

Analysis on Chinese Culture in Junior Middle School English Textbooks

-- Take PEP as an Example

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Abstract

Nowadays, the world's thoughts and cultures collide violently, and Chinese culture "going out" has become the basic strategy of our country. As the hope of national revitalization, middle school students are in the critical period of the formation of world outlook, life outlook and values, and they need to accept the influence of Chinese culture more. However, the phenomenon of "Chinese cultural aphasia" is widespread among contemporary middle school students, they cannot express their familiar national customs and culture in English or express improperly. English textbooks for junior middle school students, as a bridge of cultural communication, play a key role in improving this phenomenon. In this paper, the widely used People's Education Press "Compulsory Education Curriculum Standard Experimental Textbook" the new target of junior middle school English textbooks in five volumes are selected as the research object. The text analysis method and quantitative analysis method are used to conduct research and analysis, and the analysis results and suggestions are obtained, which provide reference for the compilation and improvement of the textbooks. It is helpful to improve the English expression ability of Chinese culture in middle school students, make Chinese culture go abroad with the help of English language tools, show Chinese culture to the world, enhance the cultural soft power of our country, and provide power for our country in the global competition.

Keywords

English Textbook for Junior Middle School; Chinese Culture; PEP Edition.

1. Introduction

With the in-depth development of globalization, the cultural exchanges between China and other countries are increasingly frequent. With the gradual introduction of western culture, correspondingly, Chinese culture will also go out. With the convening of the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the cultural "going out" strategy has become the only way to build a cultural power country and enhance the country's cultural soft power (Zhao Yuling, 2018).

As an international language tool, English is an important carrier for Chinese culture to go out. English teaching materials as the basis of teaching status is very important (Zhang Zhen, 2020). However, the current English teaching materials for junior middle schools have the problem of unbalanced and unidirectional cultural dominance of English-speaking countries (Jia Zhirong, 2020). Among them, the most widely used PEP English textbooks (People's Education Press "Compulsory Education Curriculum Standard Experimental Textbook" the new target of junior middle school English textbooks in five volumes) also have this problem. The proportion of Chinese native culture is not large and its scope is not wide, which leads to the common phenomenon of "Chinese cultural aphasia" in middle school students. "Chinese cultural

aphasia" refers to the phenomenon that Chinese people are unable to express the customs, systems and traditional concepts contained in Chinese culture in English in cross-cultural communication, which leads to the imbalance of cross-cultural communication and finally results in the failure of cross-cultural communication (Yang Qi, 2020).

This should arouse the attention of textbook writers. If the proportion and breadth of Chinese culture in junior middle school English textbooks are increased, Chinese middle school students' knowledge and understanding of local culture can be deepened, the English expression of Chinese culture in cross-cultural communication can be enriched, and the real Chinese culture can be shown to the world (Gu Xiao, 2020). At the same time, it also enhances students' sense of identity, national pride and cultural confidence in Chinese culture, and makes them become the communicators of Chinese culture and promoters of sino-foreign cultural exchange. It is of profound significance to the implementation of the "going out" strategy of Chinese culture and the promotion of Chinese culture, which is conducive to China's standing in the tide of globalization (Shen Xinran, 2020).

2. Literature Review

American linguist Claire Kramsch said, Foreign language teaching should not only cultivate the cultural view of "knowing others", but also cultivate the cultural awareness of "knowing yourself". However, contemporary Chinese junior middle school English textbooks tend to ignore Chinese local culture. Students trained by such textbooks can introduce "Thanksgiving Day" and "Christmas" fluently in English, but do not know how to express "Mid-Autumn Festival" and "Dragon Boat Festival", which are endowed with Chinese historical and cultural flavor (Wu Xiaoyin, 2020). This situation is not conducive to the Chinese culture out of the world, China's junior middle school English textbooks need to be improved.

Search the keywords "English textbooks" and "Chinese culture" on CNKI (China National Knowledge Internet). From 2010 to 2020, there are 341 articles in total. The research stage of these articles includes primary school stage, secondary school stage and university stage. Among them, the research on Chinese culture and college English textbooks accounts for a large proportion, and the researchers are mainly university teachers. The articles on Chinese culture and English textbooks for primary and secondary schools are relatively small, and the researchers are mainly primary and secondary school teachers. The main reason is that college English teachers are mostly research-oriented teachers, who are free from the pressure of entrance exams in middle and high schools and have more spare time. They have enough energy, time and knowledge to study their teaching materials. Compared with university teachers, the front-line teachers in middle schools lack certain knowledge of educational research methods. Due to the heavy pressure of entrance examination and tight schedule, they have no time to conduct academic research (Zhou Yi, 2020). Thus it can be seen that there is a certain lack of research in middle school English textbooks. Compared with primary school students, junior middle school students already have a certain basic knowledge of English. Compared with high school students, they do not have the heavy pressure of college entrance examination. Moreover, they are in the critical period of forming world outlook, life outlook and values outlook (Guan Li, 2020), so they need to be influenced by Chinese national culture more. Therefore, the author decided to choose junior middle school textbooks as the research object, analyze the Chinese culture in them and put forward suggestions.

In the second search of the keywords "English textbooks for junior middle school" and "Chinese culture" on CNKI, the PEP edition of junior middle school English textbooks is the most research. The author believes that it is mainly because PEP textbooks are the most widely used and more valuable to study them. Therefore, the author decides to take PEP junior middle school English textbooks as an example to conduct research.

The author selected five articles which fit the research theme for analysis. These five papers all believe that there is a lack of Chinese native culture in English textbooks, resulting in the phenomenon of "Chinese cultural aphasia". In addition, all the five papers emphasize that language learning is inseparable from culture, and they believe that it is of great significance to add Chinese cultural content in junior middle school English textbooks, which will help students deepen their sense of identity with Chinese culture, convey Chinese culture to the world, and provide language carriers for the export of Chinese culture.

The difference lies in the different emphases of the five papers. Song Yun (2016), Huang Jiaxin (2020) and Wu Xiaoyin (2020) all adopted text analysis method to study the PEP junior middle school English textbooks and analyzed the presentation mode and quantity distribution of Chinese culture in each grade. Song Yun and Huang Jiaxin statistically analyze Chinese culture and other cultures. Song Yun further divided it into Culture with a capitalized C (literature, art, music, architecture, philosophy, scientific and technological achievements reflect all aspects of human civilization) and Culture with a small c (people's customs, ways of life, social organization, and mutual relations, that is, culture as a series of characteristics). Huang Jiaxin divided them into information culture, behavior culture and achievement culture. Wu Xiaoyin mainly studied Chinese culture in the textbook in detail. And she proposed to deepen students' knowledge and understanding of Chinese culture through classroom teaching based on textbooks, and encourage students to know more about Chinese culture and spread it through a variety of extracurricular activities. Zhang Manman (2020) made a comparative study of the cultural content in the PEP and FLTRP (Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press) junior middle school English textbooks, and specifically studied the role-play part in the textbooks by using qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis. Ding Xiang (2016) mainly adopted the literature review method to analyze the deficiencies in the PEP English textbooks for junior middle schools, which mainly included the overall number of Chinese culture is small, the number of rural culture and the number of ethnic minority culture is small. She also offered advice to education authorities, English teachers and textbook writers.

To sum up, previous researchers mainly used text analysis and quantitative analysis methods to study and classify Chinese culture in junior middle school English textbooks. Therefore, the author will also adopt the method of text analysis and quantitative analysis to study Chinese culture in the PEP edition of junior middle school English textbooks in detail, classify Chinese culture into Culture with a capitalized C and Culture with a small c, and make statistics on the quantitative distribution and change trend of Chinese culture distribution in the textbooks of each grade, so as to provide basis and put forward suggestions for the improvement of junior middle school English textbooks.

3. Research Design

This paper selects People's Education Press "Compulsory Education Curriculum Standard Experimental Textbook" the new target of junior middle school English textbooks in five volumes as the research object. Among them, The book of seventh grade and eighth grade are divided into two volumes, the ninth grade had only one book. There are twelve units for each seventh grade book and ten units for each eighth grade book. The book of ninth grade has 14 units.

The research questions are mainly about "the distribution and categories of Chinese culture in PEP junior middle school English textbooks" and "the proportion and trend of Chinese culture distribution in textbooks of different grades".

The research methods is textual analysis and quantitative analysis. The textual analysis method is used to search for the Chinese culture in the textbook by unit. According to the classification of Allen&Valette and Ovando&Collie, Chinese culture is divided into Culture with a capitalized

C (literature, art, music, architecture, philosophy, scientific and technological achievements reflect all aspects of human civilization) and Culture with a small c (People's customs, ways of life, social organization, interrelations, that is, culture as a series of characteristics) (Cui Yangjin, 2019). After that, quantitative analysis is used to analyze the proportion and trend of Chinese culture distribution in textbooks of different grades.

4. Analysis of the Research Results

4.1. Quantitative Distribution and Category Analysis

Table 1. Quantity Distribution and Category Analysis of Chinese Culture in Each Grade

Book	Unit	Language goal	Chinese culture	Cultural category
Grade 7 Volume 2	Unit3 How do you get to school?	Talk about how to get to places	The students in one small village in China go on a ropeway to cross the river to school	Culture with a small c
	Unit5 Why do you like pandas?	Describe animals; Express preferences	pandas	Culture with a capitalized C
	Unit6 I'm watching TV.	Talk about what people are doing	The Dragon Boat Festival	Culture with a capitalized C
	Unit10 I'd like some noodles.	Order food	gongbao chicken, mapo tofu, long noodles for birthday	Culture with a capitalized C
Grade 8 Volume 1	Unit1 Where did you go on vacation?	Talk about past events	Huangguoshu Waterfall, Tian'anmen Square, the Palace Museum, Beijing hutong	Culture with a capitalized C
	Unit5 Do you want to watch a game show?	Talk about preferences; Make plans	Mulan action movie	Culture with a capitalized C
	Unit8 How do you make a banana milk shake?	Describe a process; Follow instructions	Yunnan Rice Noodles	Culture with a capitalized C
Grade 8 Volume 2	Unit6 An old man tried to move the mountains.	Tell a story	The Monkey King, Journey to the West, Yu Gong Moves a Mountain, Hou Yi Shoots the Suns, Nu Wa Repairs the Sky	Culture with a capitalized C
	Unit7 What's the highest mountain in the world?	Talk about geography and nature	Qomolangma, the Great Wall, pandas	Culture with a capitalized C
	Unit9 Have you ever been to a museum?	Talk about past experiences	Hangzhou National Tea Museum, the Terracotta Army, the Great Wall, the Bird's Nest, the Palace Museum	Culture with a capitalized C
Grade 9	Unit2 I think that mooncakes are delicious!	Give a personal reaction	the Dragon Boat Festival, the Chinese Spring Festival, the Lantern Festival, the Water Festival, the Mid-Autumn Festival	Culture with a capitalized C
	Unit5 What are the shirts made of?	Talk about what products are made of and where they were made	China tea, sky lanterns, paper cutting, Chinese clay	Culture with a capitalized C
	Unit6 When was it invented?	Talk about the history of inventions	Lu Yu, Cha Jing, Chinese tea	Culture with a capitalized C
	Unit9 I like music that I can dance to.	Express preferences	Chinese folk music, erhu, Erquan Yingyue	Culture with a capitalized C
	Unit10 You're supposed to shake hands.	Talk about customs and what you are supposed to do	table manners in China	Culture with a small c

The quantity distribution and the content of Chinese culture contents in 58 units of PEP junior middle school English textbooks is studied, and Chinese culture is classified into Culture with a capitalized C and Culture with a small c. At the same time, the language goal of the unit is studied to better understand the editor's intention of presenting Chinese culture in the unit. In order to study the changing trend of Chinese culture distribution in PEP English textbooks, this paper makes a statistical analysis of the quantity of Chinese culture and presents it with a line chart. And the proportion of Chinese culture unit distribution in textbooks of different grades is calculated.

As can be seen from Table 1, there is no Chinese culture involved in the first volume of Grade 7. In the second volume of Grade 7, there are four units about Chinese culture, which are the way rural children go to school in China, panda, Dragon Boat Festival and Chinese food, such as gongbao chicken, mapo tofu and long noodles for birthday. The way rural children go to school is Culture with small c, while the others are Culture with a capitalized C. In Volume 1 of Grade 8, there are 3 units related to Chinese culture, including some scenic spots, like Huangguoshu Waterfall, Tian'anmen Square, the Palace Museum, Beijing hutong, and also including Mulan movies and Yunnan rice noodles, all of which are Culture with capitalized C. In Volume 2 of Grade 8, there are three units involved in Chinese culture, including the Chinese myths and legends, such as the The Monkey King, Journey to the West, Yu Gong Moves a Mountain, Hou Yi Shoots the Suns, Nu Wa Repairs the Sky, as well as Qomolangma, the Great Wall, pandas, Hangzhou National Tea Museum, the Terracotta Army, the Great Wall, the Bird's Nest and the Palace Museum, its are Culture with capitalized C. In the textbook for Grade 9, there are 5 units related to Chinese culture, including traditional Chinese festivals, such as the Dragon Boat Festival, the Chinese Spring Festival, the Lantern Festival, the Water Festival, the Mid-Autumn Festival, and also including Lu Yu's Cha Jing, Chinese folk music Erhu, and Chinese table manners. Table manners in China is Culture with small c, while the others are Culture with capitalized C.

It can be seen that Culture with capitalized C is involved in all the four textbooks, and the most in Grade 9 textbooks, 4 units are related to Chinese culture. And in the second volume of Grade 7, the first volume of Grade 8 and the second volume of Grade 8, each of them involves three units. The Culture with small c is less involved, with only two units in second volume of Grade 7 and Grade 9.

The author thinks that the reason why Culture with capitalized C is more than Culture with small c in junior middle school English textbooks may be that Culture with capitalized C is mostly the achievements of civilization such as mythology, diet and music. It is more vivid, interesting and easy to understand, so it involves more in the textbooks. On the other hand, Culture with small c is more about abstract things such as human life style and social relations, which requires in-depth analysis to perceive its core ideas. It is more profound and difficult for junior middle school students to understand, so it involves less.

Table 2. Distribution Proportion of Chinese Culture Units in Textbooks of Each Grade

Grade 7 Volume 1: 0/12=0%	Grade 7 Volume 2: 4/12=33.33%
In total for seventh grade: 4/24=16.67%	
Grade 8 Volume 1: 3/10=30%	Grade 8 Volume 2: 3/10=30%
In total for eighth grade: 6/20=30%	
Grade 9: 5/14=35.71%	

4.2. Changing Trend and Proportion Analysis

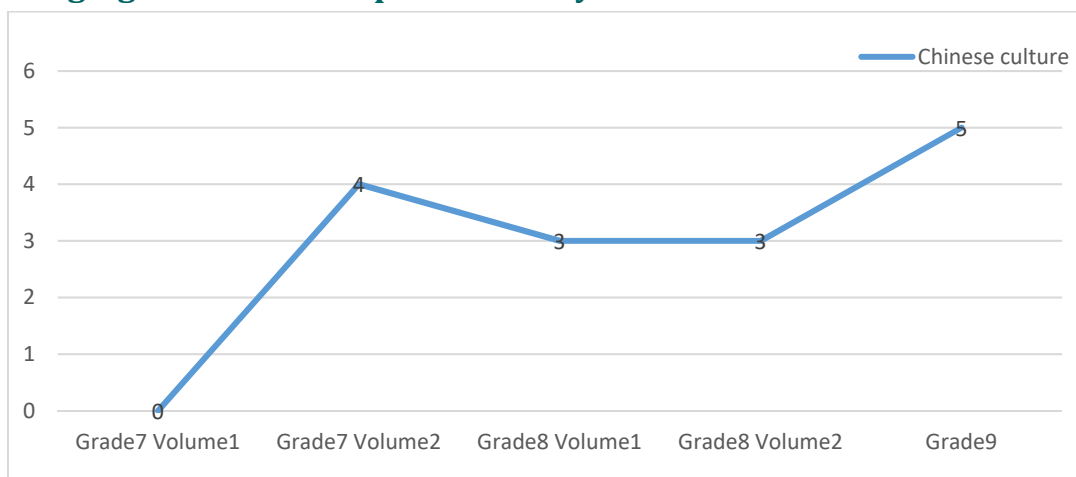


Figure 1. The Trend of Chinese Culture Distribution in Textbooks of Different Grades

As can be seen from Table 2, the overall proportion of Chinese culture is not large, and no more than 50 percent of each grade involved Chinese culture. It can be seen from Chart 1 that the number of Chinese culture in each grade shows a trend of curve growth. In Table 2, the proportion of Chinese culture distribution also increases from small to large, among which the proportion of Grade 7 is the smallest, and even the number of Chinese culture involved in the first volume of Grade 7 is 0, the Grade 9 has the largest proportion of Chinese culture. The author thinks it may be because the English knowledge taught in the first volume of Grade 7 is too basic and cannot be combined with Chinese culture. Compared with students in lower grades, Grade 9 students are more mature, with solid basic knowledge and strong understanding ability, and are more likely to accept the influence of Chinese cultural values.

5. Suggestions

Textbook writers are the designers of idealized curricula and textbooks. Teachers are the actual users of the textbook, and the degree of understanding of the textbook determines their actual operation of the course in the classroom. Both of them are very important, so some advice should be given to them.

5.1. Suggestions for Textbook Writers

In the textbooks of PEP for junior middle school, there are more cases of Chinese Culture with capitalized C, and less of Culture with small c. In foreign language teaching, attention should be paid to Culture with small c, and the content of Culture with small c in textbooks should be strengthened. Education is an activity that affects the physical and mental development of students. A good textbook is not only to increase students' knowledge, but also to give students spiritual and ideological guidance. Junior middle school students are in an important period of the formation of outlook on world, life and values. We should not only let them know the outstanding achievements of Chinese culture, but also let them know the social relations in China and the mutual relations between people. Therefore, the content about Culture with small c should be added to the textbook.

Although some Chinese culture is involved in the PEP textbooks for junior middle schools, the content of English expression about Chinese culture is needed to be increased. In addition, the English narration of Chinese culture is not in-depth and specific. Most of them are simple sentences and phrases, which are fragmentary and have not formed a system. Fragmentation of knowledge is also not conducive to students' systematic understanding of Chinese culture.

Therefore, textbook writers can systematize the knowledge of Chinese culture and introduce the knowledge of Chinese culture in English in a more in-depth way.

All aspects of Chinese culture are not fully covered in the PEP textbooks for junior high schools. Most of the textbooks in the PEP edition cover traditional Chinese food, festivals, scenic spots, myths and legends, but less about the socialist culture of modern China. Since the founding of New China, Lei Feng's spirit and Jiao Yulu's spirit have embodied the selfless spirit of the members of Communist Party of China. Since the reform and opening up, China has made a series of great achievements in the economy. By 2020, China has made great achievements in completing the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects. Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, the Chinese people united as one to build a defense line against the COVID-19 epidemic, demonstrating the superiority of China's socialist system in the face of difficulties. These contents about the spirit of modern China and Chinese socialist culture can be written into textbooks (Liu Xiaoping, 2020). Mention Chinese culture from ancient times to the present, so as to enhance students' national pride and self-confidence (Lan Siyu, 2020). China has been a unified multi-ethnic country since ancient times. All ethnic groups are equal. The 56 ethnic groups in China all have their own distinctive cultures, which constitute a splendid Chinese culture (Ding Xiang, 2016). However, the traditional culture of ethnic minority is rarely mentioned in the textbooks, which will lead students to form a wrong idea that ethnic minority culture is not important. The textbook writers should treat the cultures of all ethnic groups with an open mind and equally, and English expressions of Chinese minority cultures should be included in the textbooks (Ping Bojie, 2014).

5.2. Suggestions for Teachers

Teachers should carefully study the Chinese culture in the textbooks, flexibly use the textbooks in diversified teaching methods, and tell the Chinese culture in authentic English expressions (Zhang Linyu, 2020). Teachers should organize some English activities about Chinese culture, such as describing the making process of Chinese traditional food in English. Teachers should purposefully create an English language environment of Chinese culture, and integrate language and culture (Liu Li, 2014).

In addition, the network information technology in modern society is extremely developed. Teachers should encourage students to use online resources, such as music and movies, to learn English expressions of Chinese culture (Chen Xiufang, 2020). For example, watch Disney's "Mulan" and "Kung Fu Panda" films, which contain Chinese cultural elements. Teachers should guide students to pay attention to Chinese culture in English films, encourage them to learn to use English to express some concepts of Chinese culture, so that Chinese culture can truly go abroad.

6. Conclusion

This paper studies Chinese culture in PEP Junior Middle School English Textbooks by using the methods of text analysis and quantitative analysis, and draws the conclusion that the overall proportion of Chinese culture is not large, the proportion of higher grades is more than that of lower grades, and Chinese Culture with a small c is less involved. Then the author puts forward corresponding suggestions to the textbook writers and teachers. In order to change the phenomenon of "Chinese cultural aphasia" in English textbooks and Chinese students become silent and passive in intercultural communication. While learning a language, students should also learn the culture, especially the culture of our own country. Chinese students have the obligation to use English as a language tool to spread Chinese national culture and values in cross-cultural communication, so that China can have its own "voice" on the international cultural stage.

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