

Discussion on Representation of Chinese Cultural Elements in English Textbooks for Senior High Schools

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Abstract: With the increasing influence of Chinese culture, and the country's emphasis on the inheritance of outstanding local cultural concept, the importance of Chinese cultural elements has become increasingly prominent during the process of foreign language teaching in senior high schools. To cultivate the students' cultural awareness has been prescribed in New English Curriculum Standard. Therefore, this paper attempts to identify the representation of Chinese cultural elements contained on English textbooks. For research purposes, it is not only necessary for catching up with the development of times, but also help compilers and teachers make an objective and fair understanding when using or evaluating textbooks. Qualitative method using a content analysis design is employed in the research. After analyzing the Chinese cultural elements in each part of textbooks, the relevant suggestions are put forward.

1. Introduction

The researchers used to focus on the form of language or the approach of English learning. During the past four-decade years, researchers have paid ever-increasing attention to textbook analyses. In this paper, five different versions (1983 edition, 1996 edition, 2003 edition, 2007 edition and 2019 edition) for senior high schools published by People's Education Press are chosen as the research subjects. This study is based on the input form of "cultural elements", then analyze the textbooks from three aspects, try to deepen the research field of textbook analysis and evaluation as well as focus on the education of patriotic. It will help teachers to understand cultural education, further to teach the explicit and implicit cultural contents more acceptable, and give some suggestions to the textbook's compiler for textbooks' revising.

2. Definitions of Chinese Cultural Elements and Textbooks

The definition and connection between Chinese cultural elements and English textbooks are beneficial to the statistics of Chinese cultural elements. Meanwhile, the reasons for the analysis are also discussed.

2.1 Chinese Cultural Elements

Culture can be divided into two types; it is the unity of ideology and non-ideology. Among them, non-ideological culture includes language, logic and other forms^[1]. "Chinese cultural elements" can be summarized into four categories: "Identification features", "Custom features", "Regional features" and "Philosophical features"^[2]. Firstly, "Identification features" mainly embodied in Chinese characters, calligraphy, totem patterns and so on, which has a clear direction. Secondly, "Custom features" are closely related to the daily life of Chinese society, for example, culture of China's food or festivals, clothing and some traditional customs, etc. Thirdly, "Regional features" is the interaction of natural and cultural factors in China's regional culture. It constitutes the Chinese cultural form of the existence, such as pandas, the Yangtze River, the Yellow River. Lastly, "Philosophical features" refers to the Chinese way of thinking, mainly embodied in the idea of

treating things, such as the “Harmony” and “Golden Mean” concept.

2.2 Textbooks

The duality of book itself may just value as material form on the one hand, and as the ideology. It is the social material product and a spiritual wealth of human beings^[3]. However, textbooks as a special form of books, which is identical with books in its elements and forms of presentation.

As an important medium of cultural communication, textbook is the material form, in which the illustration, character and color are the basic elements. The cultural content expressed in the textbook belongs to its ideology, while the language and formal logic of the textbook belong to its non-ideology.

To conclude this section, the study of the evolution of Chinese cultural elements in senior high school English textbooks can be classified and analyzed from three parts: material form (composed of illustrations, characters and color elements); ideology (composed of culture and value idea) and non-ideology (composed of language and logic).

3. Research Framework

By dividing the textbooks based on the three forms mentioned above, then to classifies and analyzes the relations between the three elements and Chinese cultural elements. The presentation of Chinese cultural elements can be showed more scientifically among each part of textbook. The research framework showed below is what tries to establish and used in this paper.

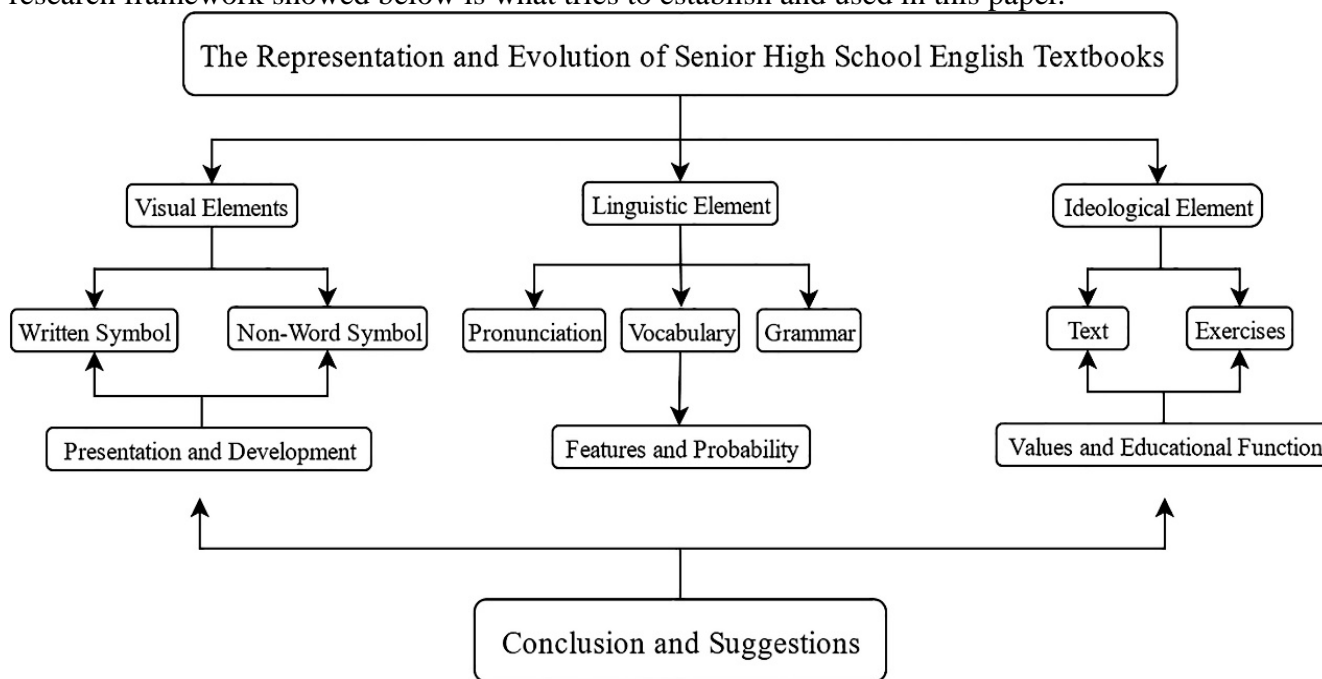


Fig.1 The Research Framework of the Textbooks

3.1 Visual Elements

About the language materials, there are two ways to present information, especially in foreign language teaching materials. On the one hand, it will present information with written symbols. On the other hand, by using non-written symbols, including illustrations, pictures, tables, fonts, font size, line spacing, version heart, color and other aspects^[4].

The development of English typography in textbooks is from Old Roman to Old style, then, Transitional^[5]. These styles of typefaces have been evolving with the development of the times. However, the design of typefaces and color which reflected in English textbooks are not clearly, so it makes little sense to research on it.

3.2 Linguistic Elements

Although language and culture are inseparable, to give a classification of language can more intuitively and efficiently reflect the display and application of Chinese cultural elements in the vocabulary and sentences of the textbook.

Chinese English is defined as a vocabulary, a sentence pattern and a text with Chinese characteristics, which expresses the special things of Chinese society and culture at the core of standard English^[6]. Therefore, although the concept of linguistic elements includes phonetics, vocabulary and grammar, the phonetics and grammar do not change with the development of Chinese culture, because it belongs to the category of Standard English. So, the presentation of “vocabulary” is closely related to the development of Chinese language and culture.

3.3 Ideological Elements

As the mainstream carrier of educational function, the ideology which contained in textbooks is often ignored, and more emphasis is put on the teaching of language structure (phonetics, vocabulary, grammar). But the values and thinking mode implicit in the content of the textbook are absorbed by the students during the learning process.

Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to the ideology of textbooks for strengthening the connection among the editors, teachers and students.

4. Data Analysis

Statistic and analysis for the data from the visual, linguistic and ideological elements of the senior English high school textbooks used in past four-decade years, in order to analyze the Chinese cultural elements more intuitively in the composition of the textbooks.

4.1 The Application of Visual Elements

Table 1 Number of Illustrations of Chinese Cultural Elements Textbooks

	1983	1996	2003	2007	2019
Hand-drawn illustrations	9	11	23	14	6
Photographs	0	11	104	53	58
Chart	0	0	9	4	1
Total	9	22	136	71	65
Mean value	0.11	0.3	2.34	1.22	6.5

The number of illustrations with Chinese cultural elements is increasing overall from the table above, but the proportion is still relatively small. In general, about the usage of three-dimensional photographic images in textbook has been increasing, which proves that modern teaching materials pay more attention to the use of “real” scene illustrations.

4.2 The Application of Linguistic Elements

Except for the repetition, the number of Chinese vocabularies is on the uptrend. However, the proportion is still relatively small. In the latest version of 2019, the vocabularies contained in textbooks have the characteristics of low repetition and wide range compared with the previous versions.

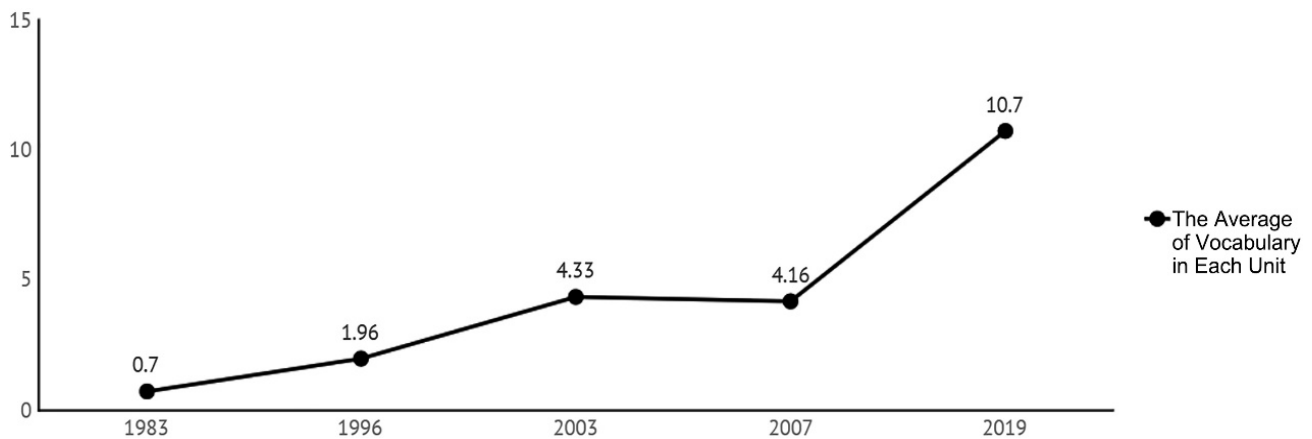


Fig.2 The Average Number of Vocabularies

4.3 The Application of Ideological Elements

In the choice of the themes in English textbooks of senior high school: The Great Wall of China, Lady Silkworm, and Cao Chung Weighs the Elephant, the only three articles concerning Chinese culture, are included in the 1983 version of senior high school English textbooks which selected materials from foreign literature on the whole. Due to the influence of China's reform and opening-up later, the publicity of foreign culture became the main English teaching content in the 1996 version of textbooks. Afterwards, the requirement of cultivating student's cultural consciousness was put forward to follow with the introduction of National English Curriculum for Senior High School. Therefore, the 2003 version, 2007 version and 2019 version maintains a certain thematic continuity, and in some extent, the contents of those interact with Chinese culture in such themes as environmental protection, science and technology, art and literature, history and geography, interest and hobby, festivals and customs and linguistic learning, but it covers only a small proportion in the main.

Moreover, the blending of China's cultural elements also embodies in the various sections of textbooks. In the workbook of 2007 version Required One, students are asked to write down the English proverbs about friendship and try to find out the Chinese proverbs according to the English ones. Coincidentally, the similar questions appeared in the exercise of the third volume of Require Three 2007 version and 2003 version. In the selection of texts, both 2007 version and 2019 version adopted the real event "The Night the Earth Didn't Sleep", which was happened in Tangshan, while the new version just extended content in some degree. The combination of real events in China and the content of English textbooks enables students to empathize and echo in emotion in learning values from textbooks. In particular, the textbooks prefaces with the saying that a thousand-mile journey begins with the first step, proverbs by Lao-zi, a thinker of ancient China, as the welcome unit of the first volume in 2019 version, which will produce a strong sense of cultural recognition among students. The cultural ideas and values permeating in various aspects of textbooks are influencing students in an invisible manner.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

After analyzing and sorting out the visual elements, linguistic elements and ideological elements in all versions of recent English textbooks, we found that the frequency of Chinese cultural elements in each version tends to increase, but the total amount becomes less. At the same time, based on the previous data induction and integration, the conclusion and suggestions will be as follows.

5.1 Conclusion

From the perspective of the visual form development in the textbook, the printing mode of the textbook develops from the traditional black and white to the modern diversified color form. The illustration form of textbooks develops from the traditional hand-drawn expression to the modern

diversified expression form. The textbook visual typesetting has evolved from boring and single style to rich and free diversified style. Among them, the increasing occurrences of Chinese cultural elements with generational growth indicates that the compilation of textbooks is paying more and more attention to combine and promote with Chinese elements, but the overall frequency occurrences is still relatively low.

The overall proportion among the vocabularies that can reflect Chinese cultural elements in textbooks over the years, is still small. And most of existing vocabularies, concern Chinese place, traditional festivals and other nouns, while few of them contain Chinese cultures, ideological values and life concepts. As a result, in time of the increasingly close integration between Chinese culture and foreign countries and the rise of national strength, language forms in textbooks shall reflect more Chinese cultural elements, which can promote the spread of Chinese culture in the world, as well as better make up for the lack and deficiency to Chinese part from learning English culture.

With regarded to the ideological elements in the textbooks, the foreign cultural contents and values display a large proportion. Although the number of Chinese cultural elements in the contents of the textbooks are gradually increasing, its overall proportion is not significant. It is right that the prime function of the textbook is supposed to introduce and present status quo of the foreign culture, but at some extent, the excessive length of foreign culture is difficult for students to form macro contrast with local culture and deep thinking, and the one-way output is unfavorable to the spreading of the values of national cultural confidence emphasized at present.

Thus, it is important how shall we better interweave Chinese cultural elements and foreign cultures in the emerging era of intensified globalization and cultural integration, in order to achieve mutual respect and inclusiveness, and build cultural confidence, as well as avoid following the trend of foreign ideas.

5.2 Suggestions

In the visual elements of the textbooks, it is favorable for students to improve their aesthetic identification of Chinese cultural visual elements of textbook that contains with more illustrations and binding design. For example, the illustration that show relevant contents of Chinese cultural elements may apply, more artistic techniques with strong Chinese characteristics such as “ink painting” and “fine brushwork”. In the binding design of the textbook, we can use more Chinese styles such as “white space” and “Chinese pattern”.

About the linguistic elements of textbooks, it will well show the communication between Chinese culture and foreign culture in the linguistic form of textbook by rising the proportion of Chinese ideology, life concept and other vocabulary such as “The Four Books” and “The Five Classics”, “The twenty-four solar terms” and so on.

In the ideological elements of the textbook, we should attach importance to the combination of Chinese culture with values, instead of blindly inheriting foreign cultural trends or ignoring the contents of Chinese local culture. For example, adding the introduction of Chinese mythology, history, literature and art and other cultures in the texts and discussion practice of the textbooks. Appropriately expanding the chapters of Chinese traditional culture and excellent ideological spirit under the current emphasis on building Chinese cultural confidence and seeking for the re-inheritance and re-creation of Chinese traditional culture.

In a nutshell, textbook plays an important role in bridging and conducting students tie Chinese culture with foreign culture. In carrying with the function of introducing foreign cultural ideology, attention should also be paid to the spreading and enlightenment of domestic culture and ideas. This does not only respond to the requirement of time’s development, but is the only way to promote students’ cultural confidence and strengthen the connection between cultural contrast. Meanwhile, in this process, it is not only necessary to metaphysically improve the proportion of Chinese cultural elements in textbooks, but also to dialectically and scientifically integrate Chinese elements and textbooks contents, so that achieving both impartiality and overall consideration.

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