

Analysis of Cultural Presentation in High School English Textbooks and its Teaching Implications

Jingwen Yang¹, Yutong Yang^{2,*}

¹ China West Normal University, Nanchong 637000, China

² Chengdu Neusoft University, Dujiangyan 611844, China

Abstract

The English Curriculum Standards for senior high schools put forward that English education should pay attention to cultivating students' cultural awareness and intercultural communication ability, help them learn, understand and appreciate Chinese and foreign excellent cultures, and strengthen their cultural self-confidence. As an important resource in English learning, teaching materials play an important role in cultivating students' cultural awareness and intercultural communication ability. This study uses the content analysis method and the Framework of Cultural Presentation in English Teaching Materials developed by Zhang Hong and other scholars to analyze the content and mode of cultural presentation in the new edition of FLTRP's senior high school English textbooks. Based on the analysis of the characteristics of the culture of compulsory English textbooks, this study discusses how teachers can better use the textbooks for cultural teaching in the stage of compulsory English courses in high school.

Keywords

High School English Compulsory Textbooks; Cultural Presentation; Cultural Confidence; Cross-culture.

1. Introduction

Language is the carrier of culture with rich cultural connotations, and foreign language teaching is closely related to culture [9]. According to the "English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools", the overall goal of senior high school English curriculum is to cultivate Chinese socialist successors with Chinese feelings, international vision and cross-cultural communication ability, and the specific goal is to cultivate students' core English competences. Cultural awareness is one of the core competences of English subject, which reflects the value of English curriculum - educating people [8]. Therefore, it is particularly important to impart cultural knowledge and cultivate cultural consciousness. As an important carrier of curriculum [3] and an important component of foreign language education, textbook plays a decisive role in what teachers teach and how they teach [1]. For students, the first grade of senior high is an important link between compulsory education to senior high school education. Therefore, it is of great value to analyze the compulsory textbooks used in the first grade.

The new edition of FLTRP's senior high school English textbooks published in 2019 is a textbook formed after modification according to the spirit of the new curriculum standards in 2017, which highlights the construction and development of cultural consciousness, especially in cross-cultural consciousness. With the use of this textbook in more areas, an analysis of its cultural presentation content and ways is helpful for teachers to better achieve the goal of English curriculum education. Due to the lack of systematic and authoritative analysis framework, the previous researches on the cultural presentation of English teaching materials, especially in the analysis of the presentation ways, are not systematic and scientific enough. In March 2022, Zhang Hong and Li Xiaonan [13] developed the Framework for the Analysis of

Cultural Presentation in English Teaching Materials (hereinafter referred to as Framework) from the two dimensions- cultural content and its presentation ways. After conducting experiments on it, they found that Framework was suitable for the analysis of cultural presentation in different English teaching materials, which verified the rationality and broad applicability of Framework.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Researches about Content of Culture Presentation in English Textbooks

There are many researches on the content of cultural presentation, and the research perspectives are diverse. According to Cortazzi et al.'s classification of culture, and Allen et al.'s classification of culture, Tang shuang [9] studied the differences in cultural contents between the old and new editions of English textbooks for People's Education Press, and found that the contents of world culture, native language culture and communicative culture in the new editions increased. Wu Xiaowei [10] analyzed the cultural presentation of senior high school English textbooks based on the classification of cultural structure and cultural region, and found that the presentation of local culture was less than that of Britain and the United States. Sun-Young Kim and Jiwon Paek[2] made a comparative study of English textbooks for a middle school in China and South Korea according to cultural dimensions, cultural categories and cultural themes, and found that cross-cultural interaction was seriously insufficient. According to the classification of cultural products, cultural concepts, cultural practices and cultural figures, Xiao Zhang and Xiaoli Su[4] make a comparative analysis of Chinese and German high school English textbooks, and believe that cultural content should not only pay attention to cultural facts, but also pay attention to more profound beliefs and values. To sum up, the study on the region and type of culture in teaching materials is particularly important.

2.2. Researches about Ways of Culture Presentation in English Textbooks

There are few and scattered researches on the ways of cultural presentation. Hong Ming and Weng Qingqing [5] studied the contents and ways of cultural presentation in high school English textbooks of People's Education Press, but there was no authoritative classification standard for reference in terms of presentation methods. The study found that the presentation of cultural content in the teaching materials is not systematic and the form of presentation is single, and it didn't analyze the specific form of cultural presentation. Zhou Xiaobing et al. [11] divided the ways of cultural presentation into overt and covert. Overt presentation refers to cultural knowledge sections and texts or reading materials with obvious cultural themes; covert presentation refers to the practice part of textbooks. Zhang Hong and Yu Rui [12] studied the ways of presenting Chinese culture in college English textbooks from the perspective of overt and covert, and found that covert presentation occupies a main position, and further analyzed various question types involved in covert presentation. Based on the theories and practices of second and foreign language cultural teaching at home and abroad, Zhang Hong and Li Xiaonan combined top-down and bottom-up approaches to build an Analytical Framework for Cultural Presentation in English Teaching Materials from two dimensions of cultural presentation content and ways [13]. At the same time, considering the teaching function of cultural materials in teaching materials, the two scholars optimized Zhou Xiaobing's [11] overt presentation classification and adjusted the presentation of cultural discourse in practice from overt to covert. The framework provides a systematic and feasible guide for the current study of cultural presentation in English teaching materials, and makes up for the defects in the study of cultural presentation.

2.3. Conclusion

To sum up, present researches on cultural presentation of English teaching materials, especially on the ways of presentation, is characterized by a lack of systematism and scientificity. Therefore, this study adopts Framework developed by Zhang Hong et al., aiming to make a more scientific analysis of the cultural presentation in compulsory textbooks by using a systematic analysis framework, and obtain research results with more reference value.

3. Research Design

3.1. Research Objects

This paper analyzes the first, second and third compulsory volumes of High School English published by FLTRP in 2019. According to the research needs, this study selects five sections of each unit, starting out, understanding ideas, using language, developing ideas and presenting ideas, as the analysis objects. The culture presented in the three textbooks is analyzed statistically.

3.2. Research Questions

- (1). What cultural content does the compulsory textbook include? What are the characteristics of its region and type distribution?
- (2). What are the characteristics of the ways culture is presented in the compulsory textbooks?
- (3). What are the implications of the above analysis for English teachers' teaching?

3.3. Research Methods

In Framework, cultural content is classified according to cultural region and cultural type, and the ways of cultural presentation is classified according to overt and covert. Overt presentation refers to the presentation of cultural content in the input material, including the discourse with an obvious cultural theme; covert presentation refers to the presentation of cultural content in practice. Each of the two presentations has ten presentation modes, and their weights are determined according to the different presentation modes. Therefore, this study uses the content analysis method to code and analyze the cultural content of the three textbooks according to the definition of the content and ways of cultural presentation in Framework, and takes the text (including written text, listening text and video text), pictures, cultural knowledge blocks and exercise activities as the coding units. Specific research steps are as follows.

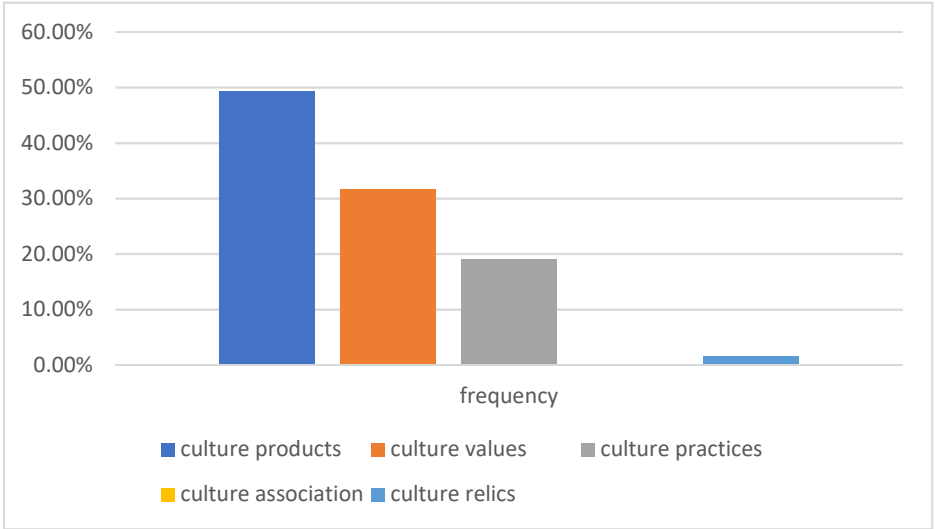
- (1) Filter information and preliminarily encode it. Collect all the cultural content in the three textbooks and conduct level 1 coding.
- (2) Conclude secondary coding. According to the "Framework", the author classifies the first-level coding into the corresponding cultural types and cultural regions from top to bottom. If the same level of coding unit contains two or more cultural content, the total is double counted.
- (3) Calculate the scale. The proportion of each culture in all the cultural content of the textbook, the proportion of each presentation ways in the total frequency of presentation mode, and the intensity of each specific presentation mode ($\text{intensity} = \text{frequency} \times \text{weight}$) are calculated respectively. It should be noted that in all cultural contents, although there are five idioms or colloquial expressions that reflect culture, they don't constitute any cultural discourse, so they are not included in the analysis of presentation ways, and the final total frequency of presentation ways is 455 times.

4. Results and Discussion

It can be found that the new FLTRP Edition of senior high school English compulsory textbooks covers all cultures included in the Framework in terms of cultural content. The content is rich,

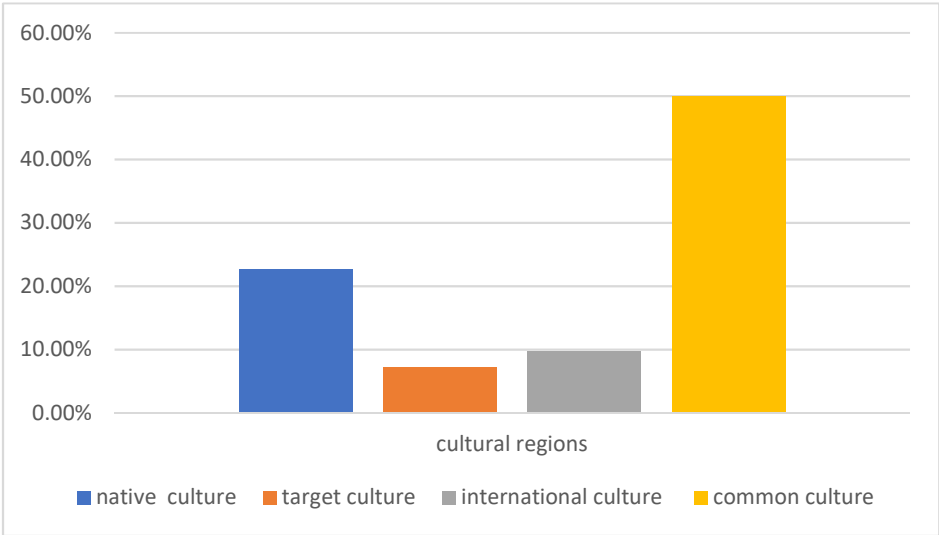
including art, literature, sports, beliefs, festivals, social customs and other aspects, which meets the requirements of the New Curriculum Standard for English teaching in the cultural knowledge section.

Table 1. Frequency of different culture types



As can be seen from Table 1, in terms of cultural types, the proportions from high to low are 49.35% cultural products, 31.74% cultural concepts, 19.13% cultural practices, 0.21% cultural figures and 1.52% cultural communities. This data shows that compulsory textbooks pay more attention to cultural facts and less attention to deeper beliefs and values, and the research results are consistent with Xiao Zhang[4] et al. Cultural concepts determine cultural products and cultural practices, and the depth of cultural content that can be mined is more meaningful to teaching. Therefore, the proportion of cultural concepts in teaching materials should be increased. A cultural community is a culture at the national or ethnic level, such as black culture. Compared with other cultural types, cultural community has risen to a new height, and it also examines the comprehensive cultural knowledge and thinking quality of students. The compulsory course only involves one cultural community, which shows that it fully considers the basic level of students in senior one.

Table 2. Frequency of different culture regions



As can be seen from Table 2, in terms of cultural regions, the highest proportion is shared culture (50%). This is because in all the cultural content of the compulsory textbook, most of the cultural content does not reflect any country, such as faith, environmental protection, people and animals, movies and other entertainment. In addition to the common culture, the target language culture occupies the highest proportion, 37.17%, which is 14.57% higher than the mother tongue culture. The New Curriculum Standard emphasizes that students should strengthen their cultural self-confidence and have the ability to spread Chinese culture, so the gap between the proportion of mother tongue culture and the target language culture should not be too large. Keeping a good balance between Chinese culture and target language culture in teaching materials will help students strengthen their cultural self-confidence and tell Chinese stories well in English.

Table 3. Frequency of overt and covert presentation

Frequency of overt and covert presentation of culture					
	Compulsory 1	Compulsory 2	Compulsory 3	Total number	frequency
Overt Presentation	33	29	44	106	23.3%
Covert Presentation	121	141	89	349	76.7%
Ps. The total number is 460-5=455(five idioms and colloquial expressions are not included).					

Table 4. Specific modes of over and covert presentation

Specific modes of over presentation				Specific modes of cover presentation			
mode	frequency	weight	intensity	mode	frequency	weight	intensity
1	42	10	420	1	42	10	210
2	1	9	0	2	0	9	0
3	6	8	48	3	51	8	204
4	0	7	0	4	2	7	6
5	6	6	36	5	2	6	6
6	0	5	0	6	0	5	0
7	7	4	28	7	103	4	206
8	2	3	6	8	32	3	64
9	31	2	62	9	21	2	21
10	10	1	10	10	96	1	96

As can be seen from Table 3, covert presentation is the main way of cultural presentation, accounting for 76.70%. At the same time, it can be seen from Table 4 that among the covert presentation ways, the intensity of mode 3 (monocultural expression) and mode 7 (cultural understanding exercises) is only lower than that of mode 1 (monocultural discourse in exercises), and the gap is not large. It indicates that the compulsory course attaches great importance to students' understanding of cultural content. Among the overt presentation ways, mode 1 (monocultural discourse) has the greatest intensity, followed by mode 9 (picture/introduction), which fully reflects the characteristics of multi-modal teaching in this textbook. Each unit of this set of compulsory textbooks introduces culture in the form of video discourse and listening discourse in the start out section, and supplemented with a large number of pictures in the textbook to mobilize students' learning from multiple senses.

Finally, in covert presentation ways, the intensity of multicultural expression is too low, and the overall intensity is 12. This kind of setting is not conducive to students' understanding and expression of multi-culture.

5. Conclusion and Implications

To sum up, the presentation of cultural content in the English textbooks has the following three advantages. First, it has a rich cultural content, which meets the requirements of the New Curriculum Standard for cultural knowledge in high school English teaching. Second, the cognitive development level of senior high school students is fully considered in the setting of cultural difficulty, which is conducive to the gradual transition of students from compulsory education to senior high school learning. Last, with the characteristics of multi-modal teaching, it can better mobilize students' interest and enthusiasm in learning.

However, at the same time, this set of compulsory textbooks also has some shortcomings. First, it pay too much attention to cultural facts, and need to expand the content of cultural concepts. Second, the proportion of different cultures is not balanced, with Chinese culture accounting for a relatively small proportion and the target language culture accounting for a larger proportion; third, the design of multicultural output is insufficient, which is not conducive to students' cross-cultural understanding and expression.

Based on the above research, this paper puts forward the following suggestions for the cultural teaching of English teachers who use this textbook. First of all, one of the purposes of English teaching in China is to cultivate global citizens, so that students can spread Chinese culture and tell Chinese stories to the world. Therefore, teachers should make full use of the rich cultural content of this book. In the face of the uneven proportion of Chinese culture and target language culture in the textbook, teachers should make use of cross-cultural comparison to consciously lead students to associate with relevant Chinese culture in the process of learning target language culture, cultivate students' awareness of actively associating with Chinese culture and strengthen their cultural self-confidence. Second, under the background of the new era, English teaching should be based on the situation to create a real and effective situation for students. Multimodal teaching can better mobilize students' multiple senses in the situation, enrich the teaching situation, and enhance their learning enthusiasm. Teachers should give full play to the role of pictures and videos in textbooks, creatively use the teaching activities provided by textbooks, and mobilize students' visual and auditory skills. When necessary, teachers should also provide a certain sense of touch, so that students can personally experience the culture. For example, when teaching the four treasures of the study, the teacher can take the students to visit the museum, or take the students to personally experience the use of the four treasures of the study. Moreover, after the cultural content is presented to students, the most important thing is the students' understanding of its connotation. There are many exercises on cultural understanding in the textbook, which teachers can make full use of. At the same time, attention should be paid to the use of effective ways to test whether students have a correct understanding of cultural content, which involves students' cultural output. There are many exercises in the teaching materials to exercise students' cultural expression, but their forms are relatively simple, teachers need to use them flexibly and enrich the forms of classroom activities according to the specific teaching situation. Finally, as the main imparts of culture in teaching, teachers must strengthen their own cultural accomplishment, make reasonable use of teaching materials, learn to make implicit culture explicit, and cultivate students' cultural consciousness.

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