be more newborn babies in the year of the tiger, dragon, horse, and pig, because it is common to regard people born in these years as having good luck and the ability to succeed. The dragon is the most popular and lucky animal in Chinese culture, which is different from western culture. In China, people regard themselves as children of the dragon ancestor; especially in ancient China, the dragon is a unique representation of the emperor, with total respect from civilians. There
are many words with the image of a dragon (龙 lóng) to express positive meanings in Chinese, such as “龙飞凤舞” (literally, “dragonflies and phonics dances,” referring to liveliness and vigor in calligraphy), “生龙活虎” (literally, “act as live dragon and tiger,” referring to being full of vim and vigor).

Example 3:

It was a nice big dinner with Chinese food. All family members sat at the table.

Which one is like their dinner table? Please circle and explain your choice.

Explain:

___________________________________________________________________

This is another question in the question set of “birthday celebrations,” which is about a typical Chinese round table. Shapes also convey different connotations in different cultures. Chinese culture favors the circle or round shape because it represents wholeness. All words and phrases associated with this shape denote features and qualities that are good and desirable. Besides its literal meanings of round, circular, and spherical, circle/round (圆) also signifies fullness, completion, and satisfaction. For example, there are common phrases like 圆满成功 (a complete success), 圆满的答案 (a satisfactory
answer), and 圆润的声音 (a sweet, mellow voice) (Xu, 1996, p. 166). It is also common knowledge among the Chinese that the round shape symbolizes perfection, harmony, togetherness, and good luck. Chinese celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival (August 15 on the lunar calendar), eating round-shaped moon cakes while admiring the perfect full moon in the sky with the whole family. Similarly, for the Lantern Festival (15th of the first lunar month), Chinese make sweet balls of glutinous rice flour. Therefore, round tables arranged in lines in restaurants is very common in China. People like to sit together to share food, with a lazy Susan in the middle of the table. It is easier and more convenient to communicate with all the people and share happiness with the whole group, which has a similar effect as circle time in the U.S. classrooms.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Data Collection

To test the study hypothesis, after multiple rounds of modifications, the questionnaire was distributed to scholars and Chinese language learners at different levels enrolled in the Chinese language program at a public university in Massachusetts, and it was also distributed to intermediate level students at a public university in Virginia. There is no obvious difference for intermediate level students’ performance on the questionnaire between universities in Massachusetts and in Virginia, therefore, this study focuses on analyzing the data collected from the university in Massachusetts. There were 180 questionnaires collected for effective statistical analysis, including nine Chinese native speakers, five English native speakers without Chinese language learning background, and 166 Chinese language students at all levels (7 advanced, 53 intermediate, 106 elementary).
Students were permitted to take as long as 20 minutes to finish the questionnaire, but were not allowed to consult textbooks, dictionaries, instructors, or other students. The answers were scored as correct (1 point) or incorrect (0 point) and each questionnaire was graded as a percentage. There are 46 answers for the whole questionnaire. The score range, percentage and letter grade are arranged in the table 1:

Table 1: Score range, percentage and letter grade distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Letter grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41-46</td>
<td>Above 90%</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40.9</td>
<td>80%-89%</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32-35.9</td>
<td>70%-79%</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-31.9</td>
<td>60%-69%</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-26.9</td>
<td>50%-59%</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 below</td>
<td>Below 50%</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Data Analysis

4.2.1 Background Information Analysis

The actual sample size for this study was 180 participants: 80 (44%) men and 10 (56%). The following demographic analysis is based on 166 students who were enrolled in the language courses at the university. Their age range was 18 to 25, and the median age was 20.8. Language proficiency level was assumed by years and amount of Chinese study (language level classification can be found in Table 2). The average length of participants’ Chinese classroom instruction was 1.74 years (minimum 0.5 year and maximum 6 years). Of the participants, 10% of them speak one Chinese dialect with one or more family members at home; 44 learners have been to China before for different purposes (family reunion, travel, language study, etc.). For Chinese culture self-evaluation, 90.5% participants think they know some Chinese culture to different degrees. They learn Chinese culture through various materials: 93% of them choose Chinese language classes as their main source; 85% of them choose textbooks; 31.2% choose various readings; 15% choose Chinese friends; and 5.7% choose others (social media, family and parents, etc.). (Background information data can be found in the Table 3)

Table 2: Chinese language level and learning quantity
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Years of study</th>
<th>Learning hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>C527</td>
<td>4 years (8 or more semesters)</td>
<td>520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>C427</td>
<td>3 years (6 semesters)</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C327</td>
<td>2 years (4 semesters)</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>C246</td>
<td>1 year (2 semesters)</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C110</td>
<td>1 semester (4 months)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Summary of participants’ (n=165 students) background information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Subcategories</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Science/Engineering</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social science</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of classroom instruction</td>
<td>1-1 Year</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>63.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-3 Years</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Four or more years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of stay in the Chinese environment</td>
<td>A. No residence</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Up to 3 months</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. 3-12 months</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Over 12 months</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese language background</th>
<th>Heritage</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>10.2%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-heritage</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>89.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese cultural resources</th>
<th>Language course</th>
<th>154</th>
<th>93%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Textbooks</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Readings</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chinese friends</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings do not indicate any significant difference among the variables for individual differences within subjects (i.e., major/department, age, gender). The study results are regardless of a person’s gender (P=0.668), age (P=0.102), and field of study (P=0.107), because it shows no significant difference. The emphasizes is on the objectives and process of culture learning that is essential if we want to promote effective culture teaching in the language classroom. Focusing on culture teaching is important to
develop new perspectives and motivate learners from all backgrounds. It encourages learners to identify their own values and compare their attitudes and behaviors with Chinese culture.

Length of classroom instruction was grouped into three categories: less than one year (Group A: 106 students), one to three years (Group B: 53 students), and more than three years (Groups C: 7 students). Chinese courses they were enrolled in met five hours a week except C110 at the elementary level. Besides course time, there are also extracurricular activities, tutor hours, individual study time, etc. Their total study time is shown in Table 1. Students are grouped into three levels based on their Chinese language learning time: elementary (C110 and C246), intermediate (C327 and C427), and advanced (C527). At the advanced level, there were five additional participants who were not currently enrolled in any courses when taking the questionnaire. They have been learning Chinese for more than 4 years, and they all still work in the field of Chinese language and literature study or related fields. The P values are showed here, indicating the significance between Chinese language learning years and Chinese culture acquisition, in another words, students with longer years’ learning experience performed better than students with less learning experience:

Length of classroom instruction:

Group A and Group B $P<0.05$

Group B and Group C $P<0.05$

Group A and Group C $P<0.05$
Forty-four students had experience living in China for different periods of time. Findings did not show that it was helpful for their test if they stayed less than 3 months without any formal language instruction. Meanwhile, there was no evidence that living there for a short time in childhood (Group D: 0-9 years old) was helpful for their culture test. It is assumed that learners in a study abroad environment have richer exposure to target language input and more contact with the target language culture than learners limited to classroom instruction. Seven students studied abroad in China for at least six months, and they got higher scores compared to students at the same level. Study-abroad learners exhibit certain linguistic and culture gains as a result of their exposure to such an environment. The statistics $P$ values are here:

Length of stay in the Chinese environment:

Group A and Group B $P=0.238$ (No significance)

Group B and Group C $P<0.05$. (Shows significance)

Group C and Group D $P=0.443$ (No significance)

Group A and Group C $P<0.05$ (Show significance)

As the sample number of people whose length of residence is over 12 months is 2 person (i.e., $n=2$), hence the degree of freedom is $n-1=1$. Due to the small sample and small degree of freedom, there is no meaning to conduct statistical test (i.e., $t$-test) with Group D.
There is no evidence indicating that heritage students performed better on the test, the ANOVA test shows no significance (P=0.086) between heritage students and non-heritage students and it will be discussed more in the following questionnaire analysis. There were 17 students with Chinese background who had one or more relatives at home speaking at least one Chinese dialect, such as Cantonese, Taishanese, or Min. Six of them understand their dialect and have the limited speaking ability, five can only understand, and seven cannot understand the dialect very well.

4.2.2 Differences Among Students at Different Levels

The study shows that students at different levels perform differently on this test. The length of formal class instruction determines the level of learners’ language development, including students’ understanding of the culture. Therefore, the result can be viewed as a direct evidence for the claim that a learner will be able to interpret the culture according to their level of language development. A closer look at the data indicates that a learner’s language level contributes not only to the accurate fact cultural knowledge, but also to the appropriate use of the social culture in specific contexts.

All Chinese native speakers got As. English native speakers with Chinese background, who are classified as advanced Chinese language learners, got As and Bs. Five English native speakers without Chinese learning background got Ds and below (The summary of scores of different groups can be found in the Figure 2):
For advanced level students (n= 7): 28.6% got A, 42.6% got B, 28.6% got C, and no one got lower than C. For intermediate level students (n=53): 9 % got A, 42% got B, 30% got C, and 10 students (19%) got lower than C. For elementary level students (n=106): none got A, one student got B, 16% got C, and 83% got lower than C. The complete summary of scores of enrolled students at different levels can be found in Figure 3.
For intermediate and elementary levels, there are students from two courses for each level. Although they are categorized in the same level, there are still some differences between them, especially for the elementary level students. Students enrolled in C246 (n=38) and C110 (n=67) are classified as elementary level; no students got an A, one student in C246 got a B, 10 students in C246 (26%) got a C, and 71% students got lower than a C; for students in course C110: no student got above a B, 7 students (10%) got a B, and 90% students got lower than a C (Figure 4).
4.2.3 Differences among different questions

There are 26 questions in the questionnaire with 46 potential answers, all of which were designed based on topics chosen from textbooks (*Integrated Chinese* Level 1, parts one and two; level 2, parts one and two). Twenty questions (77%) are from Level 1, six (23%) from Level 2. Different accuracy percentiles existed among questions, showing in Figure 5:

![Graph showing differences among different questions](image)

Figure 4: Differences in two groups at elementary level
Figure 5: Summary of accuracy rates among questions

From the Figure above, it is obvious that different performance is shown not only among different student levels, but also among different questions.

Questions with high accuracy:

1. Red envelope: 84% (7(2))
2. Mahjong: 75% (5(6))
3  Date and time: 73% (3)

4  The spicy food in Sichuan province: 70% (9(2))

Questions with low accuracy:

1  Chinese culinary schools: 13% (the item number is 9(1))

2  How to ask for age: 16% (5(1))

3  Holidays and traditional foods: 19% (6)

   Peking Opera facial mask 19% (5(6))

Questions about red envelopes have the highest accuracy rate in the whole questionnaire; all three levels of students performed well on this question. Red, usually regarded as a lucky color in China, is familiar to students or perhaps the whole world, and red envelopes on holidays, especially the Spring Festival, is also a popular tradition known by students. For question about date and time, students got a higher accuracy rate, but it is different from other questions. Usually, the advanced level students performed better than other levels on most of the questions, but as to this question, they got the lowest accuracy among three levels. The intermediate level students had the highest accuracy, followed by the elementary level students: 43% advanced level students chose option A because they were not familiar with the expression “周一 (zhōu yī)” (Monday), which they thought would take a different order from “星期 (xīng qī)” when describing the day of the week. Elementary level students had just finished their lesson about date and time, so their memory of the expression was fresh, from general information to detailed information, which is also applied to address.
Example question: 3 date and time

*When do you think Sam will take his first Chinese written test?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2017 test schedule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May, 1st (Monday)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese written test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A 周一上午 10 点，2017 年 5 月 1 日       B 2017,5,3 星期一下午三点

C 5,5,2017 中午 1 点       D 2017 年 5 月 1 日 星期一，上午 10 点

Questions about Chinese culinary schools had the lowest accuracy of the questionnaire. This topic is introduced in the *Integrated Chinese* (Level 2 Lesson 3 饭馆), which explains that there are four main culinary schools in China, which can also be grouped into eight schools. Usually, we take eight culinary schools of Chinese food as common sense. Therefore, the information in the textbook is not accurate, or it is not well-known information. The question of how to ask a senior’s age in China is another tricky one for students. Different from English; requesting the age from others is not very rude in daily conversation; however, more women in current time do not like to be asked or talk about this topic in public. There are ways of asking for age with respect in Chinese according to whom you are asking. This question is designed to ask an older family member’s age; usually the word “高寿 (gāo shòu)” is a proper choice to express respect.
and admire person’s longevity. The hard part for students in making the proper selection is mainly that they do not know characters, especially “寿” (literally: life, longevity, or birthday). The question about matching Chinese holidays and traditional foods had lower accuracy. The highest accuracy was for the pair of mid-autumn festival and mooncake. The questions about facial makeup in the Peking Opera did not have good accuracy rate, it is similar as the question with color connotations in Chinese.

4.2.4 Heritage Students

In this study, the term "heritage student” is used to refer to a student who is raised in a home where Chinese (including dialects) is spoken, who speaks or merely understands the heritage language, and who is to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage language (Valdes, 2000).

Heritage students in Chinese classes not only have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds from students without a similar family background, they also have different purposes and motives for learning the language. Some students desire to communicate with their family members who cannot understand English but only Chinese (Mandarin or dialects); some students plan a career in China in the future; some students think they should know some Chinese because of their partial identity as a Chinese. Knowing students’ learning purposes and motivations help Chinese language teachers understand their needs, and therefore facilitate their language achievements.

Heritage students are expected to have better performance on the culture knowledge test because of their Chinese background, but the results indicate that they
have no advantage. Their test scores are not different significantly from students without a similar background at the same level.

Table 4: Heritage students questionnaire grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Level</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Letter Grade (number)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Overall percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>C (1)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D &amp; below (4)</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>B (4)</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C (3)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D &amp; below (3)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>B (1)</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C (1)</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are 17 heritage students participating in this questionnaire research, including 5 elementary level students, 10 intermediate level students and 2 advanced level students. No heritage student got A for the culture knowledge questionnaire, what is not as well as expected. One student (20%) from elementary level got C, and four students got Ds and below. No elementary level student got B or above. For the overall questionnaire result of the elementary level students, 16% got C and 83 % got D/below, which is close to the percentage of the heritage students in this level. For ten intermediate students, four got Bs, and the percentage is 40%, which is close to the overall percentage (42%). For two advanced level heritage students, one got B and one got C. Besides the grades they got, the questions they answered with high and low accuracy are also similar as the overall group. Their high accuracy questions are the red envelope, Mahjong and Spicy food questions; and their low accuracy questions are Chinese culinary schools, Peking Opera facial mask, and how to ask for age. The only obvious difference is that
heritage students hold higher accuracy (41%) than students without background (17%) on the question of Chinese traditional holidays and food.

4.2.5 Students with Culture Input during Regular Classes

The results show that students with continuing cultural teaching along with language teaching by the instructor perform better than other students at the same level. There are three sessions of Chinese 327, which is set as a course for intermediate level students. There are fourteen students in session A, eight students in session B and twelve students in session C. It is not a big difference for the number of different sessions, making the comparison among them reliable and meaningful. The teacher of session C (the “trial session” in the following part) is selected to provide more cultural knowledge for students during regular language classes. She introduces more culture information when teaching vocabulary and grammar, and she integrates cultural elements into the curriculum design and classroom activities. Meanwhile, the teacher requires students to add cultural content to their mid-term group project as part of their grades. According to the results of the cultural knowledge test, after one semester’s trial, students in this session outperformed student in other sessions at the same level on questions related to topics from lessons of that semester. The accuracy of questions designed based on lessons of the trial semester are shown in Figure 6 (session C is the trial session with continuous culture input for one semester).

There are seven questions designed based on lessons students learned in that semester when taking the questionnaire. The trial session with culture teaching hold
higher accuracy for five of seven questions. For the question of Chinese zodiac, 92% of students from the trial session chose the correct answer, while only 10% of session B and 29% of session A, what is significant different between the trial session and regular sessions. The lowest accuracy (50%) question for the trial session is “Matching Chinese holiday and its traditional food”, but it is still higher than the other two sessions (session A is 36%, session B is 22%). For the question of red envelope, all three sessions perform very well. It is the only question three session have the same accuracy rate.

Figure 6: Three sessions comparison at intermediate level
4.3 Discussion

4.3.1 English Speakers without Chinese Instructions:

This group of students do not have answers to any small culture questions, not only because they do not know the characters, but also because they have no clue how to respond or converse with native speakers in contexts. Meanwhile, they have a lack of information about words and phrases with cultural connotations. Even after translating all Chinese into English (word-for-word translation, literally translated with original order and meanings), they still cannot find the right answers for these questions referring to social cultures in Chinese. They performed better on Big-C cultural knowledge (information culture) questions than small-c culture (behavior culture) questions. However, their knowledge of Chinese culture is still very limited. Their performance on information culture questions is as follows:

Questions with higher accuracy rate are:

1. Chinese zodiac
2. Chinese Mahjong
3. Chinese round table
4. Chinese spicy food

Questions with lower accuracy rate are:

1. Peking Opera facial makeup
2. Chinese gift-giving taboo
3. Important Traditional festival and food
4. China’s Great Four Inventions
The questions on which they got high or low accuracy rates are like the overall students’ performance. However, their small-c culture test scores are far below the average. The final aim of language learning is to communicate with people from another culture, otherwise it will be meaningless even though learners can decode all the linguistic clues. Small-c culture plays an important part when learners try to get their communicative competence. It is common that there are connotative meanings behind words and expressions no matter in which language; in this case, people cannot understand or use it only based on the literal meanings. For example, there is an expression “老不死” (lao bu si) in Chinese, literally referring to an old man (old but not dead), but it indicates an old person who has outlived his usefulness. In other words, it shows the strong negative feelings of dislike, being tired of, or even hatred toward elderly people. It is not a good choice to address people in daily life, not mention on birthday celebration. People without language courses and learners with language courses but no cultural information are not capable of distinguishing either noticeable or slight differences about words and expressions, let alone to respond properly in particular contexts.

4.3.2 Native Chinese Speakers’ Performance

Ten native speakers from different parts of China took the questionnaire. They all got an A, or more accurately, they all got 93% or higher on the test, which means cultural questions designed for the survey are, to a great extent, common sense to Chinese speakers around the whole country.
There were only six answers differing from the expected answers on their culture test. One native speaker chose the wrong option for the gift giving question. Three chose the wrong options for the national drink of China: tea. The information about tea is in the textbook (*Integrated Chinese* Level 1, Part 1 Lesson 5 p142-143). They chose Chinese liquor as the national drink of China, which also makes sense to some extent. Chinese liquor is a clear liquid usually distilled from fermented sorghum, which appears similar to other liquors or wine, but it often has a significantly higher alcohol content. Chinese liquor is also regarded as special in China, which has been intertwined with other aspects of Chinese culture since ancient times. It plays an important role in Chinese social life, especially at some big events, such as celebrating triumph, weddings, anniversaries etc. There are many expressions and stories about Chinese liquor. Chinese value their liquor culture with a long history. For questions about Chinese culinary schools (菜系), four of nine Chinese native speakers choose six cuisines in Chinese food, which is not the correct answer (four). China covers a large territory. Each part has its own local dishes with typical flavors and ways of cooking. Basically, Chinese food can be roughly divided into eight regional cuisines (Shandong, Sichuan, Guangdong, Fujian, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Hunan, and Anhui), which have been widely accepted in China. Some people also think there are four cuisines in China, which is the information from the textbook (Level 2, Part 1 Lesson 3). However, there is no way to categorize them into six cuisines.

For this group, the lowest accuracy is on the question of Peking Opera facial makeup, which is also the lowest accuracy for the whole culture test. Peking Opera can be described as the national opera of China and a critical part of Chinese history and culture. Peking Opera developed in the early 19th century, presenting singing, dancing,
playing of instruments, and martial arts in one stage performance. It was popular during its peak time. The facial makeup is designed based on the understanding of different roles in the plays, which can display the characteristics or personalities of various roles. There are typical formats for facial makeups in relation to colors, types, and shapes. For example, basically, red symbolizes loyalty, such as Guan Yu; black signifies honesty, integrity, bravery and even reckless, such as Zhang Fei; white usually stands for some treacherous or cunning characters such as Cao Cao. However, the Peking Opera is not so popular as before in China especially in recent years. That is the reason why it shows the lowest accuracy in this survey even for native speakers. People know it is a treasure of China, but they do not have knowledge about Peking Opera; meanwhile, they are not interested in getting to know more or trying to appreciate it because of its slowly developed plots and its traditional performance style, which are not attractive to people nowadays, especially the young people.

Another question that did not meet expectations is about the small-c culture question: how to respond to compliments. The question was designed to find out how to respond when someone tells you that “Your Chinese is so good!” In the survey, 57% of learners at different levels chose proper answers that are accepted in real contexts. However, there are four of nine (44%) Chinese speakers chose “Thank you!” as their response to compliments, which is a typical expression in an English-speaking environment. This expression is a representative example often cited by people to show excessive humility and modesty in Chinese culture. These four Chinese have been staying in the U.S for one to four years to study. They responded in the following interview that their choice of “thank you” was natural response, and they also said this
way of expression was more popular in China in recent years. Their thinking mode has already changed, to some extent, or in other words, the new way of thinking has been internalized, which indicates that spending time with native speakers is an effective way for language learners to be more familiar with language and culture, especially their social/behavior culture acquisition.

4.3.3 Questions with Low Accuracy

Questions on Peking Opera facial makeup showed low accuracy in the whole culture test. Most participants had no recognition of the facial makeup in Peking Opera, which was discussed above (about Chinese native speakers’ performance). It is not as widely acknowledged and accepted as popular culture even to native speakers. Professional knowledge is required when appreciating Peking Opera. Some people have only heard about the name of “Peking Opera” and knew it plays an important role in Chinese culture, without more knowledge about it. The facial makeup in the opera displays different personalities of characters with particular colors and shapes. Color terms of a language are very important to indicate people’s perception and interpretation of nature and the world. Connotations of color indicate culture in many contexts. There are three more questions about color in Chinese culture. Question 7 tests one’s understandings of color choice of clothes when attending different events, particularly a wedding ceremony. Here, 75% of participants provides proper answers to this question. Meanwhile, Question 5(4) is also about color connotations.

Example question: 5(4)
Grandma was very happy, wearing nice ____ clothes, which was a birthday gift from her son. People always use this color to express their happiness. However, you cannot use it to ______, otherwise, you will not be so happy.

A red,   make dresses           B black,    paint the wall

C red,   write a letter        D yellow,  color the flower of the picture

It is well known that colors are invested with great cultural implications, which may cause misunderstanding in intercultural communications. The implications of color depended on contexts. Red, usually, is warm, happy, and lucky color. It is used abundantly in celebrations and festive occasions, from high-hung lanterns to gift wraps, and the covers of various certificates. On such occasions, golden yellow and red are often combined to enhance the atmosphere of festivity. For example, many greeting cards for the new year are set in these two colors, and many couplets for Spring Festival are also designed with them. This was also the test objective for this question. People will be more likely to choose red or colors from a similar color scheme for their clothes when attending an important celebration, such as birthday party, wedding, or family gatherings. For mourning, Chinese use both black and white. These two colors are thus closely associated with mourning and death. However, except for mourning events, white also signifies purity, and black implies dignity. It is appropriate to use either of these two colors in different contexts. For example, at wedding ceremonies, more Chinese brides are dressed in white wedding dresses and bridegrooms in black suits. It will cause
misunderstandings when colors misused in wrong contexts. For example, it is not appropriate to wear red into a mourning situation.

Another example of color connotation is question 10. There is detailed information about it in the textbook (Level 2 Part 2 L20). Advanced and intermediate levels students perform better than elementary level students since they have already learned the lesson.

Example question: 10

*Color terms often convey some special meanings when used in certain situations; in Chinese, there is an expression to indicate “speak frankly”, it is “说______了”*

A 白 (white)  B 红 (red)  C 黑 (black)  D 黄 (yellow)

Students are aware of the cultural connotations with colors, which are interesting and important to intercultural communication. Connotative meanings often contain implicit cultural meanings, such as attitudes, values, and beliefs. Knowing the connotative meanings of certain words enables learners to see and understand why natives act in certain ways (e.g., why they wear or more like certain colors on certain occasions). Learners thereby gain insight into the deep cultural implications of certain behaviors of the target culture. Learning the connotative meanings should not be regarded as a burden to teachers and learners when combined in the language curriculum design properly through effective activities. It piques learners’ interests in learning the language, and it also makes the learning meaningful.
Like color, food also plays a critical part in culture, especially in Chinese culture. There is a variety of foods across the whole country. Usually, people think there are eight main cuisines in China, as well as tons of famous flavorful local foods and snacks. Based on the extensive and profound food culture in China, there are a lot of expressions referring to foods, flavors, and other elements related to eating and food, indicating various meanings more accurately and vividly. For example, flavors can be used to describe feelings in Chinese. They may be used directly to indicate people’s feelings, or can be used in other fixed expressions, such as the following four words expressions:

To describe being happy: sweet

To describe being not so happy or hard to describe: sour

To describe sadness: bitter

To describe jealousy: sour

However, students did not perform as well as expected on the food culture questions, even though this is the most popular topic when they take the interests survey at the end of the questionnaire. Questions are as follows:

Example question: 9(3)

In Chinese, flavors can also be used to indicate some special meanings, for example, if you want to describe someone who is very popular in the company, you can use the expression, “this person is (这个人很) ____”

A 吃 (to eat) 甜 (sweet)  B 吃香 (incense)  C 吃苦 (bitter)  D 吃辣 (spicy)
However, if your girlfriend is angry because you speak with another girl for a long time, she is ______.

A 吃 (to eat) 辣 (spicy)  B 吃苦 (bitter)  C 吃醋 (vinegar)  D 吃酸 (sour)

These two expressions are commonly used in daily life in China. The first question about the expression of “吃香” had a low accuracy, which is as low as the question about the Peking Opera facial makeup.

Table 5: Accuracy rate of food question “吃香”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy rate</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students were not familiar with expressions about flavors in Chinese. They applied English language and culture to them: most students choose “吃甜(sweet)” to describe the popularity, and the second option is “吃辣(spicy)”. Compared to words in English, they transferred sweet to describe good fortune, good feelings, and aspects with positive attitudes, therefore, most students chose sweet as their option to express people’s popularity. “Hot” is used often in English to describe popularity, therefore, it explains why students chose it. For the other question, “吃醋(vinegar)” is used to express being jealous between people in a relationship. On average, 30% of students had the right answer, which is more than for the question about expression of “吃香”. There are at
least three lessons discussing about topics of Chinese food in textbooks: Level 1 Lesson 12 (Dinging), and Level 2 Lesson 3 (饭馆 restaurant) and Lesson 12 (中国的文化 Chinese culture). Besides the above, there are conversations and other related topics included in textbooks. There are also lessons with topics of falling in love and marriage. All of these is supposed to be helpful for students to get the right answer in order to reach a higher accuracy rate on these questions if teachers could remind them.

Another question about Chinese food is matching the important festivals and their traditional foods:

Example question: 6

*Match the traditional festival and its important food.*

- **Spring festival**  Zòngzi  (*Chinese rice pudding.*)
- **Dragon boat festival**  Yuèbǐng  (*mooncake*)
- **Mid-Autumn day**  Jiǎozi  (*dumpling*)
- **Lantern festival**  Yuánxiāo (*Chinese sweet rice dumpling*)

Advanced level students performed well on this question, but the lower-level students had a low accuracy rate on this question. Chinese festivals and foods are popular topics for Chinese learners. Most students know the pair of mooncakes and Mid-Autumn Festival. For other three festivals, they were not familiar with food, or even the festival. It helps a lot if teachers could provide more information on Chinese traditional holidays and foods culture when giving lectures, leading students to gain a deeper understand about
Chinese culture and language. Students from Session C (with special cultural knowledge curriculum) at intermediate level got the highest accuracy rate on this question.

For the question about gifting giving, students were confused about taboos. Gift giving culture is an important part of daily life. Giving customary gifts is considered as a traditional way to build and maintain friendships or other relationships. There is etiquette in giving and receiving gifts in China that is different from other cultures. When receiving a gift, people often decline it for one or two times before accepting it to show modesty and avoid any suggestion of personal greed. Meanwhile, it is not a proper way to open the gift in front of the gift giver immediately. People choose to open and enjoy the gift after the giver has left. One interpretation of this practice of not opening gifts upon receiving them is this: the receiver is “saving the face of the giver by avoiding any possibilities of judging the gift in the presence of the giver and others” (Hu, 1999, p 152).

When wrapping a gift, usually Chinese choose red or other warm colors for happy occasions; white or black is not a good choice. However, it is not acceptable to write the card in red ink, which suggests disassociation. There is a question (question 5(4)) in the questionnaire about red ink, with a 67% accuracy rate. Another cultural aspect in gift taboos: numbers. Numbers six and eight are good and lucky numbers in China, but four is not a good number for gift giving, which sounds like death in Chinese. A clock is not a gift choice especially to older people. In Chinese, “clock” is pronounced as “zhōng”, and giving a gift is pronounced as “sòng”. When combined, it becomes “sòng zhōng” which means giving a clock as a gift. However, the same pronunciation of “sòng zhōng” (though the zhōng is a different character) also means paying last respects to someone who has passed away. Therefore, it is not auspicious to give someone a clock.
as a gift. Flowers are a good choice as a gift; however, chrysanthemums are often used to show respect or as a memorial for friends and family members who have passed away. Fruit is also a good gift option, but pear is not proper because it sounds like “离 (lì: separation)” in Chinese.

Example question: 5(2)

*Sam would like to select a birthday gift for grandmother. Which is the best choice?*

A *An Antique clock*

B *Fresh yellow chrysanthemum*

C *Fresh fruit basket with decoration (four pears and four peaches)*

D *Green tea*

Green tea is the best gift in this scenario. Tea plays an important role in Chinese history, as great as Chinese silk and porcelain, which are very popular around the world. Drinking tea is beneficial to people’s health. With a long history of tea culture, there are many poems, stories, and expressions about tea. Tea is considered as the national drink in China (Level One L5 Visiting Friends, p 142-143). This question also shows differences among different levels, as shown in Table 6:

**Table 6: Accuracy rate summary of question 5(2)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy rate</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information about tea and other Chinese drinks is in the textbook, Level 1 Lesson 5 (p.142-143), but it is arranged in the part of “culture highlight”, the end part of the lesson. All students have learned the lesson when taking the questionnaire, but they may not pay any attention to that part, since they have spent more time on the main part of vocabulary and grammar. Students usually take for granted that the later provided information is provided, the less important it is. It only serves as an appendix to expand your mind or just for fun, since it will not be tested on any exams. For this question, the elementary level students performed better than intermediate level students, because they had just finished this lesson. The lowest accuracy rate was for the intermediate level, indicating it is effective to repeat cultural knowledge in order to keep students’ memories fresh, which is like linguistic knowledge, otherwise, they forget it. After a few years’ review, the target culture can be internalized, which is proved by advanced level students’ performance in the culture test of the questionnaire.

4.3.4 Questions with High Accuracy

The balance between small-c culture and Big-C culture changes as student progresses. For elementary level, it contains more small-c culture than Big-C culture. As learners advancing to higher levels, however, the reverse happens. That is why they get higher accuracy on small-c culture questions, even the elementary level students. All of topics in textbooks (Level 1 part 1) are about daily life. Students learn how to greet, how
to introduce themselves, how to ask for directions, how to continue a conversation, and so on.

Students performed well on questions about the above topics after their language courses, while English speakers without systematic language courses had the lowest accuracy on these questions. Language courses with teachers’ instructions showed the importance of learners’ understanding about another social culture. Social cultural knowledge (small-c culture) has an enormous impact on intercultural communication, which is the goal of language learning. A lack of sociocultural knowledge may cause serious problems for students in coping with linguistic and cultural matters. If it happens to Chinese language learners, the situation may get worse, because Chinese culture is very different from Western cultures. For example, there are some different ways of expressing politeness in Chinese:

* Using honorific forms to address elders and person at higher level in some situations to show respects: apply 您 instead of 你;

* Letting other people enjoy/do things first

* Avoiding showing off or flattering oneself

* Showing modesty when praised (Xu, 1996)

It is important to address people properly in daily life, it does not matter to address family members or people in other relationships. Chinese people are used to showing respect based on age, seniority, and rank. Traditional culture embodies this
attitude toward power and authority by stressing the benefits of ordered hierarchical relationships, which is also applied to family members. The determinant of relative power in China is seniority. In Chinese, there are different words for elder brother, younger brother, elder sister, and younger sister. An elder sibling may call a younger one by his/her given name, but the younger one must use the more reverential age-relative title when addressing the older one: gēgē for elder brother and jiějiě for elder sister. There is detailed information in the textbook (Level 1 Part 1 Lesson 2 Family p. 60):

In pairing up kinship terms, the Chinese customarily say the term for the male before the female: 爸爸妈妈, 哥哥姐姐

In pairing up kinship terms for the same gender, the one with seniority is mentioned first: 哥哥弟弟, 姐姐妹妹

Younger siblings generally do not refer to their elder brothers and sisters by their names but use the appropriate kinship terms instead: 大哥 二哥 三弟 小妹 (with ordinal numeral words)

Moreover, the textbook explains that because of “the Only Child” policy in China, it is not common for children of those generations having siblings. But they may have cousins (堂哥 or 表姐). The new universal two-child policy in China was carried out in 2016, which allow couples where either the husband or the wife is from a single-child family to have the second child. It is beneficial to students if teachers could provide updated information. Language rules about how to address family member are provided
at the beginning of the textbook, indicating that it is part of the basic knowledge in Chinese. However, students did not perform very well (45%) on the question:

Example question: 2

*In pairing up kinship terms, the Chinese customarily order terms as:*

*(Please circle the right one(s))*

爸爸 妈妈 爸爸 妈妈 姐姐 弟弟 姐姐 哥哥 妹妹 姐姐 哥哥 弟弟

Students have no clue about how to arrange the kinship terms in order except “爸爸妈妈 (father and mother)”. The knowledge is a “culture highlight” in the textbook, which is at the end of the lesson, where students may not pay much attention as discussed above. Therefore, they would not get the information without the teacher’s reminder or instruction. Besides family members, there are also different ways to address people in Chinese. Chinese are used to applying official and occupation-linked titles (such as doctor, professor, and major) especially for official correspondence and on formal occasions such as banquets, instead of using the equivalents of Mr., Miss, and Ms. Another commonly used Chinese word that does not have an exact equivalent in English is “lǎo shī” (teacher), which is used in educational institutions at all levels to designate anyone who teaches, from preschool and kindergarten teachers, to college and university professors. “Lǎo shī” is usually translated as teacher, but that is not an accurate
equivalent title in English. It is used with considerable respect even beyond the field of education (Hu, 1999, p17).

The most conventional way to greet in China is simply to say people’s name, perhaps adding a term of respect. A typical Chinese greeting is a casual question about “Qù nà er?” (Where are you headed to?) It is only a friendly greeting with no expectation of a formal or detailed response. Another common form of greeting in Chinese is “Chī le ma?” It means “Have you eaten?” literally. This greeting normally occurs around mealtime, but, like questions about the destination, it is not a genuine request for information. It is neither an invitation to join the other person for a forthcoming meal, even though it sounds like the opening phrase of an invitation. Communication in real situations “is never out of context, and because culture is part of most contexts, communication is rarely culture-free” (Cortazzi and Jin, 1999, p.97). Lacking task-based communicative exercises in real contexts, students would have less opportunity to experience culture, even for the basic greetings happening in the daily life.

Students at all levels performed well on the question about how to greet a new professor for the first time: 100% advanced level students and 91% intermediate level students chose “您” instead of “你”, and they chose the right expression to greet the professor in Chinese properly. There are different ways of asking someone’s name, such as asking his/her full name, last name, etc. Students performed well on question 7(4): how to ask for someone’s last name in a first-time meeting with respect. This is in Level 1 Part 1 Lesson 1, the first lesson of the entire Chinese language course, and it is explained under the grammar column, supposed to attract more attention by students than the information shown at the end of lesson. The question about how to respond to praise
from others also has high accuracy. Students have knowledge about how to show modesty in Chinese, such as “哪里哪里”.

Example question: 7(3)

Professor Zhang’s friend praised Sam: “你的中文说的真好！” (Your Chinese is great!) Sam felt very happy and he replied: _____________________

A 哪里哪里。  B 谢谢。  C 不好，不好，你的中文更好。

In the “asking for directions” scenario, most elementary level students knew not choosing “对不起”, which was not a commonly used expression in Chinese to ask for help, but they chose the general question “…在哪 (zài nǎ?: Where is…)” rather than “…怎么走 (zěn me zǒu)??” that is more common in Chinese, and they have learned from the classroom. It is also because they are not familiar with the expressions of “不好意思” and “麻烦”. For intermediate and advanced levels’ students, more could get right answers, indicating that the more instruction they receive, learners may gradually develop the ability to identify the subtle differences among similar expressions. As a result, they develop the ability to use native words to express their intended meaning. The lack of the accumulated study time and experience made elementary level students have no chance to internalize native-used structures.

Example question: 7(5)
Sam was lost when he came out from the wedding restaurant, he asked someone about the direction to his university: “你好，请问中京大学怎么走？” he could also ask the question in the following way (choose all that apply):

A 不好意思，请问中京大学怎么走？

B 你好，麻烦（trouble）问一下中京大学怎么走？

C 对不起，你知道中京大学吗？

D 你好，请告诉我中京大学在哪儿好吗？

The question about “red envelopes” had the highest accuracy rate among all participants. Students listed many possible events where red envelopes would be necessary, such as weddings, Spring Festival, graduation, being admitted to college, birthdays, birth of a baby. They have a good understanding of red and the red envelope. The second question with higher accuracy was about a leisure and entertainment activity in China: Mahjong, which is in Level 1Part 1 Lesson 4 Hobbies. Mahjong is a popular activity across the country, and it integrates Chinese culture within 144 tiles. For example, the flower tiles contain plum blossoms, orchids, bamboo, and chrysanthemums, indicating four reasons and the special high evaluation of these four plants in China. All these four plants stand for the forever pursuit of life with nobility and modesty.

Chinese hold the philosophy of collectivism, which leads people to think about general information followed by detailed information. It is also a demonstration of China’s hierarchy. That is the reason why Chinese people describes dates and times,
addresses, and some other information from the big/general concepts to small/detailed ones. This typical Chinese thinking mode is totally different from the Western ways. Obviously, students pay more attention to the difference, so they get a high accuracy rate on the question about describing dates and times in Chinese. Comparing is an effective way to teaching culture. Students compare their own culture with the culture of the target language, which can lead them to explore deeply about their own culture and to get a good understanding of the target culture as well.

As the only question about food with a high accuracy rate (70%), the spicy flavor shows its popularity no matter in China and throughout the world:

Example question: 9(2)

“民以食为天”, literally means “people regard the food as their sky”, indicating that food is very important to life.

2) If you like spicy food, where would you like to visit?

A Beijing (北京)  B Shanghai (上海)

C Sichuan (四川)  D Hong Kong (香港)

Sichuan cuisine is one of the eight Chinese cuisines, and is one of the most famous and popular Chinese cuisines in the world. Characterized by its spicy and pungent flavor, Sichuan cuisine emphasizes on the use of chili, pepper and prickly ash, producing typical distinctive spicy taste. It often leaves a slightly numb sensation in the mouth. Besides, garlic, ginger and scallion are also used as part of the seasoning. Sichuan cuisine
could be the most familiar food to Chinese learners all around the world, such as fish flavored pork, Mapo tofu, and Kung Pao chicken. There is detailed information about Chinese cuisine in the textbook *Integrated Chinese Level 2 Part 1 Lesson 3 饭馆 (Restaurant)*. 
CHAPTER 5
IMPLICATIONS

The questionnaire was designed based on the cultural topics and knowledge in textbooks (*Integrated Chinese* Level 1 & 2), with the purpose to test students’ Chinese culture acquisition after their language courses. With the analysis of the outcomes of the questionnaire, there are implications for textbook editors and language instructors.

5.1 Implications for Textbooks

The language profession has gone through tremendous changes since the 1940s at the consensus that language and culture are inseparable. Language study cannot be devoid of culture study. Communication is loaded with cultural implications. Cultural information is carried through language. Textbooks are the most ubiquitous objects in language learning, together with teachers, textbooks impart language and cultural knowledge to learners (Feng, 2004, p 171). “A textbook is thus seen as an authority: it is reliable, valid, and often unjustifiably considered as correct, or even as the only interpretation” (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999, p 200). Textbooks and language courses are students’ top 2 choices as their resources of Chinese culture learning. Besides language teachers, they are almost the only input providers of linguistic codes and cultural knowledge for them. It is proved by the background information collection of the questionnaire:

*How do you learn Chinese culture?*
various readings, Chinese language textbooks, Chinese friends, Chinese language classes, others: __________________

Language textbooks should provide not only phonological, grammatical, and structural knowledge, but also integrate cultural knowledge equally with language study. They carry the responsibilities of “conveying social norms concerning human relationships and individual behavior; presenting social institutions and social values; and selecting what counts as important in a society” (Dedrino, 1995, p.60). However, foreign language textbooks usually emphasize overwhelmingly the form of the language rather than its cultural aspects. They contain knowledge about how to say certain things in certain contexts, but they reveal little to why one should act and say what they do. Even when they contain cultural information, they are far from accurate, authentic and diverse. In sum, neither quantity nor quality of cultural knowledge in Integrated Chinese is effective enough for students.

Textbooks bridges language and cultural study, but there is not enough cultural knowledge provided in the textbook of Integrated Chinese. It is generally driven by structural concerns rather than cultural concerns. The context for cultural learning is not adequately provided. Cultural knowledge in the textbooks is mainly contained in the “culture highlight” (at the end of each lesson) or footnotes (explaining isolated facts about the culture). Learners rarely pay attention to knowledge “displayed” in these areas. Besides, some knowledge or information is outdated, inaccurate, or lacks enough explanation. For example, the cultural knowledge about hobbies (Level 1 Part 1 lesson 4), the most popular hobbies in the textbook are Mahjong and chess, however, it is not the
whole picture of the leisure life in China, especially for the young people. They are more tending to take various activities, such as singing (KTV), hiking and other healthy activities. Recently, there is an increasing tendency to appreciate Chinese traditional arts, such as Peking Opera, tea culture, and other local arts. Another example is about the topic of how to make appointments: there is only one way introduced in the textbook – through the phone, but it is very common to communicate through WeChat (a popular social App in China) and email. There is another example about shopping (Level 1 Part 1 Lesson 9): shopping is an essential activity happened in daily life with many related aspects such as currency, payment methods, and tax and other fees, which are different from western countries. Besides, it is also a good opportunity to show color connotations in Chinese culture. However, there is not enough knowledge provided in the textbook.

There is no systematic inclusion of culture into language teaching in the textbook. Culture is still seen as an add-on element, not an integral part. A very small amount of information is provided in the conversations, texts, language notes, and exercises, which should be equally important to identify the culture content, such as people’s views, their attitudes, their values, and their beliefs. Without learning the above, students are expected to understand why people act in certain ways and what are the beliefs behind these actions. However, as Feng (2004) stated in the research, the cultural content contained in the texts lacks validity. Culture information is not based on real Chinese culture, such as locations, settings, and characters (p175). Students do not get the whole picture of the target culture. What they acquired from language courses was only the way to describe their life in the U.S society in Chinese. For example, there are many differences about college life in China from the life in the U.S; college students are not allowed to live off-
campus in China (students could choose to live on/off campus in the U.S.); there are four to eight people sharing the dormitory (there are two people in the U.S.); they usually begin their summer vacations in July (it begins in May in the U.S.).

As a result, it is difficult for teachers to realize the goals of five Cs’ (ACTFL guidelines), and for students to participate effectively in intercultural communication. Even though there are new editions for the textbook, it is only a fancy new look, but the change is superficial with more pictures and updated popular culture elements. However, it does not head to the essence of learning to communicate in sociocultural contexts. To accomplish the intercultural communication goal, the authenticity of materials of textbooks is the most important factor when compiling teaching materials for students of different proficiency levels. Otherwise, textbooks miss a great opportunity to integrate and present more authentic cultural information via dialogues, narratives, and other practices. In contrast, added culture information could have great impact on students’ study of Chinese language and culture. It prepares students better to be intercultural communicators. For the textbook, there should be more accurate, authentic and updated cultural knowledge provided systematically because textbooks play an important role irreplaceably in language learning, affecting students profoundly.

5.2 Implications for Instructors

5.2.1 What to Teach

When designing a curriculum, instructors should integrate cultural knowledge into language teaching appropriately, so that language teaching and culture teaching can
be combined in courses. It does not mean that every aspect of culture should be covered during the limited class time. It is reasonable to choose important cultural elements that represent the essence of Chinese culture, embody China’s core values and soft power, and show how Chinese culture differs significantly from other cultures. It is also important to consider students’ interests in cultural topics. Based on the open-end questions in the questionnaire, some specific cultural topics interest students: Chinese slang, customs, food, Chinese holidays, taboos, things considered rude/bad luck in Chinese culture, etc. Students are interested in both Big-C culture and small-c culture. Here are some replies from the students:

*I think it would be interesting to learn more about the relational manner when addressing different people, such as within the nuclear family, age divisions, in the workforce, at service establishments, etc.*

*I would like to learn more about Chinese traditions.*

*I have not had many opportunities to eat authentic Chinese food. I would love to explore the culture more especially through the food. Also, I would love to learn more about and experience a Chinese festival celebration.*

*It seems that there are a lot of special phrases that use characters I know, but I am not aware of these phrases. These would be cool to learn about.*

*More colloquial phrases*

*I am interested to the origins of why colors, numbers, and other things hold such importance in Chinese culture.*
I wish I knew more about etiquette and social interactions

I wish I knew more about Chinese holidays, their purposes, and their origins. I also want to understand Chinese family trees and the different names you call your family members according to their relations to your mom and dad.

Teachers could explain cultural knowledge through various activities, especially for social culture. Some similar cultural cores exist even in different cultures; however, they have different ways to show or represent them. To some extent, cultural teaching in a language classroom could be regarded as showing students how to express your own culture in another way accepted by people from another country. This culture learning theory is easier for students to understand another culture, and to make them less nervous and less confused to the new culture. For example, people around the world have the culture to respect each other; however, there are different ways to show respect. When receiving gifts from others, western people choose to open the gifts immediately in front of the giver in order to show respect and thanks; Chinese people hold the same value to respect and thank the gift giver, but they choose to open it later when the giver leaves. Comparing is an effective way of teaching a different culture. When applying it, only compare the difference, do not compare with debates or arguments which one is better. The purpose to make comparison is to know the difference in order to understand each other and avoid misunderstandings. The key point to comparison is to exclude the ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice. Compare the main concept of culture, or the most important rules, while it is no good to compare many details that could cause more confusions.
It is effective if the instructor adapts the class expectations, instructional materials, and assessment techniques to language learning with more consideration of culture. Relevant cultural knowledge could pique learners’ interests in language learning. Both Big-C Culture and small-c cultural knowledge should be provided during students’ language learning progress. The cultural facts knowledge is still an important component in culture teaching, particularly in language situations where learners have limited opportunities to be exposed to target culture or have relatively fewer resources to explore the target culture (Byram & Feng, 2004, p160). The curriculum should be designed based on students’ language level: for elementary level students, it is better to illustrate basic cultural facts and small-c cultural knowledge that focuses on communicative and social culture; while for the higher levels’ students, achievement cultural knowledge (Big-C culture) should be a supplement or extension of the language class.

5.2.2 How to Teach – Teaching Strategies

After solving the problem about what to teach, teachers focus on how to make use of different materials and strategies to teach culture effectively. For instance, for sociocultural knowledge, usually there is an explicit method consisting of three stages: explanation, exploration, and expression (Savignon & Sysoyev, 2005). It is a familiar sequence in cognitive learning theory that has been used successfully to introduce diverse aspects of a language:

The first stage is to explain the role and importance of a particular strategy in intercultural communication; the second stage is to let learners work in pairs or
small groups to become acquainted with the study real-life examples in communication; the expression stage is to provide more opportunities for learners to be exposed to and practice in simulated communicative contexts (Savignon & Sysoyev, 2005).

This is a traditional means of teaching culture. Sometimes it becomes a burden for students if the teacher spends much time in explaining culture and practice separately from language teaching. Therefore, culture teaching should be integrated into language-based course naturally and smoothly, but only a limited number of language-based texts successfully integrated cultural components in *Integrated Chinese*, as Feng concluded (Feng, 2006).

Teachers who would like to attach a high degree of importance to cultural education should spend additional time and efforts in preparing learning materials and strategies used in language teaching. For example, when integrating culture and vocabulary, it is better to place the word in a meaningful language context, even with its expanded cultural connotations within a context. Oral communication practice is also important. When taking communication activities, it not only requires students to use words and grammar but to use them correctly, properly, culturally and contextually. To accomplish this goal, it is worthwhile to design meaningful activities based on language learning, which appropriately integrate the linguistic and cultural contents of the lesson as much as possible. For instance, the “Market Game” for the lesson about shopping; half of the class works as customers, the other half works as vendors or stores. Students design their advertisements, logos, and the prices of their products, while customers purchase
things with limited budgets. It is a good role-play opportunity to practice language about shopping and solving the possible problems that arise from the process, such as bargaining, sales tax, and tips.

In a foreign language environment where students have limited opportunities to use their target language on a daily basis, it is helpful to be provided with real opportunities for exposure to language use in the classroom, which requires tasks designed in the real language environment with authentic language materials. By taking activities in the classroom, students are expected to enhance comprehensibility of Chinese through negotiating meanings, providing feedbacks, and modifying language productions to be more target-like, which are significant for L2 learning. Many students suggested that there be more personal contacts with native speakers and more exposures with authentic learning materials such as reading materials, films and videos from China.

Encouraging students to develop personal contacts with native speakers has been regarded as an effective and straightforward way to develop sociocultural ability. The curriculum about culture is designed with the goal of promoting mutual respects and understandings of cultures in contact. When people with different backgrounds socialize with each other, there are some misunderstandings because of a lack of cultural knowledge, which impedes the communications. It is worse when it happens in the foreign language environment where students have limited opportunities to use the target language daily. Regularly planned interviews with natives as guest speakers could be taken as an integral part of language courses. Spending an hour every two or three weeks with a visitor from the target culture is a direct personal intercultural communication. Setting up a WeChat chatting/discussion group is another popular way for students to
communicate with teachers, peers, and more native speakers out of the limited class time. It is also a good way for teachers to answer students’ language and culture questions in a timely manner (quickly) and provide course supplement materials, in order that students gain a good understanding of Chinese culture and authentic expressions from daily life. Besides the above, authentic materials are good resources to learn a language. Authentic materials are defined as materials produced by native speakers for native speakers (Duquette, Dunnett & Papalia, 1987). In other words, they are materials that are not manipulated for language teaching/learning purposes. Language and culture are integrated in authentic materials, which provide the necessary context for appropriately relating forms and meanings in the language acquisition process. Steele and Suozzo (1994) saw the reasons for using authentic material this way:

Authentic materials stimulate motivation for learning because students appreciate that they are learning “real” language used in the target country as opposed to pedagogical language for the classroom. Through these materials they can experience the target culture.

Authentic materials allow students to expand their existing knowledge. They not only provide information on the target culture but also contain expressions of attitudes, feelings, opinions, and ideas (Suozzo, 1994, p 88). Authentic input should be included early in language learning as a part of instruction. It is important to select authentic teaching materials when designing culture curriculum, especially for social cultural knowledge. Multimedia materials are helpful to language learning and teaching when they are presented at the right time and place. Helping students develop their knowledge
about the target culture is very important to all levels of language learners. Multimedia materials illustrate the target culture visually without a requirement of much grammatical skill and express the culture in a way that words cannot explain completely. It is more vivid and impressive for students to learn through authentic pictures, photos, videos when introducing culture. For example, when teaching Chinese holidays, it is better to show students about current photos, flyers, and movies with related elements to present Chinese holidays and people’s celebration about them; traditional foods are also welcomed to the classroom if applicable. In addition, teachers could design a flipped classroom based on authentic language materials. For example, they could make up conversations, narrations or even short videos about selected topics which are desirable to sufficiently compile language contexts and culture contents as needed. Students spend time outside of the classroom on learning language (vocabulary and grammar) and understanding the culture contained in the materials. Then they have more time and opportunities to do oral practices and in-depth discussion about the language and culture in the regular classroom, which are applicable to students at intermediate and above levels.

Designing culture learning activities with the overall goal to actively involve students by assisting them in analyzing, comparing, and responding to multiple stimuli is an effective way to teach culture. Each individual lesson aims at blending structure and culture into a meaningful learning experience. Ancillary materials in the form of audio-motor units, mini-dramas, culture capsules, and role-play activities are easily incorporated into the daily lesson plans. Seelye (1993) suggested ways to bring culture into the language classroom for the purpose of achieving cultural communication and
understanding. The listed items included: “cultural themes, songs, ethnography, illustrations, cultural capsules (brief statement for presentation), folklore…travel and study abroad” (pp.55-67). Many of the above suggestions were subsequently taken up, modified, and further developed by classroom teachers according to their features. For example, the culture capsule is short and designed to provide a natural connection between vocabulary and the content of textbooks, which teach the language as well as the culture and help students outgrow culture-bound attitudes (Seelye, 1993, p 8). These activities lead teachers to create a supportive classroom environment that mimics authentic communication so that students are motivated to learn cultural elements needed in real-life communication.

A direct way to include culture in the curriculum is to designate specific days for culture teaching. This approach is often used by teachers who attach less importance to culture in the regular classroom or those who must rely heavily on supplementary materials because their textbooks lack sufficiency cultural materials. The selection of these special days should not be limited to Fridays or pre-vacation days, as this practice reinforces the notion of culture as an afterthought. When carefully planned, this approach can provide students with meaningful cultural experience (Seelye, 1993, p 9). It requires instructors to make a well-organized plan in terms of time duration for each culture day and numbers of days about it. It is helpful to select the important topics based on students’ interests, and it is also a good attempt to present selected topics with vocabulary and grammar from language courses. Students should participate in the designed activities but not only sit still to take the lecture. Some Chinese programs have developed informal extra-curricular activities for students in order to reinforce and expand what they covered.
in the classroom, including but not limited to, individual conferences, chat rooms, Chinese tables/corners, calligraphy clubs, painting clubs, cooking clubs, movie clubs, and so on. These informal activities not only help students strengthen their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills, but also stimulate their interests in language and culture.

Besides all the above strategies, it is important to list cultural knowledge as part of assessment. There are many creative ways to assess cultural knowledge learning except traditional paper tests since culture is a special study subject that does not only exist on paper. It is a choice to assess culture with individual portfolios or small group projects, which are effective and meaningful for students’ continuous and comprehensive culture learning. For example, students create their culture portfolio step by step (topic selection, bibliography, outline, slides, and summary) during the whole semester with one selected topic they are interested in about Chinese culture (e.g., art, environmental issues, economics, holidays, literature, music, popular culture, etc.). They present their research about the topic and write a review paper about what they have learned from others about other cultural topics after the presentations. Their mini cultural research can also be displayed with the form of a culture fair at the end of the semester. The entire process of the project leads them to understand the target culture deeply, until the final oral presentation which is a demonstration of their work and a continuously rewarding process. Big-C culture knowledge can be assessed in chapter tests, final exams, and oral exams. “Short information” at the beginning of every class (first three minutes), inviting students to make a brief introduction about Chinese vocabulary, idioms, colors or any other topics with implicit or explicit culture connotations, is another good way.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

It has been widely accepted that culture is an indispensable element of foreign and second language learning. In the view of Seelye (1984), “it is becoming increasingly apparent that the study of language cannot be divorced from the study of culture, and vice versa” (p26). The purpose of this questionnaire research is to gain some practical insights into the students’ level of Chinese culture acquisition after their language courses. All questions were designed based on textbooks. The results of the questionnaire show differences among different questions. The question about “red envelope” takes the highest accuracy rate (84%), following by the question of “Mahjong” (75%) and question about word order of date and time (73%). To the contrary, the question about Chinese culinary school takes the lowest accuracy rate (13%), following by the small c question of “How to ask age” (16%) and the question about Chinese traditional holidays and its foods (19%). The results also show differences among students at different levels. In general, students at advanced level perform much better than intermediate and elementary level since they have more learning time and more relevant learning and living experience. However, for some questions, intermediate even elementary level students performed better than them, indicating that it is necessary to keep teaching and refreshing learners’ memory of their culture learning, which is a continuous and internalized process. The questionnaire results also show indiscrimination of heritage students’ performance which is not as well as expected, because they have language and culture background to varying degrees. No findings indicate any significant difference among the variables for individual differences within subjects (i.e., major/department, age, gender). From the
analysis of questionnaire results, it is noticeable that Chinese instructors should systematically implement cultural knowledge into daily language teaching and assessment in order to develop students’ cultural competence simultaneously.

The ultimate goal of any language learning is to gain the skills to use the language properly for communication. The emphasis is on “properly” using the language. The goal of properly using any language involves not only learning pronunciation, grammar, and the lexicon but more importantly, learning how to make meaning, to express, interpret, and negotiate meaning in a variety of situations, that is, to develop a communicative competence that is appropriate to their needs. To accomplish the goal, it is necessary to learn linguistic knowledge and cultural connotations. Without an understanding of the target culture, it will cause the misunderstandings during the intercultural communication even when they speak another language fluently. The culture teaching is a process of acculturation that narrow the gap between native culture and target culture. It is also a process of exploring, contrasting, and interpreting culture difference. In order to incorporate into the language instruction with intercultural activities appropriate to different students and different subjects, instructors should design the curriculum with proper integration of language and culture and apply various teaching strategies. It is helpful to explore and create proper culture supplement learning materials in different forms if the information in the textbook were lack of quantity and quality. It is beneficial for students to have more opportunities to practice language in real contexts. The appropriate assessments and timely feedbacks are indispensable for students’ further development about language and culture learning.
This questionnaire is designed to explore your cultural knowledge acquisition from your regular Chinese language classes. Please complete it and help us improve our teaching in the future. Your response will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous and will only be used for the purpose of this research. I would deeply appreciate your help.

Questionnaire:
Part 1: Background information
Part 2: Cultural content questions

PART 1: Background information:

1. Personal information
   Major/Department ___________, Gender: ________________, Age: _____
   Class Standing: freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, graduate (Please circle)
   Others (please specify): __________

2. Language background
   1) Native language/dialect __________

3) Do you speak Chinese (including dialect) with any of your family members?
   Yes, I speak _______________ with _____________________.
   No, I do not. I speak _______________ at home.

3) Have you ever taken any Chinese class? List the following information, please.
   School        Course        Semester/year        Grade received
4) Have you ever been China before? List the following information, please.
Place/city     length of stay     at age of     purpose (travel, language study etc.)
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

5) How do you evaluate your Chinese competence level?
Novice     intermediate     advanced     other: ______________

6) How much do you know about Chinese culture? (1 to 10: 1 very little, 10 most)
________________________________________________________________________
How do you learn Chinese culture?
various readings, Chinese language textbooks, Chinese language classes, Chinese friends,
others: __________________

Part 2 Cultural content questions:
1 Sam goes to study Chinese in Beijing for one semester. This is the name card of his
advisor in Zhong Jing University.
1) Which is the best greeting for his first time meeting the advisor?
2) Can you guess whether Professor is male or female according to the first name? Why?

2 In pairing up kinship terms, the Chinese customarily order terms as:
(Please circle the right one(s))
爸爸妈妈 妈妈爸爸 姐姐弟弟 姐姐哥哥 妹妹姐姐 哥哥弟弟

3 When do you think Sam will take his first Chinese written test?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2017 test schedule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 1st (Monday)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese written test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A 周一上午 10 点，2017年5月1日 B 2017,5,3星期一下午三点
C 5,5,2017中午1点 D 2017年5月1日星期一，上午10点

4 There are Four Treasures of the Studio in Chinese calligraphy, please circle them:
Ink stick pencil writing brush ink stone paper ruler paperweight

5. Professor Zhang invited Sam to attend the celebration of grandmother’s birthday.
1) Sam would like to know grandmother’s actual age, so he asked:
   A 她几岁了？ B 她多大了？ C 她高寿(shòu)了？

2) Sam would like to select a birthday gift for grandmother. Which is the best choice?
A An Antique clock
B Fresh yellow chrysanthemum
C Fresh fruit basket with decoration (four pears and four peaches)
D Green tea

3) Sam had a dinner with Professor’s family on that day, and Professor explained to him that mother had a bowl of __________ with the auspicious meaning: hope she could live a long time.
A dumplings  B noodles  C fish braised in soy sauce  D wine

4) Grandma was very happy, wearing nice ____ clothes, which was a birthday gift from her son. People always use this color to express their happiness. However, you cannot use it to ______, otherwise, you will not be so happy.
A red, make dresses  B black, paint the wall
C red, write a letter  D yellow, color the flower of the picture

5) There are ___ (how many?) animal signs in the Chinese zodiac, each representing one year in the cycle. Grandma was born in the year of the __________. This animal has been a very important representation of China for many centuries.

6) Usually, three family members play ____ with grandma, which is her favorite traditional game. There are 144 tiles and some different playing rules in different areas in China.
A Mahjong  B Chinese chess  C KTV (karaoke TV)  D poker game

But that day, they invited grandma to watch Peking Opera in the theatre, which is also her favorite activity. There are types of facial makeup with certain colors in operas, and they are based on certain personalities, temperaments and some special types of figures.

_____ stands for integrity, bravery and even recklessness,
_____ usually stands for treacherous, cunning, or malicious.
7) It was a nice big dinner with Chinese food. All family members sat at the table:

Which one is like their dinner table? Please circle and explain your choice.

Explain:

___________________________________________________________________

6 Match the traditional festivals and their important food.

The Spring festival                                Zòngzi (Chinese rice pudding.)
The dragon boat festival                       Yuèbǐng (mooncake)
The mid-Autumn day                           Jiǎozi (dumpling)
Lantern festival                                 Yuánxiāo (Chinese sweet rice dumpling)

7 Sam was invited to attend Professor Zhang’s daughter’s wedding ceremony.

1) The bride's dresses were amazing, please write down the order number of her choice of dress in parenthesis and the most possible color on the line. Her wedding ceremony procedure: 1 Chinese traditional ritual, 2 modern ceremony, 3 wedding reception

( ) _______                        ( ) _______                        ( ) _______

2) Parents gave the red envelope to the bride and the bridegroom. Do you know when children will receive the red envelope from their parents, especially the grandparents as a gift? Please write down all the possibilities you know.

____________________________________________________________________
3) Professor Zhang’s friend praised Sam: “你的中文说的真好!” (Your Chinese is great!) Sam felt very happy and he replied: _____________________

A 哪里那里。 B 谢谢。 C 不好，不好，你的中文更好。

4) Sam met Professor Zhang’s friend for the first time. He asked ___________.

A 你好，你姓什么？ B 您好，请问您的名字是什么？ C 您好，请问您贵姓？

5) Sam was lost when he came out from the wedding restaurant, he asked someone about the direction to his university: “你好，请问中京大学怎么走？”， he could also ask the question in the following way (choose all that apply):

A 不好意思，请问中京大学怎么走？
B 你好，麻烦（trouble）问一下中京大学怎么走？
C 对不起，你知道中京大学吗？
D 你好，请告诉我中京大学在哪儿好吗？

8 China’s Great Four Inventions:
Paper making, ________________, ________________, ________________

A moveable printing, compass, gunpowder
B silk making, compass, gunpowder
C moveable printing, dumpling, umbrella

9 “民以食为天”, literally means “people regard the food as their sky”, indicating that food is very important to life.

1) Do you know how many culinary schools (菜系) of Chinese food there are?
A 4 B 6 C 10 D 100
2) If you like spicy food, where would you like to visit?
   A Beijing (北京)  B Shanghai (上海)  C Sichuan (四川)  D Hong Kong

3) In Chinese, flavors can also be used to indicate some special meanings, for example, if you want to describe someone is very popular in the company, you can use the expression, “this person is (这个人很) ______”
   A 吃甜（sweet）  B 吃香（incense）  C 吃苦（bitter）  D 吃辣（spicy）

   However, your girlfriend is angry because you speak with another girl for a long time, she is ______.
   A 吃辣（spicy）  B 吃苦（bitter）  C 吃醋（vinegar）  D 吃酸（sour）

4) ____ can probably be called the national drink of China.
   A wine  B Chinese white alcohol  C tea  D plum juice

10 Color terms often convey some special meanings when used in certain situations; in Chinese, there is an expression to indicate “speak frankly”, it is “说______了”
   A 白（white）  B 红（red）  C 黑（black）  D 黄（yellow）

11 Chinese like number ________________, because __________________________

   They do not like number ________________, because __________________________

Based on your experience, are there any other aspects of Chinese culture that you wish you knew more about? If so, please explain:
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN ANALYSIS

Questionnaire design:

1 Background information

4) Personal information:
   gender, age

5) Language background:
   Chinese courses they have had, study or visit abroad experience, self-evaluation of
   Chinese competence, etc.

6) Chinese culture competence:
   self-evaluation, learning resources

2 Cultural content questions

1) format: multiple choice & question and answer & match

2) category: basic culture information & behavior culture

3) structure & key points:

   问卷包含 4 个情景系列问题（每个系列问题包含 2 至 6 个小问题），4 个系列
   问题分别以特定话题或特定场景为背景进行相关问题的设计，总计题目 26 个，包
   含答案 46 个。

   题目设计以外国留学生 Sam 到中国留学为背景，进行相关话题讨论。

1 情景系列问题，设定场景，介绍整个问卷的总背景：Sam 是一名留学生，他来到
位于北京的“中京大学”留学，为期一个学期。给出指导教授名片，根据名片信息进行回答。
包含两小题，题目源自 L1 Greetings
1）初次见面，如何与教授打招呼。
考察点：
*交际文化，初次见面如何有礼貌地恰当地与长辈或老师等特定职业的人进行交流（behavior culture for daily routine）
*中国人打招呼的具体表达，不是英文的直接翻译。
*如何称呼中国人的名字（依据亲疏关系），姓？名？单字名？双字名？
2）根据教授的名字判断性别并解释。
考察点：中国人起名字的文化传统及含义。
L1 开学

2 亲属关系的四字词语，如何安排前后顺序。L2 Family
考察点：男前女后（the male before the female）：哥哥姐姐
大前小后（same gender，the one with seniority is mentioned first.）：
姐姐妹妹
Tricky one：兄妹，姐弟

3 中文日期时间表达：先大后小-年月日星期具体时间L3 Dates and Times & L20 外国人在中国（Word order：general before specific）

4 文房四宝（Chinese Calligraphy）L7 Studying Chinese

5 情景系列问题，教授邀请留学生 Sam 参加祖母的生日宴会：
1）询问年龄：不同年龄的人如何恰当的询问年龄 L3 Dates and Times
考察点：交际文化。（几岁？多大？高寿？）
2）送礼物的选择：L14 Birthday Party
考察点：送礼的禁忌。（钟，菊花，数字 4 的特殊含义）
3）吃饭：过生日吃长寿面
4）祖母衣服的颜色：红色在中国文化中的重要地位及含义（吉祥喜庆/凶兆）
考察点：颜色词的特殊象征意义。L9 Shopping
5）十二生肖，龙意象在中国文化中的重要地位。
L14 Birthday Party & L9 教育（龙凤在中国文化中的代表含义）
6）麻将，中国传统娱乐项目，阐明有 144 张牌，各地区玩法不尽相同L4 Hobbies
　　副题：京剧脸谱不同颜色所代表的特殊含义（黑/白）
7）圆桌的含义
6 传统节日与传统节日食物配对（match）L11 中国的节日
7 情景系列问题：教授邀请留学生 Sam 参加自己女儿的婚礼庆典：

1）婚礼流程及相关服饰：
考察点：中国传统服饰，婚礼庆典服装选择，及服装颜色选择。
表述中国现代现实婚礼，融入西方文化因素。
   L19 面试（旗袍）& L9 shopping
2）红包
   L11 中国的节日
3）如何回应别人的赞扬夸奖。
   考察点：交际文化，现实生活运用（以中国文化为基础）
   L10 Transportation
4）第一次见面，询问别人的名字
   考察点：交际文化，如何有效有礼貌的询问别人的名字
   L1 Greetings
5）婚礼结束之后出来迷路，如何向陌生人问路
   考察点：交际文化，如何有效恰当的问路
   L3 饭馆（“麻烦”）
8 中国四大发明
   L18 中国历史
9 情景系列问题：“民以食为天” 中华饮食文化
   L12 Dining & L3 饭馆 & L12 中国的文化
1）菜系
2）菜系具体化：辣菜
3）饮食文化引申义：人受欢迎-吃香，男女之间嫉妒-吃醋
4）茶：中国国饮
   L5 Visiting Friends
10 颜色词含义，引申义：说白了
   L20 外国人在中国
11 数字含义：中国喜欢的吉利数字，不喜欢的数字及原因
   L3 Dates and times （数字）

Post notes: 学生自己感兴趣的中国文化知识
交际文化考察题：
1 初次见面打招呼，如何恰当的称呼别人：带职务，全名，只称名
2 针对不同的人询问年龄的礼貌问法
3 回应别人的赞扬
4 初次见面询问名字
5 向陌生人问路

基本文化知识：
1 中国人的姓名，起名字的文化，称呼姓名的文化
2 中国人传统文化中的男尊女卑，尊敬长者
3 中国人传统的世界观：先总括后详细
4 中国传统文化：文房四宝，四大发明
5 送礼物的文化禁忌
6 饮食文化：长寿面，吃…（香，辣 etc.），菜系，味道，茶
7 颜色：红，黑，白，本义及引申含义
8 数字
9 生肖
10 中国的龙文化
11 中国传统娱乐项目：麻将
12 中国艺术：京剧
13 中国人传统：喜聚不喜散-圆桌
14 中国传统服饰及演变
15 中国传统节日及各自传统（食物，活动）


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