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# Culture Teaching and Learning in an Advanced Placement Chinese Course

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The University of San Francisco

CULTURE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN AN ADVANCED PLACEMENT  
CHINESE COURSE

A Dissertation Presented  
to  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

by  
Yu-han Lin  
San Francisco  
May, 2017

# THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

## Dissertation Abstract

The significance of teaching culture in the foreign language classroom has been widely acknowledged. However, it remains a challenge for language teachers to properly incorporate culture teaching into language teaching. Chinese language teachers in the United States also encounter the challenge of teaching culture to the increased number of Chinese language learners. In particular, scant attention has been paid to how Chinese language learners approach cultural issues and develop cultural awareness in the language teaching context of American secondary education. In order to address the research gap, the present study aims to explore how the teaching and learning of culture develop in an Advanced Placement Chinese course in an American high school based in the state of California.

This qualitative case study looks into concepts of culture perceived by the Chinese language instructor and the students. The teacher's general approach to the teaching of culture is also investigated through classroom observations. The researcher then examines the observed teaching approaches and analyzes how the pedagogical practices help students' development of diverse cultural perspectives. As the ultimate goal of culture learning is successful intercultural communication, this research study also focuses on exploring students' development of cultural awareness through the process of Chinese language learning.

Research findings show that the teacher and the students have a similar notion regarding what constitutes culture. Despite their clear definitions about culture, the teacher feels it challenging to update her students with contemporary Chinese culture and

some of the non-heritage students feel it hard to identify with any ethnic cultures. In terms of teaching approaches, the teacher makes good use of *cultural values*, *cultural comparisons*, and *cultural change* to connect the teaching of cultural products or practices with their corresponding cultural perspectives. Nevertheless, other teaching approaches might lead to cultural stereotypes or hinder formation of diverse cultural perspectives. Furthermore, heritage and non-heritage students are found to benefit from different ways to develop cultural awareness.

The research findings are expected to inspire the educational community how to better serve language learners in regard to culture learning. Future research topics may include how cultural identities affect language learning.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

Yu-han Lin  
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05/01/2017  
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## CHAPTER I

### THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

#### Statement of the Problem

Teaching culture in the language classroom has been a challenge for many foreign language teachers (Byrd, Hlas, Watzke, & Valencia, 2011; Smith, 2013; Young, Sachdev, & Seedhouse, 2009), although the learning of foreign languages like Mandarin Chinese in the United States has been gaining popularity (Zhou & Li, 2015). This is evidenced by increased popularity of immersion schools. Chinese immersion schools have expanded more rapidly than any other foreign language programs in the United States (Zhou & Li, 2015). Likewise, Wang, Hsiao, and Wang (2009) documented the soaring need for Chinese language learning in American K-12 schools in their study of trends regarding Chinese language. Li, Wen, and Xie (2014) in their survey study also indicated “a sustained need for Chinese language education in the United States” (p. 17). According to the College Board, in year 2015 the Advanced Placement Chinese Language and Culture was offered in 11,633 school programs and a total of 1640 schools offered the AP Chinese Exam in the same year.

Chinese language learners, like many other foreign language learners, may assume that learning world languages is the key to successful intercultural communication in the global world. However, linguistic competence alone does not lead to effective communication. As Nieto and Booth (2010) argued, “to truly *understand* each other requires more than language proficiency” (p. 406). In fact, cultural competence is the key to facilitate accurate understanding. Hsieh, Gao, and Lo (2010) indicated that cultural elements make up one of the main barriers for communication

because different languages have different practices for showing courtesy, greeting, declining invitations, showing appreciation, and issuing apologies. These practices are cultural features specific to different groups of language speakers, and therefore can become sources of misunderstanding.

Although learning a second or foreign language does not necessarily promise successful intercultural communication, cultural competence that contributes to effective communication can be cultivated in the context of a second or foreign language course, in this case a Chinese language course, due to the fact that language and culture are closely intertwined (Schulz, 2007). Lustig and Koester (2006) also supported the concept that cultural competency can be better acquired with help of language learning because language, culture, and intercultural communication are interrelated. In a similar vein, Jiang (2000) recognized the inextricable link between language, culture, and communication by referring to language as a vehicle, culture as a traffic light, and communication as transportation. While language competence facilitates communication, cultural competence regulates and promotes communication, or if it is not present, hinders it.

Despite the fact that foreign language teaching has accepted the significance of cultural elements for years (Wang, 2006), how to properly incorporate culture teaching into language teaching remains an unsolved problem. East (2012) contended that cultural knowledge is still treated as something separated from foreign language learning, or additive to communicative proficiency development. If presented in language classrooms, cultural knowledge teaching is mainly concerned with facts about foreign countries, which fails to teach foreign language learners about relating to otherness.

In addition, Schulz (2007) documented the popular teaching belief that language and culture are interconnected, as well as the urgent need to revamp teacher education so as to implement culture teaching standards into current foreign language instruction. As Schulz (2007) stated, the United States lacks commonly accepted minimal cultural content that should be included in teaching materials for different instructional levels. Schulz argued, even though it may not pose a problem for teachers to find examples of culture-specific products or practices, the majority of teachers are incapable of determining how the products and practices are related to the cultural perspectives behind them. Likewise, Dytynshyn and Collins (2012) questioned the actual practice in the foreign language classroom, although most foreign language teachers value cultural awareness, they feel unprepared to deal with cultural issues (Sercu, 2006).

The teaching of Chinese as one of many foreign languages in the United States also encounters difficulties when it comes to incorporation of language and culture teaching. Wang (2006) specified that educators do not agree on how to classify cultural elements and what parts of Chinese culture should be taught. Wong (2012) echoed Wang's contention in that differences exist regarding what constitutes culture, even though the need for integration of language and culture in Chinese language instruction is widely acknowledged. According to Wong, the challenge for an integrated curriculum may lie in differing interpretations about the notion of culture. Since it is hard to define culture, what to teach becomes an issue. In addition to confusion about *what* to teach, *how* to teach culture also poses a challenge for teachers. Limited time and resources impact culture teaching. In Tsai's (2012) research study concerning Chinese teaching

materials, she also mentioned that Chinese teachers working overseas have been seeking adequate materials to conduct culture teaching.

### **Background and Need**

In response to the issues in foreign language teaching, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 1996) published *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. The five goal areas proposed in the standards were concerned with communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. These 5C standards serve as the basis for the Advanced Placement Chinese Language course and Examination that has had a great impact on Chinese curriculum in the United States (Chang, 2010). In terms of Chinese culture teaching, the standards set up goals for students to be able to:

Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture of the Chinese-speaking world...demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the cultures of the Chinese-speaking world...demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of Chinese culture with their own.  
(ACTFL, as cited in Chang, 2010, pp. 77-78)

According to Chang (2010), these 5C standards (ACTFL, 1996) offered only guidelines for all levels of schools rather than specific course content or learning suggestions. Furthermore, apart from a small number of scattered lectures and abstracts, little published research has been conducted relating to the 5C standards and Chinese education. The existing research primarily concerns introduction, explanation, and translation of the standards. Research about application of the standards on Chinese

learning and teaching is limited to literature reviews. Scant attention has been paid to relevant teaching strategies and classroom teaching and learning realities. Chang (2010), therefore, encouraged further studies on classroom teaching practices connected with the standards.

Since the 5C standards (ACTFL, 1996) were published two decades ago, it is now a good time to review how the standards have been implemented in actual foreign language teaching. Phillips and Abbott (2011) led a survey project to investigate the influence, impact, and future directions of the 5C foreign language standards. The survey report provided a short analysis pertaining to cultures in general, but the survey results did not comment on the 5C standards as they relate to Chinese foreign language education.

In light of the aforementioned gap in the scholarship and need for more research on Chinese, the present study will place a particular focus on culture teaching and learning in an Advanced Placement (AP) Chinese course. Rather than concentrating on a regular Chinese course, the present study chooses AP Chinese partly because this course has a leading influence on Chinese language education (Chang, 2010), and partly because it is an advanced-level course (Ewing, 2006). As culture learning involves more advanced vocabulary and expressions (Wong, 2012), culture teaching is more likely to happen in a high-level class than a low-level one. Hence, researching the topic of culture teaching and learning may yield more productive data within the setting of an AP course.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate how culture teaching and learning progresses in an Advanced Placement Chinese course in a U.S. high school. Responding

to the need for examining how the cultural goal area of the 5C standards (ACTFL, 1996) is carried out and understanding the status quo of classroom practices related to culture teaching and learning, the present qualitative study will serve as a case study that looks into both the teacher and students' perception of culture. It will also research what is taught regarding culture, and how it is taught, as well as how the process of culture learning promotes students' self-understanding, which is helpful for successful intercultural communication.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the concept of culture as perceived by the teacher and the students?
2. What is the teacher's general approach to the teaching of culture?
  - a. How is culture taught in the AP Chinese course?
  - b. What elements are highlighted?
  - c. What elements are ignored?
3. How do these pedagogical practices in teaching culture help or hinder students to build the relationship between products/practices and perspectives of the cultures of the Chinese-speaking world?
4. In what ways do students come to know about their own cultures throughout the process of learning Chinese culture?

### **Conceptual Framework**

To address the first and second research questions, the present study will utilize the Iceberg Concept of Culture (Indiana Department of Education, as cited in Moule, 2005) to explore the participant teacher's and the students' perceived notions of culture. The concept will also help to identify whether the cultural elements taught in the course

belong to surface culture or deep culture. Surface culture refers to elements like food, dress, music, celebrations, and literature. Deep culture deals with unspoken rules related to cultural components, such as notions of modesty, personal space, concept of time, courtesy, and many more. Unconscious rules are also part of deep culture and comprise elements like attitudes toward elders, preference for competition or cooperation, and concept of “self,” to name a few. The cultural goal area of the 5C standards (ACTFL, 1996) will also be used to examine what types of culture are contained in the teacher’s and students’ cultural concept and cultural pedagogies in the Chinese language classroom. That is to say, the study findings will show whether or not practices of culture, products of culture, or perspectives of culture, or all three, are highlighted in the perceived notions and practices.

Through the lens of the Iceberg Concept of Culture (Indiana Department of Education, as cited in Moule, 2005) and the cultural goal area of the standards (ACTFL, 1996), the findings of the study will be examined to reveal if the teacher and the students have a thorough understanding of the term, culture. Based on the analyzed findings, clues about what is missing in the process of culture teaching and learning may emerge.

In order to understand actual pedagogical practices in the Advanced Placement Chinese course, the researcher will rely on the notion of a Teacher’s Approach to Culture (Dytynyshyn & Collins, 2012, p. 9) to cast light on the collected data. Dytynyshyn and Collins adapted and reproduced this approach from Menard-Warwick (2009, p. 35). Approaches to culture are categorized into sub-categories of ‘cultural change,’ ‘cultural adaptation,’ ‘cultural comparisons,’ ‘cultural values,’ and ‘cultural information’ (2012, p. 9). The approach of cultural change represents “discussion of how contemporary



practices, products, and perspectives differ from those of the past” (2012, p. 9). The cultural adaptation approach involves “discussion of the changes that individuals experience as they adjust to new contexts” (2012, p. 9). Cultural comparisons include “discussion of the ways that practices, perspectives, and products of one group differ from or are similar to those of another” (2012, p. 9). Cultural values stand for “discussion of a particular group’s beliefs about what is right and wrong, valuable or worthless” (2012, p. 9). Finally, cultural information means “description of a particular group’s practices, products, or perspectives without reference to change, adaptation, comparison, or values” (Dytynyshyn & Collins, 2012, p. 9).

These concepts will help the researcher to sort out the participant teacher’s primary approaches and make sense of how the approaches facilitate students’ cultural understanding. Similar to the category of cultural comparisons, the cultural goal area of the 5C standards (ACTFL, 1996) also includes cultural comparisons. As a result, cultural comparison will be the main focus in the examination of the teacher’s cultural approach. The researcher will also pay attention to whether other methods, like the dialogic approach (Byram & Feng, 2004) or the interconnectivity approach (Smith, 2013), are used in the classroom.

As for the last research question, presence of the category of cultural comparisons in Teacher’s Approach to Culture (Dytynyshyn & Collins, 2012, p. 9) will again hint at the participant students’ levels of self-understanding concerning their own cultures. Moreover, the cultural goal area of the standards (ACTFL, 1996) that emphasizes culture comparisons will serve as a guideline to inspect whether the students acquire certain

degrees of cultural understanding about not only Chinese culture but also their own ethnic cultures.

### **Limitations/Delimitations**

Given that this research study involves a language other than English, the researcher will translate key findings for discussion into English to serve the majority of the audience. Although faithful translation is the goal, the translated work might not be a hundred percent the same as the original data. To compensate for this limitation, selected data will also be presented in its original language, Chinese.

Moreover, the study will limit its scope to only one specific AP Chinese course in the Bay Area. This means findings of the study may not be applicable to any other AP Chinese course in the United States. In addition, the researcher may not be able to conduct classroom observation on a daily basis for more than a semester; it is, therefore, possible that some important details might be left out and affect the study's completeness. In a similar vein, such a limited time of study would preclude the researcher from interviewing all students taking the course, which may likewise influence richness of the collected data.

However, despite the aforementioned limiting factors, the study still provides a new perspective to enhance understanding of culture teaching in the field of teaching Chinese as a Second/Foreign Language in the United States. The reader will benefit from the findings in many aspects regardless of the delimitations and limitations.

### **Significance of the Study**

Findings of the present research study are expected to bring to light the actual implementation of culture teaching in the field of teaching Chinese as a second/foreign

language. Through the findings, in-service language teachers, including but not limited to Chinese teachers, may be inspired to challenge their perceived notion of culture and revisit their own cultural pedagogies connected with language teaching. They may also recognize their crucial roles in helping students to cultivate cultural competence, which is conducive to successful intercultural communication in the global world.

In addition, findings of the study might enlighten teacher training programs to better prepare future language teachers with respect to culture teaching. More culturally relevant courses might therefore be provided to assist future language teachers in terms of curriculum design and development. Meanwhile, pre-service language teachers could be better trained to tackle cultural issues in the classroom with confidence.

Moreover, textbook publishers may also reconsider what kinds of culture learning content should be included to better serve language learners. As Chinese language learners living outside of Chinese communities may have little exposure to Chinese culture, learning materials like textbooks could be their primary access to Chinese culture. The findings of the study may prompt textbook designers to review the cultural topics they intend to introduce and consider whether the topics are carefully chosen and properly presented to help learners truly understand Chinese culture and promote intercultural communication.

Lastly, for people who care about Chinese education in North America, the present study will act as a window for them to see through the educational realities in the United States. As more and more people come to understand the educational realities and challenges, closer attention may be paid to help improve the field of teaching Chinese as a Second/Foreign Language.

## Definition of Terms

### *Advanced Placement Chinese Language and Culture Course (AP Chinese):*

According to Ewing (2006), the Advanced Placement Program (AP) allows high school students to take advanced-level courses and corresponding AP Examinations to demonstrate their proficiency in relevant subject areas by the end of the courses. Chinese Language and Culture combined with its AP Examination was first added to the program during year 2006-07. Tseng (2007) described the course as “comparable to a fourth semester (or the equivalent) college or university course in Mandarin Chinese” (p. 3), which requires students to complete “approximately 250 hours of college-level classroom instruction” (p. 3). It should be noted that AP Chinese is for Mandarin Chinese only.

*Culture:* The term, *culture*, has hundreds of definitions (Peng, 2012). For this study, culture teaching and learning will suggest teaching and learning of what Bennett (1998) termed *lower-case culture* or *subjective culture* (p. 2), which means “the learned and shared patterns of beliefs, behaviors, and values of groups of interacting people” (p. 2). It is this lower-case culture that leads to intercultural communication (Bennett, 1998). As language education has a goal for intercultural communication, the present study will place its focus on subjective or lower-case culture.

*Culture teaching and learning:* This term indicates the research topic of the present study. Culture is placed in front of teaching and learning so as to show its role as the major theme in the study. In light of its peripheral status in most language teaching and learning contexts, the wording of the term *culture teaching* is also expected to raise more focus on the teaching and learning of culture as a core subject in place of its traditionally auxiliary role in the language classroom.

*Heritage language students:* Heritage language students in this study include both students who grow up speaking or understanding Mandarin Chinese at home (Valdés, 2001, as cited in Comanaru & Noels, 2009) and those to whom Mandarin Chinese is the ancestral language independent of the degree the language is used in the student's home (Fishman, 2001; Noel, 2005, as cited in Comanaru & Noels, 2009).

*Intercultural communication:* As defined by Bennett (1998), intercultural communication is “communication between people of different cultures” (p. 2).

*Teaching Chinese as a Second/Foreign Language (TCSL/TCFL):* Although high school Chinese courses generally appear under the category of *world languages*, various recent research studies (Hsu, 2014; Jiang & Cohen, 2012; Wang, 2006; Zhao & Du, 2014) still use the term *Teaching Chinese as a Second Language* (TCSL) or *Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language* (TCFL) in the field of Chinese language education. For example, Chang (2006) referred to TCFL as “the teaching of non-native Chinese speakers” (p. 570). Since the research classroom will accommodate a mix of learners who learn Chinese as either a foreign language or a home and community language, the present study will use TCSL and TCFL interchangeably to stand for teaching taking place in a Chinese language classroom.

*Traditional Characters versus Simplified Characters:* Tseng (2007) in her *AP Chinese Language and Culture Teacher's Guide* mentioned that the course could be taught in either traditional characters or simplified characters. The AP Exam recognizes both versions. However, given the fact that the research site chooses simplified Chinese characters for instruction, the present study will use simplified ones to represent findings in accordance with the instructions for character selection. Apart from findings,

characters in direct quotes from the literature review will remain the same as they are in their original research works.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Although a growing body of scholarship recognizes the importance of cultural instruction in second and foreign language education (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002; Schulz, 2007; Wang, 2006), as well as the documented demand for learning Chinese in the United States (Dretzke & Jordan, 2010; Jiang & Cohen, 2012; Li, Wen, & Xie, 2014; Xu, Padilla, & Silva, 2015; Zhou & Li, 2015), a relatively small number of research studies probe into how culture teaching and learning actually proceeds in Chinese language education, especially in the context of American high schools. The purpose of this empirical study, therefore, aims to investigate how culture teaching and learning progresses in an Advanced Placement Chinese course in a U.S. high school. To this end, the literature review examines research studies and scholarly publications focusing on four primary areas pertinent to culture and language education, namely *Defining Culture for Language Education*, *the Standards of American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL)* and *AP Chinese*, *Culture Teaching in the Foreign Language Classroom* and *Culture Teaching and Teaching Chinese as a Second/Foreign Language*.

In light of the significant role culture plays in the present study, the first section—*Defining Culture for Language Education* reviews various definitions of the term, *culture*, and then explores which definition fits culture teaching in second/foreign language teaching the best. The section places a special emphasis on explaining Weaver's (1986) iceberg model of culture as well as Bennett's (1998) dichotomous perspectives of culture.

The second part of the literature review introduces the ACTFL's Standards of Foreign Language Teaching (the 5C's) and states how the national standards serve as the guidelines for culture teaching in language education like AP Chinese. The section also includes a brief introduction of the current state of AP Chinese course in the United States.

The third section explores culture teaching and learning in the foreign language education. In this part of the literature review different case studies will be discussed to foreground relevant challenges in the teaching and learning of culture facing second and foreign language education.

The final part of the literature review looks into the area of culture teaching and Teaching Chinese as a Second/Foreign Language (TCSL/TCFL). Various case studies show challenges of culture teaching in TCFL/TCSL in terms of learning content, pedagogies, curriculum design, and most important of all, inadequate focus on surface culture and linguistic elements instead of deep culture and cultural competence. The section concludes with a review of scholars' suggestions for culture teaching in regard to curriculum design, pedagogies, and cooperation with heritage language schools.

## **Defining Culture for Language Education**

### **Definitions**

The word, *culture*, has more than 200 definitions reflective of the different disciplines it may involve (Ho, 2011). This is based on the anthropological perspective, “culture is composed of traditional ideas and related values; it is learned, shared, and transmitted from one generation to the next; and it organizes and helps interpret life” (Moule, 2005, p. 90). Moran, Abramson, and Moran (2014) contended that, “Culture



gives people a sense of who they are, of belonging, of how they should behave, and of what they should be doing” (p. 11). It is dynamic yet subject to slow change.

### **The *Big C* Culture and the *Small C* Culture**

Since many people confuse *culture* with *personality*, Bennett (1998) made a clear statement that personality refers to individual behavioral patterns while cultures belong to groups of people. He separated culture into objective culture or the big C culture that concerns routinized behavior and institutions like social and linguistic systems. Bennett considered that understanding objective cultural knowledge about classical music or dance does not generate cultural competence. The author highlighted the less obvious kind of culture— subjective culture or the *small C* culture, which defines a group of people’s psychological features. In his opinion, understanding the “learned and shared patterns of beliefs, behaviors, and values of groups of interacting people” (Bennett, 1997, p. 2) contributes to intercultural communication.

### **The Iceberg Concept of Culture**

As Peng (2012) maintained, hundreds of definitions about culture suggests the broad content the term covers and resembles culture as the image of an iceberg, which can hardly be seen as a whole. The iceberg concept of culture, however, appears to be a common construct adopted to explain its deep and complex feature. Sharon Ruhly (1976) modeled culture as an iceberg with nine-tenths of it hidden beneath the visible chunk.

Regarding the concept of culture, Weaver (1986) likewise presented the iceberg of culture. The part above the water level represents external culture like behavior and some of beliefs, which could be explicitly learned and of conscious awareness. The external culture includes objective knowledge and changes easily. Contrary to the small

tip of the iceberg is the gigantic part of the internal culture hidden below the water level. It is comprised of values and thought patterns, which ought to be unconscious and implicitly learned. The internal culture deals with subjective knowledge and appears hard to change.

Weaver (1986) stressed that the knowledge of the internal culture could be significant in interpreting and analyzing external culture such as behavior and customs. For example, understanding Americans' linear time orientation helps make sense why they tend to schedule time and plan for the future. The scholar (Weaver) also accentuated that moving away from the descriptive do's and don'ts towards the interpretive and analytical skills facilitates successful cross-cultural communication.

Hanley (1999) further illustrated Weaver's (1986) iceberg concept of culture. The visible part of the iceberg stands for surface culture that contains part of folk culture and elements like dress, arts, literature, and drama. The invisible deep culture below the water, though including some of folk culture, mainly enlists elements like kinship, tempo of work, approaches to interpersonal relationships or problem solving, and much more.

Years later, Moule (2005) employed the similar iceberg concept of culture from the Indiana Department of Education to discuss cultural competence (please see appendix A). Same as its previous models, this iceberg diagram categorizes elements like food, music, dress, celebrations, and literature as surface culture. The deep culture is divided into the part partially below the sea level and the one completely below the sea level. The former involves with unspoken rules like courtesy, contextual conversational patterns, notion of modesty, and concept of time. The latter, on the other hand, relates to unconscious rules that govern attitudes toward elders, preference for cooperation or

competition, concept of “self,” and so on. In accordance with Weaver’s (1986) viewpoint, Moule highlighted the significance of deep culture that “defines the ways in which a people have learned to respond to life’s problems” (p. 91). She suspected that many classroom cultural activities emphasize surface forms of culture only and lack focus on the useful concept of human paradigms.

In a recent case study, Zhang (2013) also analyzed a Canadian’s new experience on Chinese culture and table manners through the lens of the iceberg model. The author (Zhang) treated table manners as deep cultures underneath the water level of consciousness. According to Zhang, this part of culture could be learned by imitating models before the behaviors and attitudes become automatic and even taken for granted. Zhang was right in describing that table manners reflect cultures’ hidden values. Nevertheless, it would have been clearer if the researcher (Zhang) had followed Weaver’s (1986) diagram to explain table manners within Chinese culture. In other words, the way Chinese hosts insist on persuading guests to eat and drink more by refilling food on their plates is the behavior part of the iceberg stuck out of the water level. Though such table manners might be learned through imitation, foreigners need more explanation to help understand the underlying value of the host’s hospitality instead of simply imitating the dining behavior or acquiring the objective cultural knowledge.

### **Hofstede’s Cultural Difference Model**

Hofstede’s (1986) model of cultural differences has also been alluded to widely in exploring culture in the context of educational settings (Signorini, Wiesemes, & Murphy, 2009). Based on his four-dimensional model of cultural differences, Hofstede analyzed interactional differences in teacher/student and student/student relationships related to

dimensions like *individualism*, *power distance*, *uncertainty avoidance*, and *masculinity*. The scholar later added the fifth dimension named *long/short term orientation* or *Confucian Dynamism* (Hofstede & Bond, 1988, as cited in Shaiq, Khalid, Akram, & Ali, 2011).

Applying Hofstede's and Bond's models of cultural differences, Dong (2009) portrayed Chinese people as submissive, restrained, patient, self-contained, cautious, situation-centered, and externally oriented. They tend to avoid disharmony and disagreement with others. However, Westerns were labeled as natural, spontaneous, impulsive, and excitable. Different from their Western counterparts who believe in themselves, the Chinese trust in destiny.

Even though Hofstede's (1986) model of cultural differences seems plausible in drawing cultural landscape, it received much criticism. His work has been challenged in terms of problematic validity of the survey instrument, outdated data, too few dimensions, overlook of political influences, adoption of one company approach, over generalization of findings on individual assessment, questionable statistical integrity, and national boundaries (Shaiq, Khalid, Akram, & Ali, 2011). Above all, Hofstede's cultural difference model showed limitations like "oversimplification of cultural differences, inconsistencies between his categories, lack of empirical evidence from educational settings and overall a model of culture as static (instead of dynamic)" (Signorini, Wiesemes, & Murphy, 2009, p. 253).

Abubaker's (2008) empirical study illustrated research findings deviant from Hofstede's analyses for the educational settings. Despite that Hofstede's model categorizes Chinese culture as high power distance, weak uncertainty, and medium

masculinity, Abubaker's study showed that Chinese culture is characterized to be high power distance, weak masculinity, and medium uncertainty avoidance. The author argued that cultural change over time might explain the research differences, which could be a factor overlooked in Hofstede's work.

### **Summary**

Although culture has been defined in myriads of ways, its multiple definitions converge to show that culture has many visible and invisible layers depicting how different groups of people live their different lives. An agreement has also been reached regarding the significance of deep culture over surface culture in achieving cultural competence and intercultural communication. Therefore, it is important for culture learners to understand the invisible values and thought patterns that support the formation of behavior or creation of objective knowledge. To sum up, the present study will build on the iceberg concept of culture (Weaver, 1986) and emphasize the perspectives of deep culture and *small C* culture (Bennett, 1998). This conclusion may lead to a potential way to define *culture* as thinking and behavioral patterns that a certain group of people use to communicate with others in the world.

## **ACTFL's Standards and AP Chinese**

### **ACTFL's Standards**

In respond to the need for better educating American students to communicate successfully in a multiethnic and multicultural society, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language published *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* in 1996 that placed a special focus on culture teaching and learning (ACTFL, 1996). Since the standards identified five content goal areas such as

Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities (ACTFL, 1996), the standards are also widely known as the 5C standards in K-12 foreign language education. According to Tseng (2007), these National Standards wield a profound influence in helping language teachers explore new opportunities for effective teaching.

Among the five standards three of them are directly related to culture and foreign language learning. The goal area of cultures requires students to “gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures” (ACTFL, 1996, p. 9). The cultural standard dictates that students “demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied” and “demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied” (ACTFL, 1996, p. 9). As explicated in the guidelines (ACTFL, 1996), perspectives stand for “meanings, attitudes, values, and ideas” (ACTFL, 1996, p. 43). Practices refer to “patterns of social interactions” (ACTFL, 1996, p. 43). Products include “books, tools, foods, laws, music, and games” (ACTFL, 1996, p.43). Teachers and learners are reminded to pay close attention to ‘perspective’ and how it impacts products and practices that are part of surface culture. These standards (ACTFL, 1996) signal certain consistency with scholars’ (Hanley, 1999; Moule, 2005; Ruhly, 1976; Weaver, 1986) iceberg concept of culture by emphasizing deep cultures including shared values and thought patterns.

In the goal area of connections, students are encouraged to “acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures” (ACTFL, 1996, p. 9). In the comparisons goal area meant to “develop insight into the nature of language and culture” (ACTFL, 1996, p. 9), the standard expects learners to “demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through

comparisons of the cultures studied and their own” (ACTFL, 1996, p. 9). The focus on cultural comparison is crucial in that it helps students enhance self-awareness and develop intercultural competence.

Moreover, the document (ACTFL, 1996) echoed with Bennett’s (1998) cultural dichotomy in terms of *Big C* (formal) culture and *little c* (daily life) culture. The document (ACTFL, 1996) also indicated that most teachers are accustomed to the *Big C* definition of culture and knowledge about historical figures, products of arts, literature, and science that carries traditional aspects of elite culture. Although the document (ACTFL, 1996) recognized the sociological value of the *Big C* and *little c* division that had long been neglected in classrooms and teaching materials, the standards (ACTFL, 1996) underscored both the formal and daily life types of cultures as they are inseparably tied to the languages used to express the cultures. Unlike Bennett (1998) who argued for the importance of *small C* culture for the goal of successful intercultural communication, the ACTFL (1996) stressed involvement with both kinds of culture for language learners of all levels.

However, the ACTFL’s Standards (1996) was not impeccable in regard to culture teaching and learning. Kubota (2004) pointed out few caveats about the standards (ACTFL). For instance, the 5C standards (ACTFL) claim that stereotyping results from students’ lack of knowledge and sensitivity about the target culture and cultural difference. Hence, the importance of learning cultural difference is highlighted so as to eliminate stereotyping. Nevertheless, Kubota questioned the idea of eliminating stereotyping due to its basis on a binary concept supporting existence of true versus false information, which could be discursive constructs manipulated by politics and ideologies.

## AP Chinese

Due to the fact that the 5C standards (ACTFL, 1996) are aimed for foreign language teaching, the standards also serve as foundation for AP Chinese course in the United States (Chang, 2010). In a similar vein, Tseng (2007) manifested that the AP course develops on the basis of the 5C standards. The College Board first added a Chinese Language and Culture course into the AP Program in 2003 (Tseng) and then offered its end-of-course AP Examination in 2006 (Ewing, 2006). Given Tseng's description, the goal of the AP Chinese course is to integrate students' language skills within a cultural framework. In addition, cultural understanding should go hand in hand with language skills taught in the AP course (Tseng). The author reiterated that the AP Chinese course focuses on "using the language holistically in a culturally appropriate context" (p. 3), which conforms to the current trend in second language learning.

Slightly different from the ACTFL's (1996) emphasis on both the "Big C" and "little C" cultures, Tseng's (2007) *AP Chinese Language and Culture Teacher's Guide* focuses more on the *small C* or daily life culture in order to undergird the central principle of communication in the AP Chinese course development. Speaking of the content of the AP Chinese course, the author (Tseng) specified that students should develop "awareness of and appreciation for Chinese culture" and "a broader world view in the process of comparing and contrasting the products and practices of Chinese cultures with those of their own society" (p. 6, 2007). The aforementioned statement reflects the ultimate goal of intercultural competence through the learning of Chinese language and culture.



Although Tseng (2007) pointed out the requirement that language and culture ought to complement with each other, she later in the chapter introducing the AP Exam in Chinese Language and Culture commented that cultural activities are highly recommended to reward students' hard work after taking the exam. It seems that cultural learning is again treated as an appendant that mainly serves the purpose of maintaining students' interest in learning the language itself.

Despite the fact that the 5C standards (ACTFL, 1996) laid a strong foundation for the AP Chinese course, scant attention has been paid to researching Chinese language education in line with the 5C standards (Chang, 2010). Bien's (2011) study on the possibility of utilizing old films for contemporary Chinese language learning is one of the very few empirical studies that connect with the five C's standards. However, the context of the study (Bien) was a college Chinese language course rather than a secondary AP Chinese setting.

### **Culture Teaching in the Foreign Language Classroom**

Before delving into more research studies on culture teaching and Chinese language education, this section scrutinizes how culture teaching is treated in the general context of foreign language classrooms so as to bring further insights into the field of Teaching Chinese as a Second/Foreign Language.

In order to better understand the topic of culture teaching, several research studies (Browett, 2003; Byrd, Hlas, Watzke, & Valencia, 2011; Lazaraton, 2003; Smith, 2013) investigated language teachers' beliefs and practices. The purpose of Browett's research study was to explore the conceptual frameworks of culture that inform Australian teachers' choice of visual images for studies of culture in their classrooms and the content

of the teachers' understanding of culture. The reading is significant in that it helps to understand Australian teachers' conceptual frameworks of culture, which may have a great impact on how they teach culture. However, more information is needed regarding whether or not the participant teachers' beliefs have been translated into actual pedagogical practices. It would also be interesting to find out what concepts of culture underpin language teachers' culture teaching in a different country like the United States.

In regard to teaching practices, scholars (Byrd, Hlas, Watzke, & Valencia, 2011; Smith, 2013; Young, Sachdev, & Seedhouse, 2009) maintain that the teaching of culture has been perceived as a problem by a great number of foreign language teachers. In the view of Byrd et al. (2011), culture teaching poses challenges for language instruction of all levels, in particular for K-12 language teachers as they are often left to find resources, strategies, and frameworks for culture teaching on their own. Although Byrd et al. pointed out that the ACTFL's standards (1999) for foreign language learning came to rescue L2 teachers and assisted them better approach language and culture, the teaching of culture still remains as a thorny issue in the foreign language classroom.

### **What Are the Current Challenges?**

**From fragmentation to integration.** Since the publication of *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (ACTFL, 1996) has elevated the status of culture teaching in foreign language teaching (Smith, 2013; Byrd, Hlas, Watzke, & Valencia, 2011), Byrd et al. worked with the ACTFL to survey how pre-service and in-service language teachers are prepared for culture teaching. In their study researchers (Byrd et al.) found that teacher education put more focus on cultural products and practices than perspectives, even though the importance of teaching perspectives in L2

classrooms was admitted. The reported information from the respondents hinted that perhaps they needed support for integration of sub-parts of culture.

Additionally, Lazaraton (2003) made an argument that current culture teaching usually involves only facts, artifacts, anecdotes, and knowledge about the L2 culture. Alongside Lazaraton, Smith (2013) commented that foreign language teachers have tendencies to teach isolated facts instead of facilitating elaborated discussion. Although teachers might be interested in engaging students with further discussion based on the discrete cultural points in the textbook, they are probably unable to intergrate the different types of texts into the language course (Smith).

In relation to culture and language learning, Byram and Feng (2004) also put the facts-orientated approach under scrutiny. According to the scholars (Byram & Feng), traditionally the facts-oriented approach is heavily critized as inappropriate in that culture is taught as a list of segmented knowledge that might lead to formation of stereotypes. Notwithstanding, the facts-oriented approach was still very popular in culture teaching within EFL classes (Ho, 2011).

**From context to the core.** Furthermore, the researcher (Lazaraton, 2003) made clear that majority of language teachers were unwilling to prioritize culture learning but only consider culture teaching as a means or context for language learning. In parallel with Lazaraton, Young, Sachdev, and Seedhouse (2009) were concerned with culture teaching and learning in English language learning. The reseachers (Young et al.) conducted a critical review and concluded that most research studies investigate culture “as a context for and background influence”(p. 149) on English language education while little recent emperical research directly explores “whether and how culture *is* actually

taught” (p. 164). Overall speaking, in reality culture has been assigned a peripheral role in language teaching.

**Other challenges.** Aside from the previously documented problems, Smith (2013) contended that challenges about presenting culture in the foreign language classroom might exist when students tend to hold stereotypes and rely on the teacher as the sole transmitter of cultural knowledge. In addition, the researcher (Smith) noted that teachers may be inclined to associating the target language with “a single monolithic culture” (2013, p. 1). Byram and Kramsch (2008) also documented language teachers’ fear of evaluating or categorizing a group of people and their language with undue generalizations that produce stereotypes. In other words, there are chances that foreign language teachers might perpetuate cultural stereotypes if they do not know how to properly approach cultural issues in their classrooms.

Moreover, Lazaraton’s (2003) study showed that nonnative-English-speaking teachers failed to teach culture in a confident manner. Their problem with honestly confessing their incapability caused many missed opportunities for culture learning. Nevertheless, Byram and Kramsch (2008) held a different view arguing that native speakers are not definitely capable of introducing their native cultures to learners. Being native speakers or not, foreign language instructors have to substantiate cultural knowledge through a wide array of reading sources like novels, newspapers, and pamphlets.

### **Summary**

In sum, extensive literature concurs with what Young, Sachdev, and Seedhouse (2009) posited, “culture is not approached in the classroom in a principled, active and

engaged manner” (p. 149). Current foreign language teachers still encounter a wide array of challenges as to integrate culture teaching into language teaching, which cause them to place culture teaching in a marginal position or approach the teaching of culture in a problematic manner. All the difficulties in culture teaching bring up the question about what cultural pedagogies could be put into good use.

### **What Are the Suggested Pedagogies?**

**General approaches to culture.** In Menard-Warwick’s (2009) study on culture teaching in ESL and EFL contexts in Chile and California, she proposed several approaches such as *cultural change*, *cultural adaptation*, *cultural comparison*, and *cultural values*. Cultural change refers to “discussion of how contemporary practices, products, and perspectives differ from those of the past” (Menard-Warwick, p. 35). Cultural adaptation stands for “discussion of the changes that individuals undergo as they adjust to new contexts” (Menard-Warwick, p. 35). Cultural comparison includes “discussion of the ways that practices, perspectives, and products of one group differ from or are similar to those of another group” (Menard-Warwick, p. 35). As for the approach of cultural values, it represents “discussion of what particular groups (e.g., nations) believe or should believe about what is right and wrong, good and bad, valuable or worthless” (Menard-Warwick, p. 35).

Menard-Warwick’s (2009) approaches to cultural pedagogy shed light on a later empirical study conducted by Dytynshyn and Collins (2012). The researchers (Dytynshyn & Collins) adapted Menard-Warwick’s approaches to culture into another different yet similar set of approaches that helped examine an ESL classroom in Quebec, Canada. They kept the same approaches of cultural change, cultural adaptation, cultural

comparisons, and cultural values. On top of that, Dytynyshyn and Collins added the approach of cultural information that entails “description of a particular group’s practices, products, or perspectives without reference to change, adaptation, comparison, or values” (2012, p. 9). Their study (Dytynyshyn & Collins) found that cultural adaptation and cultural information were the most prominent approaches in the observed class.

**The interconnectivity approach.** Apart from the aforementioned approaches to culture teaching in ESL or EFL settings, Maya Smith (2013) promoted the use of interconnected texts to teach culture in foreign language classrooms. She presented her lesson plan used in a French class at the University of California, Berkeley. This lesson plan highlighted the approach that “forces students to focus on the relationship between texts and history, cultural meaning, and other forms of expression” (Smith, 2013, p. 3). Exposed with a network of authentic texts expressing dissenting opinions, the students developed a nuanced understanding about the multiple aspects of the French society. The application of interconnected texts appeared to be an excellent approach to avoid stereotypes or essentialism, which constantly impedes culture teaching and learning (Smith).

Smith’s (2013) study demonstrated how the interconnectivity approach could be used to carry out the ACTFL’s (1996) cultural standard about understanding perspectives behind products and practices. The approach also encompasses the approaches of cultural comparisons, cultural values, and even cultural change which are advocated by Menard-Warwick (2009) as well as Dytynyshyn and Collins (2012). Although the approaches serve as great lens to examine culture teaching, the learning contexts under investigation in the studies (Dytynyshyn & Collins; Smith; Menard-Warwick) are university,

community, or adult language classes. No empirical studies look into culture teaching and learning in secondary schools by means of the same lens of approaches.

**The facts-oriented approach versus the knowledge-for-scrutiny approach.** As indicated earlier, the facts-oriented approach has been under attack by scholars like Kramersch (Byram & Feng, 2004). From a post-modernist perspective, culture involves discourse, identity, and power (Kramersch, as cited in Ho, 2011). The *facts* held true by a group of people may not be accepted as *facts* by others with different identities. For example, a Chinese language teacher coming from mainland China may tell students that Taiwan is not a country but a province of China, which could be opposed to a Taiwanese teacher's proclamation that Taiwan is an independent country. The delineation of cultural facts in class might be tangled with issues of power and identity. Thus, it would be dangerous if the teacher assumes the sole authority to transmit the cultural facts and the learner absorbs the facts as the absolute truth. In the same vein, Lazaraton (2003) agreed with the postmodern view of culture as a "socially constructed practice" (p. 216) that involves meaning and identity and thus cautioned against teaching culture as a set of fragmented facts in L2 education. The discussion on the facts-oriented approach and validity of the so-called *facts* bears a relation to the types of cultures being taught in the classroom. As Young, Sachdev, and Seedhouse (2009) raised the issue of the *ownership* of English and *which* and *whose* culture being targeted by learners, it is worthwhile to pause and think about *which* or *whose* Chinese culture being disseminated in the classroom as *facts*.

Nonetheless, the researchers (Byram & Feng, 2004) also provided the other side of argument on employment of the facts-oriented approach. Such an approach is still

welcomed in language teaching when learners have relatively limited access to the target culture and otherness. Scholars like Hu and Gao along with Cortazzi and Jin advocated a knowledge-for-scrutiny approach (as cited in Byram & Feng), which first presents learners with stereotypical knowledge and right after that helps learners scrutinize the presented knowledge via various representations of the discussed cultural concept or product.

The knowledge-for-scrutiny approach shares the same merit of Smith's (2013) interconnectivity approach to avert from superficial understanding of culture and facile conclusions linked with stereotypes and ethnocentrism. Moreover, the application of the knowledge-for-scrutiny approach adheres to the ACTFL's (1996) principle regarding teaching cultural products, practices, and perspectives all together.

**The four Ds approaches.** Being one of the scholars who challenged the existence of facts and true information, Kubota (2004) cautioned against the teaching emphasis on cultural products, practices, and perspectives proposed by the ACTFL's (1996) standards as they might lead to "manufacturing and fixing such relations based on existing essentialized ideas of the culture of the Self and the Other" (p. 35). The scholar therefore promoted the critical approaches incorporating four concepts (the Four Ds) including *descriptive understanding of culture*, *diversity within culture*, *dynamic nature of culture*, and *the discursive construction of culture*.

Rather than prescriptive understandings, Kubota (2003) lay stress on *descriptive* understandings about culture. *Diversity within culture* was highlighted as well to address issues like gender, race, ethnicity, class, generation, and so on (Kubota, 2004). According to Kubota (2003), the focus on the concept of *dynamic nature of culture* helps cultural



products, practices, and perspectives to be interpreted in historical contexts, which echoed with other scholars' cultural approaches featuring culture change (Dytynyshyn and Collins, 2012; Menard-Warwick, 2009). Last but not least, *the discursive construction of culture* is the most crucial concept in light of its potential of overcoming possible problems of the other three concepts (Kubota, 2004). For instance, exploring cultural dynamics and diversity, though helps understand the hybrid nature of the target culture, might fossilize an essentialized understanding of some historical period or group. Therefore, exploring how certain knowledge about cultural difference was invented by ideological and political struggles for power may help learners debunk essentialist thinking (Kubota).

**The dialogic approach.** Furthermore, Rajabieslami (2014) in her article about cultural awareness and English teaching argued that culture should be taught “not as an informative product but as a kind of information that needs to be explored and shared in a collaborative way to be understood better” (p. 327). Such a statement is in line with the dialogic approach Byram and Feng (2004) espoused for culture and language teaching. As Menard-Warwick (2009) stated, the importance of dialogue for teaching cultural knowledge and interculturality has been widely emphasized by many scholars.

### **Summary**

In conclusion, culture teaching may be conducted in the foreign language classroom with help of a variety of pedagogies. Some of them might focus on presenting cultural knowledge pertaining to cultural products and practices, while others may emphasize cultural understanding related to the underlying perspectives. The adoption of

dialogic approach, the four Ds approaches, and interconnected texts may pave the way for culture teaching to move beyond the superficial level into the deep level.

### **Culture Teaching and Teaching Chinese as a Second/Foreign Language**

Responding to Jiang and Cohen's (2012) finding that Chinese scholars tend to cite Chinese publications far more than English publications, the following literature review examines both Chinese- and English-language publications in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding. Since the proposed study is concerned with Chinese language education in the United States, this section of literature review starts off with an exploration of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (TCFL) and Teaching Chinese as a Second Language (TCSL) in the United States.

#### **TCFL/TCSL in USA**

Although extant literature pinpoints a growing demand for learning Chinese in the United States (Dretzke & Jordan, 2010; Jiang & Cohen, 2012; Li, Wen, & Xie, 2014; Xu, Padilla, & Silva, 2015; Zhou & Li, 2015), a large body of literature places a particular focus on the teaching of language skills and learning strategies (Jiang & Cohen; Zhao & Du, 2014). In addition, a great number of the research studies relevant to Chinese language education limit their scope to primary or post-secondary education (Li, et al.). Dretzke and Jordan specified that it is much easier to retrieve information about Chinese language education in post-secondary institutions than secondary schools in spite of an increasing growth of Chinese language learning in secondary education (Dretzke & Jordan; Wang, Hsiao, & Wang, 2009).

For example, Li, Wen, and Xie (2014) reported a survey conducted by the Chinese Language Teachers' Association (CLTA) in celebration of the association's 50<sup>th</sup>

anniversary. The researchers (Li et al.) claimed that this survey “elicited the largest number of respondents (N=216) with a high response rate, and yielded the largest set of data” (2014, p. 1) in comparison with previous surveys. It also included plenty of questions and topics concerning “institutional types, curriculum structure, staffing issues, student demographics, teaching materials, pedagogical practices, assessment methods, and emerging pedagogical concerns” (Li et al., 2014, p.1). Notwithstanding, the survey and the report did not tap into culture teaching and learning despite its well-known significance in foreign language education. Besides, the study (Li et al.) centered on college-level Chinese programs only without endeavoring to research Chinese teaching and learning in secondary education.

A paucity of research studies involves the study of Chinese in secondary schools (Dretzke & Jordan, 2010; Xu, Padilla, & Silva, 2015; Zhao & Du, 2014). Xu et al. compared the learner performance in an elementary immersion program versus that in a high school world language program in terms of the students’ linguistic proficiency. Even though the study (Xu et al.) talked about Mandarin instruction and AP Chinese, it was merely concerned about language skills like reading, writing, and speaking.

Zhao and Du (2014) in their paper on selecting different teaching strategies for Chinese teaching in American high schools manifested that most high school students choose to learn Chinese because of their curiosity about Chinese culture. They asserted the necessity of including culture teaching into language teaching but suggested a questionable way to combine the two parts in the teaching process. The authors maintained that in the beginning level, the proportion of culture teaching ought to be larger than language teaching in order to maintain the learner’s interest in Chinese

learning. For intermediate learners, they should focus on learning linguistic knowledge. Culture teaching at the same time should be incorporated to serve the goal of language teaching. Such an argument degrades culture learning by assigning it an auxiliary role in language learning.

Second and related, the survey conducted by Dretzke and Jordan (2010) revealed the reasons why American high school students want to enroll in Chinese language courses, what interests them in the course, and their future plans for continue Chinese learning. It is worth mentioning that *learning about the culture* was identified by respondents as the least favorite feature of the Chinese course. However, when asked about areas needing improvement in their Chinese classes, more than half of the students checked the choice of *more cultural activities*. The authors did not offer any detailed explanation for such responses. Although it is hard to tell what triggered the responses, the results provided a glimpse into the fact that the studied Chinese classes failed to respond to the students' need for culture learning.

### **Summary**

In short, the above research studies reflect the fact that most of the published literature on Teaching Chinese as a Second/Foreign Language in the United States dwells upon how to improve teaching and learning strategies about the language skills only. The research settings are also restricted to primary or postsecondary education. Although a handful of studies (Dretzke & Jordan, 2010; Zhao & Du, 2014) skimmed over the topic of Chinese language education in American high schools, the studies demonstrated the marginalized status of culture teaching in the classroom that deserves more serious

investigation as culture is one of the most important pillars of Chinese language teaching (Tsai & Wang, 2015).

### **What Are the Current Challenges for Culture Teaching and TCFL/TCSL?**

The following literature review attempts to expose the current challenges rooted in development of culture teaching and learning in Chinese language education. Due to the fact that few studies have narrowed in on culture teaching in TCFL/TCSL within the context of secondary education in the United States, this section approaches the topic from various angles in order to display multiple dimensions of the current challenges.

**Challenges for learning the Chinese language.** Teaching culture through the foreign language, Chinese, could raise difficulties over culture learning. The five different tones of spoken Chinese pose challenges to learners who speak only an alphabetic language like English (Wang, Perfetti, and Liu, as cited in Yang, 2006). In addition, learning to read and write Chinese characters could be extremely difficult for learners of Mandarin Chinese (Hu, 2015). As Ning (2009) pointed out, Chinese language might be truly foreign for the American learner because the two languages do not share the same linguistic codes. Chinese is characteristic of morphosyllabic writing system while English is an alphabetic language system (Wang, Perfetti, and Liu, as cited in Yeh, 2014).

Although learning the Chinese characters and pronunciation is by no means an easy task, understanding the linguistic code would facilitate the learner's cultural comprehension. Fan (1996) examined the relationship between language, gender, and Chinese culture and explicated how devaluation of women in Chinese culture has been constructed and perpetuated through the formation of the linguistic usages. By analyzing

linguistic forms of Chinese language, Fan revealed the issue of gender inequality existing in the patriarchal society for ages. As social change leads to linguistic changes that also reflect social inequalities, the author suggested Chinese women encode a new language to change social reality.

### **Challenges for expanding TCFL/TCSL in secondary education.**

First of all, Dretzke and Jordan (2010) in their study of potential challenges about expanding Chinese language programs in secondary schools spelt out few issues including “student diversification, student retention from introductory to advanced levels, articulation of the curriculum, and finding qualified teachers” (p. 70). Though this study indicated major problems in present Chinese language programs in secondary schools, the researcher did not regard culture teaching as an area needing improvement, which however deviates from other scholars’ (Hsu, 2014; Wong, 2012) critique about culture teaching in Chinese language education.

### **Challenges for implementation of cultural pedagogies. Wong (2012)**

conducted this qualitative study to explore difficulties facing cultural pedagogy implemented in Chinese language instruction. Through 60 interviews with both Chinese language teachers and learners across the United States he generated a grounded-theory analysis discussing seven major categories about teaching culture in the Chinese classroom. His study (Wong, 2012) found that although both the teachers and students recognized the importance of linking culture to language learning and the fact that culture teaching increased the learners’ interest in language learning, culture teaching remains in a predicament in Chinese language instruction. Lack of a consistent definition of culture

and sufficient resources and time turn culture teaching into a concept that merely looks good on paper.

In terms of textbooks, Tseng (2007) mentioned that no published textbooks are specifically designed for AP Chinese and encouraged teachers to compile their own instructional materials. However, years later Cui (2014) reviewed several textbooks on the market and then commented that in most of the textbooks culture has been treated as “facts within limited space at the end of each chapter” (p. 49). Even though in the review of the textbook *Encounters: Chinese Language and Culture* the researcher (Cui) gave positive feedback stating that the textbook adheres to the notion that culture should not be separated from language, it is not clear how teachers employ the textbook in reality. Do they supplement additional cultural-related activities or initiate further discussion on the cultural points scattered in the textbook? Also, do they guide students to compare and contrast Chinese culture with their own through the thought-provoking questions provided in the textbook? Answers to the questions are left unknown.

Furthermore, Hsu (2014) compared teaching Chinese as a second language in Taiwan with teaching Chinese as a foreign language in the United States and confessed that it is challenging to convey cultural information to her American students with limited language proficiency despite her identity as the Chinese culture provider. Although Hsu agreed that teaching both cultural elements and linguistic elements in the same class is a direction she desired to pursue, she was perplexed about how to balance culture teaching and language teaching. This paper (Hsu) vividly illustrated an experienced Chinese language teacher’s lack of confidence in culture teaching.

**Challenges for preparing qualified teachers.** Hsu's (2014) statement implies that in-service language teachers might not be well-prepared in teacher education. Attaran and Hu (2015) conducted a phenomenological research study on teacher education for teaching Chinese as a foreign language. This article concluded that teacher education curriculum has room for improvement and suggested adding more practical knowledge and diverse strategies in response to the challenges in the global context. However, the study exhibited a lack of investigation on the significant element in foreign language teaching: culture. The authors did not comment on the aspects of culture teaching in the curriculum except for presenting a participant's remark questioning the applicability of the knowledge learned from the curriculum like *History of Chinese Ancient Literature*. It seems that the teacher education curriculum values the introduction of the *big C* culture more than the *small C* culture and fails to assist pre-service teachers to apply what they learn about Chinese cultures into practical teaching of culture.

Since a great number of Chinese language teachers in the United States come from either China or Taiwan, Ma's study (2013) on the curriculum of *The Chinese Society and Culture*, offered in Chinese departments and graduate schools in Taiwan, may help bring to light how the teachers are prepared for the teaching of culture. According to Ma, most of the curriculum outlines of the subject being analyzed overlook the area of overseas Chinese society and culture. Nevertheless, it is very likely that these Taiwanese teachers will need to teach American Born Chinese if they work abroad. Lack of understanding about local Chinese society and cultures might pose challenges for teachers to skillfully facilitate discussion about intercultural comparison.



## Summary

Given the aforementioned challenges compounded with difficulty level of the language, culture teaching and learning in TCFL/TCSL framed in American secondary education has experienced difficulties in preparing professional teachers who are capable of incorporating appropriate culture pedagogies and teaching materials into the language classroom. Responding to the challenges, scholars offered a wide range of suggestions (Liou, 2010; Pu, 2012; Tseng, 2007; Wang, 2006; Wong, 2012).

### What Are the Suggestions for Culture Teaching in TCFL/TCSL?

*AP Chinese Language and Culture- Teacher's Guide*. The Teacher's Guide (Tseng, 2007) collected several sample syllabi illustrating how the teaching of AP Chinese can be conducted aligned with the 5C's guidelines. Different sample syllabi listed different teaching strategies the teachers recommended for teaching AP Chinese. Some of the strategies are connected with the cultural standards mandated by the ACTFL. For example, Teacher Sue-mei Wu suggested the strategy of *situational dialogue* that required students to practice how native speakers interact in the target culture by performing the situational dialogue given in the course text. Although such a strategy may familiarize student with common practices in Chinese culture, it is doubtful if the learners truly understand the perspectives behind the practices by imitating the interactions only. Another in-class exercise about Chinese idioms learning in the same syllabus might be more helpful. In this activity the learners were asked to "compare the cultural practices or views represented by the idiom to their own culture" (Wu, as cited in Tseng, 2007, p. 47).

Emphasis on cultural comparison repeatedly occurs in the presented syllabi in the teacher's guide (Tseng, 2007). For instance, Teacher Chang led a student discussion on comparing the love story of *Romeo and Juliet* in Western literature with the famous story of 梁祝 *Liang Zhu* in Chinese literature. Teacher Pierce instructed cultural comparisons by means of travel journals and role-plays, in which students were asked to compare their city to the Chinese city, Dali. Like other language teachers, Teacher Ross wanted students to compare Chinese and American cultures. The cultural comparison in this syllabus surpasses others in that it focused on comparison of cultural values entrenched in deep culture such as women's equality, the concept of consideration for other people, marital issues, and family life. Teacher Lei Wu's syllabus is unique in regard to cultural comparison as it directs students to compare and contrast not only cultural values embedded in Chinese and American societies, but also the cultural norms in traditional and modern societies. In other words, such cultural comparisons recognized the important element of cultural change.

#### **Suggestions for preparing culturally competent teachers and curriculum.**

Liou (2010) investigated how to cultivate Chinese language teachers with interlinguistic and intercultural sensitivities. According to the author, in order to acquire interlinguistic and intercultural sensitivities, pre-service Chinese language teachers have to first develop self-awareness by means of observing their own internalized linguistic and cultural knowledge. In respect to culture, student teachers of Chinese language should observe and analyze their own languages and behaviors in daily life and then extend their observation to expressions in interpersonal activities. Liou encouraged the student teachers to form a habit of examining and reflecting upon their own cultures. Such self-

awareness may help them better understand how their cultures influence their languages and therefore equip language teachers with sensitivities needed for intercultural communication and teaching students from different cultural backgrounds.

In response to the 5C Standards given by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the researcher (Chang, 2010) studied how the standards could be applied in the classroom of TCSL. She then presented several curriculum design examples based on the 5C Standards. Finally, Chang included a discussion on how the 5C Standards influenced Teaching Chinese as a Second Language. Based on Chang's suggestions, in addition to having a good command of linguistic knowledge, Chinese language educators have to familiarize themselves with Chinese culture and emphasize cultural comparison so as to enhance students' communicative competency. Likewise, teaching materials have to be revised to incorporate Chinese practices and culture and highlight interpersonal communication reflected in authentic contexts.

**Connection with the learner's needs and cultural relevance.** In regard to culture learning, Wang (2006) stressed that Chinese Culture Curriculum should cater to students' learning needs. Wong (2012) found that the participant student interviewees preferred to know more about contemporary Chinese culture because of their intention to communicate with native speakers in daily life. It is therefore important to check if the cultural pedagogies in TCFL/TCSL highlight the communicative culture to meet students' learning needs. Although teacher interviewees in Wong's study (2012) considered the long history of China a burden for culture teaching, Wong was correct in saying that the traditional aspects of Chinese culture do not need to be abandoned altogether in the teaching of culture. The main point lies in *relevance*. For instance, the teacher could talk

about how the traditional emphasis on the value of the male in ancient China impacts contemporary life in the modern Chinese society. As a result, it might be helpful to further understand if the teacher's perceived notion of culture is aligned with the students' and how the teacher translates his or her understanding about traditional culture into pedagogical tools that help students better understand contemporary Chinese cultures.

**Chinese idiom stories as reading materials.** Yeh (2014) indicated the significance of developing Chinese cultural understanding through reading four-character Chinese idioms and their related stories. Chinese idioms or *chengyu* are commonly used for communication among the Chinese as they carry cultural messages through succinct linguistic elements. They are unique to the Chinese culture in that every idiomatic expression is associated with a unique story whereas not all English idioms are connected with relevant stories. Reading idiom stories helps learners understand the moral of each idiom and various aspects of Chinese culture. This type of reading text is different from others as it exposes students not only to the language but also to the culture, which is crucial for achieving the pedagogical goal of teaching language and culture. According to Yeh, this is also the goal for Chinese heritage schools in the United States.

**Heritage language schools as resources.** In light of the ACTFL's (1996) focus on culture teaching and learning, Pu (2012) recommended that American P-12 school teachers work with community-based Chinese heritage language (CHL) schools to develop culturally responsive instruction as CHL schools possess rich cultural resources. Cultural programs and activities aside, contemporary CHL schools offer a wide range of textbooks and readings introducing a series of traditional values like collectivism, filial piety, thrift, obedience, and patriotism. According to the researcher (Pu), CHL schools

are found to present cultural products, practices, and perspectives all together. She offered a suggestion that instead of presenting surface culture by exhibiting cultural products, CHL members could be invited to P-12 classes to illuminate cultural values, beliefs, and significance connected with the cultural products. This is in agreement with Ho's (2011) recommendation that "more genuine social interaction and cultural exchanges with people from other cultural backgrounds should be also encouraged in order to enhance students' curiosity and interests in culture learning as well as developing their intercultural skills necessary for effective intercultural communication" (p. 63).

### **Summary**

In respect of the suggestions for culture teaching in the field of TCFL/TCSL, scholars encourage teachers to develop self-awareness towards their own cultures and focus more on cultural comparison in class. Moreover, teachers are advised to transfer their knowledge about traditional Chinese culture to facilitate understanding about contemporary Chinese culture in response to students' learning needs. Chinese idiom stories could be a good choice in terms of teaching and learning materials. Finally, heritage language schools might serve as resource centers in helping P-12 teachers incorporate Chinese products, practices, and perspectives into their culture teaching in the classroom.

### **Summary**

This literature review has examined an assortment of research papers exploring areas such as *Defining Culture for Language Education*, *the Standards of American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL)* and *AP Chinese, Culture*

*Teaching in the Foreign Language Classroom and Culture Teaching and Teaching Chinese as a Second/Foreign Language.*

First of all, an introduction of the Iceberg Concept of Culture and the *Big C* and *Small C* cultures displays the multiple cultural dimensions that might constitute various contents of culture teaching in a language course like AP Chinese. Then the researcher highlights the teaching and learning of culture in AP Chinese and the ACTFL's standards (1996) that guide the course.

In order to draw insights from the general foreign language classroom, the researcher reviewed scholarly works focusing on culture teaching and learning in different language classrooms and found that culture is still mostly treated as a separate and peripheral element from language learning and taught in an unsatisfactory manner. However, scholars do offer several approaches for language teachers to help students understand different levels of culture.

This literature review therefore directs its attention to the challenges entrenched in TCFL/TCSL and culture teaching. Research studies show that the field of TCFL/TCSL has not yet fully explored the topic of culture teaching and learning especially in the context of American secondary education. Lack of professional Chinese language teachers capable of integrating appropriate cultural pedagogies and learning materials into the language classroom makes it hard to implement culture teaching into Chinese language education.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Restatement of the Purpose of the Study**

This study aimed to explore how culture teaching and learning progresses in an Advanced Placement (AP) Chinese course in a U.S. high school. In response to the need for investigating how the cultural goal area of the 5C standards (ACTFL, 1996) is implemented and understanding the realities of classroom practices related to culture teaching and learning, the present research study served as a qualitative case study that found out both the teacher and students' perceived concepts of culture. It also looked into what was taught and how it was taught regarding culture as well as how the process of culture learning promoted the students' self-understanding which is conducive to effective intercultural communication.

#### **Research Questions**

Following are the research questions of focus in the present study:

1. What is the concept of culture as perceived by the teacher and the students?
2. What is the teacher's general approach to the teaching of culture?
  - a. How is culture taught in the AP Chinese course?
  - b. What elements are highlighted?
  - c. What elements are ignored?
3. How do these pedagogical practices in teaching culture help or hinder students to build the relationship between products/practices and perspectives of the cultures of the Chinese-speaking world?

4. In what ways do students come to know about their own cultures throughout the process of learning Chinese culture?

As the proposed study aimed to explore how culture teaching and learning develop in the language classroom, the first question helped to pinpoint the type of culture concept undergirding the teacher's philosophy and practices about culture teaching. It also helped to reveal the students' current understanding about what culture is and the aspects of culture they wanted to learn. Although the teacher might have a comprehensive understanding about the concept of culture in mind, she might not be able to translate her cultural knowledge into the actual teaching practices. Thus, the second question was significant in that the researcher entered the classroom and examined the teaching approaches and content actually applied in the classroom so as to gather insightful information regarding what was missing or challenging about the implementation of culture teaching.

Due to the fact that culture goal area of the 5C standards (ACTFL, 1996) put a great emphasis on learning the relationships between perspectives and products/practices, the third question helped to examine if the teacher used appropriate approaches to enhance the crucial link. Lastly, the ultimate goal of culture teaching and learning led to successful intercultural communication. The fourth question was therefore important in eliciting data determining if the process of culture learning has prepared students with intercultural sensitivity conducive to intercultural communication. Since intercultural communication requires a person's understanding about both other and own cultures, the questions attempted to investigate how the learners become more aware of their own cultures with help of cultural pedagogies like cultural comparison.



## Research Design

In light of the study's intent to capture participants' thoughts and experiences towards culture teaching and learning, the present study adopted a qualitative approach. As Kaikkonen (1997) argued, "the qualitative research methodology made it possible to explore the learners' understanding of their thinking and intercultural learning process more deeply" (p. 47). Since the study attempted to reveal the ways students develop a sharper awareness of their own cultures through the process of learning Chinese culture, the qualitative methodology turned out to be the best fit for extracting data. Also, a non-participatory observational case study was implemented to examine a particular teacher's teaching practices. This study could also be understood as an interpretive case study, which according to Faltis (1997) means "analytical descriptions that illustrate, support or challenge existing theoretical assumptions about teaching and learning" (p. 146).

Creswell (2007) defined a case study as "an in-depth exploration of a bounded system, (e.g., activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection" (as cited in Creswell, 2011, p. 465). The case may indicate "a single individual, several individuals separately or in a group, a program, events, or activities" (Creswell, 2011, p. 465). It may also refer to "a process consisting of a series of steps (e.g., a college curriculum process) that form a sequence of activities" (Creswell, 2011, p. 465). Alternatively, the case could serve as an *instrumental case* that helps to illuminate a specific issue (Creswell, 2011). In regard to case study, Merriam (2002) considered it to be "an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unity such as an individual, group, institution, or community" (p. 8). The author further stressed, "the unit

of analysis, not the topic of investigation, characterizes a case study” (Merriam, 2002, p. 8).

In light of the aforementioned description, a case study appears to be an appropriate research design for the current study. Since the purpose of the study lies in exploring a particular issue centering on the process of culture teaching and learning through an illustrating example of the AP Chinese class, a case study should be able to highlight the focus of the qualitative study.

### **Research Setting**

The research site for this study was located in a high school in the Bay Area in the State of California. This four-year public high school housed more than 3000 students with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds and 150 teachers. According to the school profile, about 10 percent of the students spoke a primary language other than English. Some 30 percent of students were eligible for free or reduced school lunch. Within the demographic enrollment, nine percent of the student population was reported to be Asian Americans or Pacific Islanders. African American and Hispanic/Latino students represented 21 percent of the student body respectively. Approximately 38 percent of the total enrollment were White and 11 percent of the students were multi-racial.

In year 2014, more than 90 percent of the graduating students from this high school planned to attend college. To prepare these students and ensure academic excellence, the school offered more than 100 college preparatory classes deriving from six learning communities including Arts and Humanities that sheltered the teaching of five world languages. Rigorous courses at the Advanced Placement level and International Baccalaureate classes were also provided among a wide range of electives.

As one of the world language programs in the school, the Mandarin Chinese program hosted five classes to serve four levels of learners with different years of learning experiences. The AP Chinese course took in students with the highest level of Chinese. All classes met up the same time five days a week. The rich language curriculum has existed in the school for more than 10 years.

### **Participants**

Based on the qualitative nature of the proposed study, purposeful sampling strategy was used help recruit participants considering their potentiality in generating rich data. As a result, selected participants included an experienced Chinese teacher familiar with the AP Chinese course and higher-level Chinese learners.

Ms. Liu (pseudonym) and her high school students agreed to participate in the study. Ms. Liu came from northern part of mainland China and had a master's degree earned in the United States. She used to teach in a Chinese heritage language school before working at the research site. I first met Ms. Liu when I volunteered in her classroom in 2014 through the recommendation of the director of a Chinese teacher training program in the Bay Area. Although she is currently the only one teacher responsible for the Chinese language learning program on the research site, Ms. Liu was a good source for the research data given the fact that she was the founder of the program and has more than 10 years of Chinese language teaching experience at the high school. She also attended the annual conference held by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and pursued opportunities for further studies. Because the teacher was from mainland China, she taught all her classes in simplified Chinese.

Since learning culture and expressing cultural concepts may require a larger stock of words and phrases, participants with an intermediate or advanced level of Mandarin Chinese were sought. Therefore, AP Chinese learners became an ideal choice. In terms of the selected AP Chinese class, there were 21 students who have learned Mandarin Chinese as either a heritage language or a foreign language. The class was made up of 12 male students and 9 female students aged from 16 to 18. In terms of ethnicity, nine students identified themselves as Asian Americans. There were another seven White students, one African American, and three students of mixed race. Only one student refused to reveal personal information. Due to the fact that both heritage and non-heritage students took the same course, the students' various cultural backgrounds provided an excellent lens for looking into cultural differences and helping explore the topic of culture learning.

### **Data Collection**

Before entering the research setting, the researcher contacted the main administrator at the school to attain approval. Then both participant teacher and students were informed of the purpose of the study and possible interruptions during the data collection process. They received consent forms to join the study.

The data gathering process mainly involved classroom observation and oral interviews. To help the researcher better understand the student composition and their Chinese learning background, I gave out a short questionnaire asking information such as ethnic culture, home language, and the length of Chinese language learning at the beginning of data collection. Moreover, I bought the textbook used for the class and collected handouts, homework practices, and test sheets the students received. As a

qualitative researcher, I also designed protocols to record information as suggested by Creswell (2011).

### **Classroom Observation**

I conducted an unobtrusive classroom observation on a daily basis for nearly three months in fall 2016. The class observations totaled 38 teaching hours, excluding test time and a one-day field trip to a Chinese cultural festival in a nearby college. Unobtrusive classroom observations allowed the researcher to pay undivided attention to investigate class activities in a neutral manner. I observed every lesson with the same criteria to ensure reliability (Nunan, as cited in Ho, 2011). Besides taking field notes, I also audiotaped the class in hope to look into the teacher's cultural pedagogies in a comprehensive manner. To address the concern that audiotaping may cause participants to act differently in class, I audiotaped every observed class to enhance a good possibility of natural performance from the participants. To follow up with interesting or confusing occurrences from the observations, I usually arrived 10 minutes earlier or stayed a bit longer after class to have casual conversations with the teacher in order to know more about her instructional approaches, challenges, or student behaviors.

### **Oral Interview**

In addition to classroom observations, I conducted one-on-one in-depth interviews with both the participant teacher and eight students so as to find out their perceived concepts of the term *culture* as well as to discover how students developed a deeper understanding about their own cultures throughout the language and culture learning process. I scheduled interviews three weeks after I started classroom observation partly because the data collected from observations provided more materials for interview

questions. Such an arrangement was also due to the fact that participants grew accustomed to my presence throughout the multiple observations and became more willing to open themselves for the interview questions.

Eight students volunteered to have interviews with me. Three of them were heritage students while five of them were non-heritage learners. All student interviews took place in the school gallery seating area next to the classroom in order not to intervene or interrupt the ordinary class schedule and to create some safe space for participants to freely express their personal opinions. The interviews took place during lunch time or after school. On account of the limited time students agreed to meet, they were given a list of interview questions in advance but told not to search for answers. During interviews I also supplemented with additional questions to further probe interviewees' responses. Each interview lasted approximately 15 to 35 minutes. The students chose to answer the questions in either Mandarin Chinese or English depending on their personal preferences.

As for the teacher interview, I met up with Ms. Liu in her classroom when she was alone during her class preparation period. This interview was scheduled two days before I left the research site because I did not want the interview results to affect the teacher's normal instruction that I observed. In addition, I did not send out the guided questions I prepared in advance as I expected a natural response from the teacher. The teacher turned out to be very eloquent in expressing her opinions about the teaching of language and culture. The interview was conducted in Mandarin Chinese and lasted for 40 minutes.

All the interviews were digitally recorded upon the participant's agreement and transcribed for further analysis. They were provided with opportunities to review the transcripts and clarify their thoughts. The transcribed interviews and classroom observation recordings reached 350 pages.

### **Data Analysis**

Following data collection, a preliminary data analysis took place. Per Creswell's (2011) strategies, I conducted the thematic analysis by first immersing myself in the raw data and then coding the data according to emerging themes or categories. Data collected from classroom observations were analyzed to answer all research questions except for question number one. Data from the interviews provided answers to research question number one, two, and four.

Key findings were presented with help of the excerpts in which both the original Chinese transcripts and the author's English translations coexist. In order to validate the accuracy of the findings, I triangulated various data sources to ensure a credible study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

In respect of ethical issues, I secured permission from the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) prior to data collection procedures. I also sought approval from the research official in the school district and the school according to Creswell's (2011) guidelines. After data collection process began, the researcher took caution to minimize disruption on the research site.

To protect participants' confidentiality, the research site and participants were kept anonymous. Pseudonyms were used throughout the research study. Moreover, participants were notified of their right to opt out of the study at any point of the research

process. All the collected data were used for future analysis to serve the study goal only and stored in a safe place during and after the research.

When the research ended, the researcher gave away Chinese learning materials with a thank-you note to reward participants' valuable output. The researcher also volunteered to help with the teacher's other Chinese classes in return for her kind help. Sharing the findings with participants would serve an additional type of reward as the participant teacher would benefit from the opportunity of reflecting and refreshing her current teaching practices.

### **Background of the Researcher**

My interest in teaching Chinese as a Second Language sprouted when I was an intern teacher in Taiwan and assigned to teach Mandarin Chinese to five Rotary exchange students from four different countries. Though Mandarin Chinese is my native language, I had no prior experience teaching it, and my Western students had zero experience learning the language. We had a bumpy ride together teaching and learning Chinese along with grappling with cultural clashes. At first, the students showed indifference to linguistic knowledge I taught from textbooks. They were also bewildered about most parts of the traditional Chinese education they experienced in mainstream classrooms. Some of them felt frustrated when the Chinese teacher stopped them from arguing with her in class and did not understand why the school elevator was reserved for teachers only in order to show respect. We spent plenty of time examining the cultural differences between the East and the West. Gradually the students showed more interest learning the words and phrases they needed to communicate with local people in order to voice their opinions. I then changed my lesson plans to include more cultural elements when



introducing the language. The more we talked about cultures, the more motivated the students became to learn Chinese and enjoy their school life.

This teaching experience sparked my attention to incorporating culture in language teaching. I was also inspired to take professional courses in teaching Chinese as a Second/Foreign Language and earned a certificate of proficiency at the end of the training program. Although the teacher training program was provided by a teacher's college of great renown, I was surprised that no specific course content outlined how culture could be taught in a language classroom. I later passed a national test to obtain my teaching license in Teaching Chinese as a Second/Foreign Language. However, the test also did not check future teachers' familiarity with cultural pedagogies.

After working for two years, I went to the United Kingdom to pursue a master's degree in Translation, Media, and Cultural Transfer. There once again I sensed the inseparability of language and culture. Coming to the United States and studying in the International and Multicultural Education program at the University of San Francisco brought me to further ponder what culture teaching and learning is like in the current field of Chinese language education. Has anything changed or is there still much space for improvement? Therefore, I decided to initiate a research study on culture teaching and learning in a Chinese language classroom.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

To address the needs to explore educational realities about the teaching and learning of culture in the field of Chinese education in the United States, the present study focused on an Advanced Placement Chinese course in an American high school. Four research questions were proposed to help better understand how culture was taught and learned in such a research setting. In this chapter I will give a detailed description of the research setting followed by findings for the four research questions. I organized the results of the data analysis in accordance with the research questions. For each research question, the corresponding findings will be presented in light of the distinctive themes. The following are the four research questions the study addressed:

1. What is the concept of culture as perceived by the teacher and the students?
2. What is the teacher's general approach to the teaching of culture?
  - d. How is culture taught in the AP Chinese course?
  - e. What elements are highlighted?
  - f. What elements are ignored?
3. How do these pedagogical practices in teaching culture help or hinder students to build the relationship between products/practices and perspectives of the cultures of the Chinese-speaking world?
4. In what ways do students come to know about their own cultures throughout the process of learning Chinese culture?

### **The Classroom**

Since setting and decoration of the classroom could be suggestive of the learning content of the class, the researcher took a close look at the ways Ms. Liu's Chinese classroom was decorated. At first sight, the classroom was found with a wide variety of posters introducing basic Chinese characters, radicals, syllables, children songs, and poetry. There were also comics showing simple sentences posted around the white board. On the white board were agenda of the day and the test schedule for each Chinese class. Several large bookcases stood against the wall and stored a rich collection of Chinese books and dictionaries. A big map of China, as well as handicrafts like Chinese papercuts, were placed at different corners of the classroom. The teacher also displayed students' projects in the back of the classroom and updated the posting periodically. The U-shape seating arrangement allowed all students to see each other and the white board without difficulties. In the front left of the classroom were the teacher's table and a computer, while the researcher was assigned to sit at the front right of the classroom, next to a student.

The AP class convened at the fourth period after lunch time. Ms. Liu usually checked students' homework in the beginning of the class, and then moved on to teaching the activities of the day. Every day, the students left the class with homework. From Monday to Thursday, students receive regular language instruction. Friday was called *Cultural Friday* when students watched movies or did cultural projects related to the coursework. At first, the teacher was reluctant to have me observe the Friday class as she was concerned there was not enough language teaching and learning activities taking

place on Fridays. However, after I expressed my interest in the movies and students' presentations, she welcomed me to stay for the Friday class.

## **Research Findings**

### **Research Question One— Perceived Concepts of Culture**

The question began with exploration of the teacher's concept about what culture was, which cultural components were considered important in the teacher's culture teaching, as well as the teacher's perspective regarding the role of culture in the language classroom. The question then continued to look into the students' concept about what constituted culture, features of the term, and the students' attitudes towards culture.

#### **The Teacher**

**Components of culture.** In her interview with me, Ms. Liu shared what she thought the term, *culture*, denoted. She mentioned topics such as celebrations, food, customs, practices, and thoughts. When asked to define the term, culture, in a few sentences, the teacher offered this definition:

我觉得文化是一种就是说在一个国家喔，就是生活的这种习俗，还有一些惯例，包括一些想法，这些都是文化[I feel like culture is a kind of, say customs and practices about life in a country. It also includes some thoughts. These are all culture.]

**Contemporary culture.** From the teacher's perspective, contemporary culture drew more of her attention compared with traditional culture. She expressed the strong intention to introduce what happens in the modern world to her students.

因为我们希望给学生带来的是这种非常近的这种，in 的文化，而不是非常古老的，你再去中国可能都不是这样子，所以作为语言的老师我自己也时时的

更新自己的东西，比如说上网去找一些现在都在看什么节目，这是我自己可能有一些电视剧学生喜欢的，像一些学生喜欢流行的歌曲，像一些说唱[We hope to bring students this kind of very recent and *in* culture instead of the very ancient kind that you won't see when you visit China again. So as a language teacher I also update my teaching stuff from time to time. For example, I go online to find the TV programs people watch nowadays. I might have some TV series students like, some pop songs or some Chinese comedies.]

**Big culture versus small culture.** According to Bennett (1998), big culture covered institutions and routinized behavior while the small culture represented people's psychological features. Ms. Liu realized that culture could be categorized as big culture and small culture. Nevertheless, it seemed to be a challenge for her to teach both elements. She had the feeling that living in the United States distanced her from what actually goes on in China.

然后同时对于老师来说，我觉得在文化其实有这种小文化跟大文化的这种不一样，然后呢，对于老师来说我是觉得是很难的，做这一部分，因为毕竟我们自己也是在这边生活啊[Meanwhile as for teachers, I feel like there are cultural differences between small culture and big culture. As a teacher, I think this is a very difficult part because after all we live here]

**The sharing of perspectives.** Throughout the interview, the teacher repeatedly talked about the importance of sharing perspectives with the learners. In her opinion, development of perspectives was especially crucial for higher-level learners like Advanced Placement class students. To help students better understand the Chinese

perspective, she supported the use of movies or more discussion on the reason why people from diverse cultures behave differently.

我觉得文化妳不能强加给他，但是作为一个语言的老师，我就觉得是一种分享，而且是一种对他们好像是影响[I think you can't impose culture on your students. However, being a language teacher I can share. This kind of sharing also seems to be an influence on them.]

She further stressed the significance of introducing students to diverse statements that are not absolutely right or wrong so that the learners could form independent thinking.

我就觉得是给他们各种观点，让他们自己去总结，而且有自己的观点，可以说出自己的一些甚么东西[I feel like I should just give them all kinds of perspectives, having them to summarize and develop their own perspectives. This way they can speak out something on their minds.]

**The inseparability of language and culture.** Although Ms. Liu explicitly labeled Fridays as Culture Friday for all her classes, she manifested the inseparability of language and culture from the very beginning of the interview.

我自己是认为语言和文化不能分着教，就是说一定要在语言里渗透文化，然后在文化里又建起语言，这是我自己一直的观点，但是现在呢就是说，当然哪我现在是把星期五我们一般从中文一就开始我就设定为文化课，所以在这一天呢我就觉得小孩他四天都是当然不完全都是 **language**，因为您看我在上课的时候我常常也就会提到一些中国的文化啊，跟他们进行一些分享，还有各方面的时事，我自己认为这一些其实对他学语言都是一个促进，包括我们

每年，不是每年，每隔一年的中国行，或者去台湾或去中国都没关系，就是说对于他打开他的眼界[Personally I think language and culture cannot be taught separately. It means that you have to infiltrate culture through language, and then structure language within culture again. This is always my own viewpoint. But now, of course in general I set up Friday as cultural class since Chinese Level One, on this day. I feel like what these kids learn during the other four days is not completely about language as you see that in class I often mention something about Chinese culture, have some sharing with them, and talk about current events of all aspects. I personally think these things actually promote students' language learning, including the China trip every year, not every year, every other year. It doesn't matter whether we go to Taiwan or China. This helps them broaden their horizons.]

### **The Students**

**Components of culture.** Different from the teacher's immediate response, it took some of the student participants a longer time to answer what the term *culture* meant to them. Pauses between questions and answers were commonly seen. The researcher encouraged interviewees to define culture in their own words. Most of them considered culture to be music, food, habits, customs, traditions, practices, values, and beliefs. Wendy commented that “culture is like a set of social norms, you know, it involves religions, arts, music, and [belongs to] specific certain groups of people.” Another Hapa (half Asian and half White) student stated, “Culture 是你长大的时候的 habits” [Culture is your habits since you grew up]. Sarah related culture to “cultural practices like holidays, like food, customs, beliefs, hmmm, how you interact with people, and what you

value maybe?!” When asked about the same question, Daisy replied, “Hmm,我觉得是 like how 你希望住(live?)你的生活, how you wanna live, and yeah. [I feel like it’s how you want to live your life, how you wanna live, and yeah.] Similar to Daisy, Henry remarked,

I think it’s like it’s like how you live, it’s like your background and it’s kind of like your history, I kind of think about like that, like my Chinese culture like I celebrate like traditions that my family celebrate. That’s kind of like I think of culture.

Still some students were not confident about the way they defined culture. For instance, Jeremy was not sure if daily practices, history, and religion could be categorized as culture. Here is how he understood the concept of culture:

Jeremy: 一些人常常做的事, No(生大笑) [Some things people usually do. No! (Laughing)]

Researcher: 一些人常常做的事?!也很好啊! [Some things people usually do?! Sounds good!]

Jeremy: 还有他对世界的问题有什麽样的 opinions, 什麽样的回答 [And what kinds of opinions he has about world issues, what types of answers ]

Researcher: 对世界上的问题有什麽答案?! [Answers to the world issues?!]

Jeremy: Oh no 它不是 culture 啦, 它是 religion [Oh no that’s not culture! That’s religion!]

Researcher: 宗教信仰, 你觉得宗教信仰也是文化吗?

[Religion and beliefs. Do you think religion and beliefs are also part of culture?]



Jeremy: 哎呀，不是啊...历史是文化，哎呀，不知道[Oh no! History is culture.

Well, I don't know.]

**Collective and fluid.** In addition to pointing out the components of culture, several interviewees further described their observations about culture. Apart from defining culture as traditions, history, and daily practices, Connie added, “You can’t be a part of the culture unless you live long enough (to build) some sort of daily connections...”

Allen provided a lengthy statement in regard to culture’s collective and fluid nature. He observed:

I mean, for me, culture is like kind of like a group of people like share like traditions. It’s very fluid for me...Like culture you can really define it in a certain way. I think generally it’s kind of like a group of people who share something like it’s wishy washy... Who’s decided American culture versus Jewish versus Chinese versus native American, like they are all very different in what they mean. But I think you can all argue that they’re cultures but also very different...really it’s some sense of collective... Like we are Americans is not like every American I see like they are automatically my friends but if I meet someone who’s Jewish I’ll have some deeper connection with them...

**Vague identity.** Vague identity referred to the researcher’s impression that some students had a foggy idea of their cultural identities. It was unexpected to hear some interviewees doubt which ethnic culture they could most identify with or even questioned whether they had culture or not. Opposite from her Jewish peer Allen, Sarah appeared vague about her cultural identity.

Researcher: Remember last time you put down *Jewish* as the ethnic culture you most identify with?

Sarah: Yeah. Is that a culture?

Researcher: Yeah!

Sarah: I'm like NOT observing all the holidays...

During our later conversation, Sarah again voiced her feelings towards culture by saying, "It's not like a really big deal to me." In a similar vein, Connie showed a vague cultural identity. Although she is the fourth generation of Japanese American (Yonsei) who does not speak Japanese and has many Australian relatives from her father's side, she did not identify herself as an American or an Australian, but a Japanese American. She admitted that such identification was "just a way to have culture."

One heritage student, Fiona, clearly expressed that her sense of cultural identification did not come from race or ethnicity but from the place she has been living for her whole life. "我觉得我的 culture 是 Beilly (pseudonym of the city),因为我爸爸妈妈没教我中国或德国的 traditions,可是我感觉我 belong 在 Beilly" [I feel like my culture is Beilly (pseudonym of the city) culture because my mom and dad did not teach me any Chinese or German traditions. But I feel that I belong to Beilly.]

Like Fiona, Daisy has been a resident of the Beilly city since birth. This White student told me she does not have any cultures. When I asked her initial thoughts after perusing the interview questions about culture, she said, "我不知道,我觉得我,因为我每天住在 Beilly, like I don't know other cultures, 所以 I can't, I don't know what means special relations to others." [I don't know. I feel like I, because I live in Beilly

every day, like I don't know other cultures, I can't, I don't know what means special relations to others.]

In brief, both the teacher and students perceived culture to be composed of customs, practices, celebrations, values, and beliefs. They all realized that culture could change from time to time and place to place. In terms of teaching perspectives, the teacher admitted that teaching small culture is challenging because she lives in the United States. However, she was committed to sharing a wide range of perspectives with her students and connecting culture with language as she believed that the teaching of language within the cultural context facilitates understanding of both linguistic and cultural elements.

To the researcher's surprise, most of the students showed a vague cultural identity though they were able to define the term, culture. Despite their different ethnic backgrounds, most of the interviewees had difficulties identifying with a certain type of culture.

### **Research Question Two— The Teacher's General Approaches**

Findings from the classroom observations pinpointed the common teaching approaches Ms. Liu employed to teach culture. Although the researcher tried to highlight one approach per example, please be reminded that more than one approach might coexist in the same example. The followings are the frequently used approaches I observed.

**Use of target language.** First of all, as the teacher contended in her interview, the teaching of culture was primarily conducted in the target language, Mandarin Chinese. She articulated her support for the use of target language:

很多老师拿出来的 PowerPoint 都是英文的，我觉得那样给学生看是没有用的，文化是可以中文来教的，可以用 target language 教，只是说老师你自己需要费很大的心思去设计各个活动[A lot of PowerPoint teachers presented are in English. I think that showing students those slides is useless. Culture can be taught in Chinese. It can be taught in the target language. Teachers just need to rack their brains to design all the activities.]

In accordance with her teaching philosophy, Ms. Liu constantly reminded the students not to speak English in her Chinese class. For instance, there was one time when she asked a student to explain 尊重[respect] in Chinese, the student replied that he was still “fishing for the word.” Ms. Liu immediately told him, “马修！英文再见！（全班笑）把你的英文留给你的英文老师，中文老师你跟我说中文！” [Mathew! Goodbye English! (the whole class laughing) Leave your English to your English teacher. Speak Chinese to your Chinese teacher!] When playing games, the teacher warned students, “诶中文中文...我聽到英文你這個就沒有分”[Hey, Chinese Chinese...If I hear you speaking English, you lose points for this part. ]

Sometimes, students experienced difficulties expressing their perspectives in Mandarin only. Ms. Liu still stopped them from using English. For example, after film watching, the teacher encouraged students to speak out their comments about the character's decision:

Teacher: 你说说给你的感觉[Speak out your feelings.]

Student: 她很自私...[She is very selfish.]

Teacher: 等一下，为什麼你觉得她很自私？说！[Wait, why do you think she is very selfish? Say it!]

Student: 她的爸爸妈妈给她很多的 resources...[Her parents gave her plenty of resources...]

Teacher: 阿不不不要变成英文![Argh, no no no! Don't switch to English!]

**Cultural information.** In addition to encouragement of target language use, Ms. Liu provided a great amount of cultural information with her class. Since the topic being learned centered on education, the teacher shared with the students plethora of information about the educational system in China, including College English Test (CET) and China's national college entrance exam, *Gaokao*.

高考叫三加二的考试...在高中的时候中国文科和理科要分开的，...我学文科，那麼三科我要考英文，我要考语文就是说中文，我要考数学，三，然後因为我是文科的，我要加考政治，...然後我还要加考历史...然後如果是理科的学生那麼他要考中文，他要考数学，他要考英文，这是三 must do,对吧，然後如果他是理科的他考什麼？物理还有化学对吧？...是啊，所以都叫三加二的考试，一门考试的总分是一百五十分，所以你的满分是七百五，绝对不会有 人考七百五 OK?!那个太难了![ Gaokao (China's national college entrance exam) is called the three plus two exam... In China liberal arts and science are separated at high schools... I studied liberal arts at high school. Then the three exam subjects I needed to take were English, Language and Literacy, namely Chinese, and Math. THREE. Because I studied liberal arts, I had to take Politics as well as History...If there's a student of sciences, then he has to do Chinese, Math, and

English. These are the three must do, right? Then what else does he need to be tested as a student of sciences? Physics and Chemistry, right? ...Yeah, so both are called the three plus two exams. The full score for each subject is 150, so your total full score would be 750. No one gets 750. That's too hard!]

To help the American learners better understand how Chinese high school students prepare *Gaokao*, Ms. Liu contacted her peer teaching in an average high school in China to obtain a typical high school schedule. She reported that the school starts at 7:10am and ends at 5:45pm for freshmen. Tutoring time begins from 5:45pm to 6:15pm for freshmen and 7:15pm for sophomores. As for the third graders preparing for the college entrance exam, they stay at school till 8:15pm. Every day students may spend up to 13 hours at the school, which does not include three and half hours they spend on completing daily homework and the extra weekend assignment package. Upon hearing the busy schedule, a student asked “怎麼有生活？”[How could you have a life?] The teacher replied, “你上了高三就没有生活啦！这是中国的 motto,高中没有生活，学习”[You don't have a life when you attend the senior grade at high school! This is a Chinese motto. No life at high school, just to learn.]

Connected with the topic of *Gaokao*, Ms. Liu shared how Chinese students applied for a university. For example:

中国有很多 tricky 的 part,如果你考得好，但是你大学没有申请好，你真的没有大学要你，...大家很多人觉得不公平，因为你到了那个分，比如说，我现在在我前面我有三个 choice 对不对？我选了南开大学，我选了清华大学，那麼清华没有要你，那麼南开也不会要你，它会觉得嘿你报了清华第一个，你

写了你的 **priority**,就说你第一个你觉得清华比我们要好,那麼清华不要你对不起我也不要你, ...他不高兴,他不要你,他觉得诶你怎麼没把南开写到你第一个。...你没有去到你想去的大学,你 **appeal** 都没有用,在中国这些 **appeal** 是没有用的,他不要你就是 **turn down**,中国没有什麼我们错了,我们要你,没有这样的 **policy**,基本上没有。[China has many tricky parts (about college application). If you did great on the exam but you did not do well on college application, then definitely no university wants you...A lot of people think this is unfair because you meet the cutting point. For example, I now have three choices in front of me, right? I chose Nankai University and Tsinghua University. If Tsinghua doesn't want you, Nankai won't take you in either. They think that you put Tsinghua as your first choice. You wrote your priority, which means first of all you considered Tsinghua better than us. Then if Tsinghua doesn't want you, sorry we don't want you either. They were unhappy. They wouldn't take you. They think how come you didn't put Nankai as your first choice... (That way) you couldn't make it to the ideal university. It is useless to appeal. In China, these appeals do not work. They just turn down if they don't want you. In China there's nothing like we were wrong. We want you (now). No this kind of policy, basically no.]

With regards to Tsinghua University, one day Ms. Liu was excited to announce a new track she read online for entering this well-known university. This unverified news said that regardless of your grades, you can enter Tsinghua if you have a U.S. passport and pass Level Five of Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK, Chinese Proficiency Test). She strongly encouraged students to apply given the cheap tuition in China. “妳四年在中国

的大学，嗯！我觉得如果去清华的话，...应该和美国的差不多一年多的学费就够了，吃和住都够了！” [You spend four years in a Chinese university. Hmm, I think if you go to Tsinghua, ...the total tuition fee should be the same as how much you pay for one year of study in an American university. That’s enough, enough for dining and accommodation!] To further impress her students, the teacher shared the latest world university ranking from USNEWS and proudly announced that Tsinghua ranked 57<sup>th</sup> among top 100 world universities, excelling Singaporean education that is well-known for prestigious universities.

**Cultural comparison.** As Ms. Liu passed a wealth of cultural information to her students, she also created numerous opportunities for students to compare American culture with Chinese culture. For example, she divided students into different groups and had them compare the most popular majors in China and the United States. The class also compared the acceptance rate of Harvard and Tsinghua in addition to how to be admitted to the top universities in China and the United States. Compared with American students who can apply as many universities as they like, Chinese students can only apply for three universities and have no help from the legacy policy. However, both the teacher and the students agreed that having rich parents help to gain admission. Ms. Liu mentioned, “中国的孩子一定会说喔，只要我爸爸是谁，然後我家里有很多钱，我就可以去好的大学” [Chinese kids would definitely say that if my father is who and who and my family have lots of money, then I can go to a good university.] Though being surprised, students shared that if a student’s father could donate a library, the American student could go to a top university for sure too.



Sometimes the students and the teacher disagreed with each other about their observations:

你们告诉我是不是在美国也是这样，在中国上过大学...你要有大学的 degree...然後会用电脑，...第三个你会说外语，这三个可以帮助你怎麽样？

诶，找到一份好工作...不是 *guarantee*，但是一定有好处。这是在中国，在美国呢？你们觉得对吗？（学生不太认同）嗯不是可以说话，嗯外语。诶，怎麽会不是呢？我觉得在美国要是一份工作，这不一定是中文对不对，你可以说我还会说西班牙文，这个没有好处？...*因为很多人只说英文在美国*。...

但是这不是说你要是会一门外语会有好处呢？应该是，对不对？可能他不是

一个 *requirement*,可是在中国你去找一份好的工作，他就一定可能会问你会英文吗？这是最基本的。[You guys tell me if it's the same case in the United States. In China you went to college... You have a college degree, computer skills, and the third one, you can speak a foreign language. All these three can help you what? Uh-huh, find a good job... This is not guaranteed but definitely beneficial. This is the case with China. How about the U.S.? You think so? (*Students showed disagreement.*) Well, *not being able to speak, um, a foreign language.* (The teacher) why not? I think in the U.S. if you want to find a job...this is not necessarily Chinese. You may say that I can also speak Spanish. Doesn't that do you any good? ...*Because many people only speak English in the United States...*

(The teacher) But this does not mean that you benefit from speaking a foreign language? Should be, right? Maybe it is not a requirement, but in China if you go

to apply for a good job, he will surely ask if you can speak English? This is the basic (requirement).]

Moreover, students praised that American education is full of freedom and choices while the teacher complained that American education offers too many choices which could be quite troublesome. Students also differed from the teacher in that they enjoyed class discussion time, whereas the teacher personally disagreed that discussion is an effective way to develop rigorous learning.

Apart from explicit comparison, implicit comparison was also carried on between the instructor and the learners. Although the teacher did not ask students to openly compare how language use reflected cultural differences, she hinted that cultural practices could be dissimilar in her teaching linguistic differences between English and Chinese. When teaching the phrase 恐怕[be afraid that], Ms. Liu reminded students of the polite connotation implied and produced an example sentence.

Teacher: I'm afraid maybe I cannot fall in love with you. 我恐怕，我恐怕不可以，不会爱上你。

Student: 为什么不说“我不喜欢你，再见！”？（其他学生）wow!

Teacher: 你上了四年的中文了，还在那儿跟她说我不喜欢你再见吧！你这个学的哎唷！中文一都这样，「我不喜欢你」。中文二「我觉得你很好，我不喜欢你...」，中文三「你是一个非常...」

Student: 怎么说你 disgust 我？... like 你很 gross!

Teacher: 哎哟喂，... See 所以电视，你看中文电视看得太少了，...我可能恐怕没有办法爱上你，这个 line 听起来好多了，而不是你刚那一句「我不喜欢你」！

[Teacher: I'm afraid that maybe I cannot fall in love with you. I'm afraid, I'm afraid that, I can't fall in love with you.

Student: Why not say "I don't like you, bye bye!"? (other students: wow!)

Teacher: You have been learning Chinese for four years! Still you said to her "I don't like you! Bye!" Oh my, your learning is...Chinese level one students are like this, "I don't like you." Chinese level two students, "I think you are pretty good but I don't like you..." Chinese level three students say "You are a very..."

Student: How do you say "You disgust me"? ...like you are gross!

Teacher: Oh my goodness! See, so TV, you watch too few Chinese TV programs...I'm afraid that maybe I cannot fall in love with you. This line sounds much better, not the sentence "I don't like you!"]

Although here students were not directly asked to compare the ways to turn down people, they were led to reflect how different these cultures were in terms of politeness and refusal.

Another example of comparison derived from a speech Ms. Liu presented to her students through a Chinese TV show. In this speech a Chinese college student promoted her perspective about filial piety. Like the speaker, the teacher used to consider being a good child means giving her parents a handsome amount of money, treating them to nice restaurants, and purchasing a big house for them. She then questioned students about their ideas of being a good son or daughter. Students became silent and expressed that

they had not thought about the question. One student mentioned, “在美国很多的父母说如果你是高兴我是高兴” [In the United States, many parents say that if you are happy, I am happy.] (other students nodded.) The teacher looked shocked and told the class “中国父母和美国父母真的不太一样，中国父母其实是很少去说我高兴或者我不高兴，真的没有” [Chinese parents are quite different from American ones. Actually Chinese parents seldom say I’m happy or unhappy. They really don’t.] By saying so, the teacher hinted that Chinese parents had a different way to express their feelings and emotions from American parents. The comparison also showcased that the idea of filial piety was perceived differently in China and in the United States.

**Cultural values.** Cultural values were embedded in the teaching of various topics. In regard to the topic of college life and dormitory, students were startled to see the small size of the Chinese dormitory and hear the random arrangement of roommates. For these American students, it sounded incredible to share personal space with stranger roommates who might have opposite life styles from you. It was even shocking for everyone to take shower in a public bathroom with a shower card that allows only 15 minutes of hot water, though the teacher explained that water is precious in China.

Money is another important value hidden in a series of discussion on the topic of major selection. Speaking of unpopular majors in the United States, Ms. Liu commented History major, “诶历史对吧？！这种希腊的古典文学对吧？希腊古典文学，那个是要真的是很喜欢才可以做这个，没工作！做什么工作呢？对吧？！学完了去哪里工作呢？” [History, right?! The kind of Greek classic literature, right? Ancient Greek Literature, you have to really love it so you can do it. No jobs! What jobs can you do,

right? Where can you work after learning?] The following is a debate between the teacher and the students:

Teacher: 哎呀你们班没有想学金融的呀？有钱哪！[Well, no one wants to study Finance in your class? Lots of money!]

Student: 我不知道，没有意思！有钱但是没有意思！[I don't know. Boring!

Lots of money but boring!]

Teacher: 没有意思？！怎麼吃饭？没有意思？！...虽然没有意思但是可以很快的找到工作，对不对？[Boring?! How could you eat?! Boring?!...It might be boring but you can find a job really soon, right?]

Likewise, the teacher encouraged students to choose pharmaceuticals over archaeology because the former makes more money. Students argued that they preferred selecting a major they were interested. However, the teacher kept reminding them to choose a major that brings a fortune is far more important than personal interests.

Chinese parents' value on education was also foregrounded in the class. In a movie students watched in the Friday class, 谁的青春不迷茫[Yesterday Once More], the female character's mother bought her daughter an oxygen machine to help her gain extra energy to prepare for *Gaokao* [college entrance exam]. Students were perplexed when seeing the scene. Nevertheless, Teacher explained this was a common practice in China. Parents bought all kinds of products like fish oil and melatonin to help their children perform well on the exam. In her words, “这是文化的不一样，可是对我们来说不会很奇怪。爸爸妈妈就是这样，因为认为教育还有考试，去上好的大学都是很重要的，所以给孩子买所有的东西” [This is cultural difference but not weird for us. Parents are

like this because they think that education, exams, and going to a good college are extremely important. So they buy all the good stuff for their children.]

The value of education was also reflected on the teacher's attitude towards students' learning. One day a Jewish student requested a day off. Ms. Liu was unhappy:

一年有很多的犹太的节日，以後你可以庆祝中国的节日吗？observe 中国节日...中国的节日在美国就是每天来中文课！所以没有，没有犹太的节日了！不来？又不来了！这里这里，这么多犹太节日！[There are so many Jewish holidays. Can you celebrate Chinese holidays afterwards? Observe Chinese holidays...Chinese holidays in the United States means coming to your Chinese class every day! So no more, no more Jewish holidays! Not coming? Not coming again! Here here, too many Jewish holidays!]

Occasionally the teacher specified a Chinese value openly. Once she told the students “比较，中国人非常喜欢用比较，非常喜欢”[Comparison. Chinese people love to compare very much.] She indicated that comparison is part of Chinese culture, which usually happens among parents comparing how smart their children are.

There were moments Ms. Liu conveyed a Chinese value in conflict with the American's. For instance, aforementioned Chinese speaker at the TV speech program was shocked when seeing her father crying. The teacher commented “爸爸和妈妈是不一样的对不对？妈妈可以哭，但是爸爸，这个 role,...因为是男人，男人，这就是我常常教给我小孩的，不准哭...眼泪收回去！因为我要教会他男人和女人不一样”[Dad is different from Mom, right? Mom can cry but not Dad. This role, ...because he is a man, a man. This is what I often taught my kids. Stop crying...hold your tears back! I

wanted to teach him men and women are different.] Students questioned, “喔老师你应该这个 gender 没有问题对不对？男人也可以哭”[Oh laoshi (teacher), you don't have this gender issue, right? Men can cry too!] Still the teacher disagreed with the students' perspective.

**Cultural change.** Cultural change is what Ms. Liu aware of in her teaching of culture. As she emphasized during the interview the importance of introducing the most recent Chinese culture to her American students, the instructor constantly informed students of the contemporary practices in modern China. Here are few examples. First of all, during a discussion on dormitory culture, the teacher reported that nowadays some top universities in China started co-ed dorm rooms, which was forbidden before. When showing a movie in class, she sometimes reminded students the Chinese culture they saw from the movie might not be the same as what goes on in contemporary China. Take commodity price for example:

他吃了一个中国的那个油条，那个早餐可能一毛钱，...一毛钱现在没有了，应该一块钱[He ate a Chinese donut. That kind of breakfast might cost one cent...well, not one cent for now. should be a dollar.]

The change of perspectives as time moved on was also included in the teacher's teaching of cultural change. She lamented:

现在观点真多，你知道说什麼说什麼喔我是爱你的可是我们不适合婚姻，这什麼话！这以前在中国七零年喔 come on 还有这样的人说话的，我们男和女认识了，男女朋友，下一个 step 就结婚啦!这个现在哇九零後会这样说：我们可以是好朋友，我们可以是有点儿或者是生活在一起，但是我们不适合婚

姻。Wow, oh, hmm (学生笑) 所以你看大家的观点不一样了，...我是七零後的，對於我来说哇，天哪，什麼意思?!而且九零後零零後，大家都很喜欢叫什麼? 试婚，试一试 wow!我们住在一起先生活 maybe 一年，然後觉得 not work out,再见，你搬出去我也搬出去，wow,对不对?! 所以你看有一些观点喔，这个有时我也在问自己，这个是说社会进步了呢还是退步了呢?

[Now there are so many perspectives. You know, some people say that well I love you but we are not fit for marriage. What kind of talk is that! If this happened in China before 1970, come on, who said that like this! We are male and female knowing each other, boyfriend and girlfriend. Next step goes to marriage! Now people born after 1990 would say so, "We could be good friends. We could be kind of, or living together but we wouldn't fit for marriage." Wow, oh, hmm. (students laughing) So you see, people's perspectives changed. I was born in 1970s. To me, wow, oh my goodness, what does that mean?! Besides, after year 1990 and 2000, people enjoy what? Trial marriage, give it a try, wow! We live together first for maybe one year and then we do not work out. Bye! You move out and I move out too, wow, right? So you see there are several perspectives. Sometimes I'm questioning myself about this. Does it mean the society is moving forward or backward?]

However, there were more times Ms. Liu focused mainly on the language change in modern China. Instead of teaching academic language, she was hoping to teach students more colloquial terms and recent language use so the students can survive if they visit China. To be more specific, students may learn 你是哪国人? [Which country are you from?] from the textbook and become speechless when hearing 哪来的? [Where



from?] at the Chinese customs. She supported giving students slangs like 哇赛[holy cow!], 给力[give power, beef up], and 林来疯[Linsanity] in reflective of contemporary Chinese culture.

**Culture as context.** Relevant to the instructor's emphasis on culture and language change, the teaching of culture, though present in the class, served as mere context of language teaching. For instance, Ms. Liu briefly introduced the ancient Chinese love story 梁山伯与祝英台 *Liangzhu* [Butterfly Lovers] just in order to teach the phrase 同窗好友 [schoolmates and friends]. She also talked about the contemporary karaoke culture in China to simply help students understand the term 通宵[stay up all night]. Moreover, since the phrase 成田分手[Narita Rikon, Narita Divorces] is gaining popularity in China, the teacher introduced Japanese cultural background of the term along with the disparate attitudes towards marriage between the generations born before and after 1990 in China.

Sometimes the teaching of culture served not only as context but also preparation for tests. A two-minute Thanksgiving presentation was labeled as a practice for the future cultural presentation of AP Examination. A discussion about racist was also encouraged based on its relevance to the test. “我很高兴大家可以讨论，...大家可以有自己的意见，但是你要用中文来说，因为这个也有一年考到...种族歧视 racist, 所以你看很难的话题对不对？...他刚好考到这个” [I'm happy that everyone can discuss...you may have your own opinion, but you need to say it in Chinese because this topic was tested one year...(the topic of) racist. You see, very difficult topic right? ...They just tested it.] Another interview project was also test oriented as students were required to use specific

words and grammatical patterns to compare popular college majors in China and the United States.

**Elaborated discussion.** Elaborated discussion normally took place on Fridays. Every Friday one of the students would give a short report on a current event followed by one or two discussion questions. As the observation time ran from mid-September to early December, this weekly student news presentation circled around the 2016 presidential election in the United States:

Teacher: 那麼大家星期一都看了他们两个人的这个争论辩论...你看了你觉得怎么样? 喜欢吗? [So Monday you all watched these two people's debate...What do you think about it? You like it?]

Student A: 非常好看...[Very interesting...]

Student B: 我看过, 我生病了! (大家笑) [I watched and got sick! (the class laughing)]

Teacher: 你看完了你生病了?! 什麼意思? [You watched and then you got sick? What did you mean?]

Student B: 因为他们都是 media circus, 不喜欢! [Because they are both media circus, don't like that!]

Teacher: 没有谈到很多就是能够以後为美国做什麼对不对? Trump 就在说 Hillary 有什麼不好, 我觉得有点像, 比较有点像 fight? 不知道, 有点觉得不知道要怎麼投票...[Nothing much about what they could do for the United States in the future, right? Trump was just saying how awful Hillary was. I feel like it's bit more like a fight? I don't know. I don't know how to vote...]

The next week a student asked the class what impacts might occur if the Chinese government did not ban the showing of the American presidential debates. The class had no idea so the teacher supplemented the Chinese government's concern about showing the public too much freedom. Later on, the conversation went to a student's question why FBI continued investigating Hillary's emails. As students started to voice dissenting viewpoints, the teacher terminated the conversation.

Similarly, after the presidential election, the current event presentation focused on protests. The student presenter brought out the discussion on the advantages of going for protests without attending school. When students were engaged in a heated discussion about the purpose of the protests and the kind of person Donald Trump is, the teacher again forced students to end the conversation.

**Introduction of idioms.** Occasionally the four character idioms showed up in Ms. Liu's teaching. For instance, when talking about 家长[head of the family], she also taught the idiom 长兄如父[Eldest brother is like father]:

你知道如果父母过世了，那麼这个在中国，知道吗？中国有一句 motto 叫做长兄为父，意思是如果在家里你有哥哥，...最长的那个哥哥，他在家里的职责就像父亲一样，所以你一定要听他的，长兄如父，就像父亲[You know if parents pass away, then this in China, you know? There is a Chinese motto called "Eldest brother is like father." His responsibilities at home are like the father's, so you have to listen to him. Eldest brother is like father, just like your father.]

Nevertheless, the teacher introduced proverbs like 在家靠父母，出门靠朋友[At home one depends on his parents; abroad, he needs the help of his friends.], 金窝银窝不

如自己的狗窝[There is no place like home], and a slang like 舒服让人死！[Comfort kills you!].

**Interconnectivity.** In addition to the textbook and handouts, Ms. Liu used other forms of media to bring students all kinds of perspectives related to her teaching topics. She once played a popular Chinese talk show 世界青年说[Bright World] in her class. Another Chinese TV program 超级演说家[Super Speaker] was used to teach students how to structure a formal speech in Mandarin. Documentary 两百万分钟[Two Million Minutes] showed students the different educational systems in the United States, China, and India.

### Highlighted Elements

**Surface culture.** A large portion of the teaching highlighted surface culture inclusive of language, food, celebrations, literature, dress, visual arts, crafts, games, and music. In terms of linguistic knowledge, Ms. Liu helped students better understand Chinese characters “我告诉大家中文的汉字百分之九十都是形声字...一部份是他的形旁，意思是 indicate 他的意思” [Let me tell you. 90 percent of Chinese characters are pictophonetic characters... A part of it represents its shape, which indicates its meaning.] When students complained about learning to write these complicated Chinese characters, she told them the fact that they only need to master 500 Chinese words in order to carry daily conversation.

Holidays and celebrations were recurring topics in the class. When it came to Halloween, the teacher gave away candies and taught students how to say “Trick or Treat” in Chinese. As for Thanksgiving, she first shared how her family celebrated the holiday

and then required students give a speech on a person they were thankful of. The teacher did not miss out Chinese holidays. On October third, she asked students:

Teacher:你们知道现在是什麼节日吗？在中国？[Do you know holiday is it now? In China?]

Student:中国人的节日[Chinese people's holiday]

Teacher: Yeah,中国的节日当然，什麼节日？是一个什麼节日呢？大家都不知道？说过很多次了！忘了？！想一想...诶中国是七天假期！七天！不上班不上课，七天...十月一日，哎啊，你们学了四年，这是第四年中文，不知道？中国的国庆！国庆节！像美国的七月四号，十月一号，国庆是十月一号，但是中国不叫这个，中国叫 National Day,国庆，国家的节日[Yeah, Chinese holiday, of course, which holiday? What kind of holiday? You don't know? We talked about this many times! You forgot it?! Think about it...People are having seven days off in China! Seven days! No work and class for seven days...October the first. Ah, you have been learning for four years. This is the fourth year of Chinese. You don't know? Chinese National Day! National Day! It's like July Fourth of the United States. October First. National Day is October First. But in China we don't call it this (Independence Day). It's called National Day in China. National celebration, national holiday.]

Food was also a recurring theme in the teacher's teaching of culture. Speaking of Szechuan restaurants and authentic Chinese food, Ms. Liu introduced:

那麼地道的中餐我自己觉得在我们的湾区其实有一些真的很地道的中餐，比如说如果你喜欢广东菜，粤菜对不对？粤菜，你要想吃到比较地道的粤菜你

可以去吃一些饮茶，不错的，饮茶，那麼想吃地道的北方菜可能在南湾要多一点儿，南湾，比如说像 Fremont, San Jose 那边多一些地道的北方菜，因为北方人多一点儿，...去旧金山也可以，旧金山也有好吃的地道的北方菜，有人说喜欢吃地道的面，那山西的面馆儿[So authentic Chinese food, I

personally think there are some really authentic Chinese food in the Bay Area. For example, if you like Cantonese food, right? Cantonese food. If you want to eat more authentic Cantonese food, you can go to eat some dim sum. Dim sum is not bad. What if you want to eat authentic Northern dishes? You may find more in the South Bay because there are a bit more Northern people...Going to San Francisco is fine. San Francisco also has tasty and authentic Northern dishes. Some people like to eat authentic noodles, then try Shanxi noodle shops.]

With respect to dress, Ms. Liu gave students guidance on how to dress up for a formal speech. She sometimes commented on students' outfit when they dressed up for the school's activities like Tropical Day or Pajama Day. The teacher even taught the students how to make crafts of traditional Chinese clothing.

At the beginning of the observation, the class was learning to sing 没时间[No Time]. This was one of the many songs they learned in the class, such as 隐形的翅膀 [Invisible Wing] and 老鼠爱大米[Mouse Love Rice]. In students' interviews, singing songs is one of the most common cultural activities they experienced in this class.

In November, the class went for a one-day field trip to a nearby college to join its Chinese Cultural Day event. There students practiced calligraphy, learned Chinese knot, kicked the shuttlecock, and even tasted Szechuan food cooked by Chinese chefs on site.

**Deep culture.** There was still a large part of culture teaching involving deep culture like concept of time, courtesy, tempo of work, rules of conduct, courtship practices, concept of food, patterns of handling emotions, ideals of childrearing, patterns of group decision-making, nature of friendships, attitudes towards dependents, attitudes towards elders, roles in relation to class, occupation, and kinship. Some of the elements were taught directly while others were presented in subtle ways. Given the limited scope of the paper, the following were some of the typical examples.

Concept of time was a noticeable theme as it emerged in almost every class meeting and related to tempo of work. To be more specific, the teacher held a different concept of time and tempo of work from her students. Even though in the interview the teacher asserted that time was never an issue in her class, she tended to say phrases like 没时间[no time] or 快点儿[hurry up] multiple times in one session, not to mention she taught students to sing a song called 没时间[no time]. Once she jokingly expressed, “我在想我最爱说的话就是快点儿！”[I was thinking that my favorite pet phrase is “Hurry Up!”] She reinforced the importance of time in language teaching. “你要知道中文的那个时间是 priority 对不对？大家，你想一想时间很重要对吧？所以时间都要在前面，都要在前面”[You need to know that time is priority in Chinese, right? Everyone, think about it. Time is important, correct? So, always put time in the front, always in the front.]

Courtesy was highly valued in the class. As the class followed right after lunch time, Ms. Liu often stopped students from eating lunch despite students' complaint. Besides no eating in class, the teacher demanded the students not to use cell phones, sleep, chat, drink beverage, talk back, leave early, and play with personal stuff like hats or shoes. The teacher insisted that all students sit upright, face the whiteboard, and pay undivided

attention to the class. She scolded a student for going to the restroom without asking her permission. Seeing students wearing pajamas to the class in celebration the school's dress week, she also expressed her disapproval.

In addition to introducing knowledge about Chinese food, Ms. Liu differed from her students in the concept of food. Here is an example about their debate on what could be called good food:

Teacher: 我问大家你觉得 panda express 快熊猫，熊猫快餐是真的中餐吗？

[Let me ask you guys. Do you think Panda Express, Panda fast food is real Chinese food?]

Student: 不[Nope]

Teacher: 哎唷，非常的不地道，对不对？非常的不地道的那是！[Ah, very unauthentic, right? That is very unauthentic!]

Student: 你可以是不地道的饭，可是好吃？like orange chicken! (大家笑)  
orange chicken,老师，你的 orange chicken [That could be unauthentic food but tasty? Like orange chicken (everyone laughing), orange chicken, teacher, your orange chicken.]

Teacher: 哎唷（老师一脸嫌恶状，学生大笑），这这这真的不喜欢吃，那个甜味，因为这是美国的中餐。那个中餐你喜欢？哎呀，太美式的中餐！...就是不喜欢那个 orange chicken![Yuck! (teacher looked annoyed and students laughing) This, this, I really don't like this. The sweetness, because this is Americanized Chinese food. You like that kind of Chinese food? Oh my, too Americanized Chinese food! ... I just don't like that orange chicken!]



Student: 像 burrito 不是真的墨西哥饭，但是太好吃！[It's just like burrito.

That's not real Mexican food, but extremely tasty!]

Ideals of childrearing was another remarkable topic. Ms. Liu shared an informal survey she did with students attending a local weekend Chinese school and concluded, “每一个亚洲的父母都希望小孩以后有两个选择，第一个当医生，第二个当律师” [Every Asian parent wants their kids to have two choices in the future. One is to become a doctor, and the other is to be a lawyer.] She then commented that learning music is a significant part of American education. She said, “乐器因为我觉得这个是美国孩子的一个特点，一个和别的孩子不一样，在美国很多孩子都是要学一种乐器，对不对？从几年级我不知道，都是要会一点儿”[Musical instrument, I think this (learning some musical instrument) is characteristic of American children. A point different from other kids. In the United States many children have to learn a kind of musical instrument, right? I don't know from which grade but you have to know a little bit.] Students were asked if they played the piano or any other type of instrument.

Connected with the topic, a discussion on parents' attitudes of childrearing began as the teacher taught the Chinese character,管[to control, to manage]. Ms. Liu questioned in what aspects the students' parents wanted to control them. Students replied that their parents usually controlled what they eat and sometimes what classes to take. The teacher told the class an anecdote about a Chinese girl visiting her friend for the first time. The mother of the girl's friend asked this Chinese girl how she scored on SAT and then told her not to associate with her daughter. The class was surprised and expressed that their parents never controlled what type of friends they should associate with and not even which college they should apply for. It was then the teacher's turn to be surprised. She

did not believe the students' American parents did not care about which college their children should attend since she took care of all things for her children.

In the teacher's opinion, taking care of everything for their children was exactly what typical Chinese parents did, especially on the topic of college major selection. She regarded this as a group decision in Chinese families. Children have to reach a mutual agreement with their parents about what they want to major in the university. As it was time for college application, Ms. Liu invited students to share any conflicts in their families about selecting a major. Most students shrugged. One student replied, "I mean 他们不可以决定我[They can't decide for me]...They don't check up my box." Again, Ms. Liu was astonished by American parents' free style of childrearing.

The different likelihood for group decision making was also reflected in the teacher's plan for a field trip. Although the teacher stressed the trip would be considered a class activity and suggested all students join the trip, four students still refused to go even though they might lose participation points. One of them said that he simply did not feel like going. The student argued it was his personal choice not participating while the teacher wanted him to reconsider going as a group member.

Teacher's role was placed at different power ranks in different cultures. Coming from China, Ms. Liu assumed certain authority and expected students' respect for her. When students teased her or kept interrupting her, Ms. Liu became annoyed, "我说一你说二! ...每天上课我是老师好吗?!" [I said one (word, sentence), and you said two (words, sentences)!... I AM the teacher in class every day, all right?!] Sometimes she was pleased to see that no students had questions or complaints about her assignments as they were AP class students, implying they had more knowledge about Chinese classroom

culture. That said, she was aware of the different power relationship between students and teachers in the United States. Occasionally she joked, “我不能跟你吵，我不能跟学生争论，你们是赢家，你赢你赢！我输！”[I can’t argue with you. I can’t fight with students. You are the winner. You won, you won! I lost!]. However, most of time she would have students obey her words.

Ms. Liu taught students to obey not only teachers but also parents. One student was curious if the teacher’s child called her by name. The teacher replied, “他叫我名字吗？打！（学生笑）当然要打！他可以叫妈妈名字吗？妈妈就是「妈妈」！”[Does he call my name? Spank! (students laughing) Of course you spank him! Can he call his mother by name? Mom is *Mom*!] The hierarchical forms of address in Chinese families conveyed here echoed the teaching of kinship terminology later. Ms. Liu spent almost entire session to help students review the complicated kinship system in China. The class learned terms of address like 嫂子[brother’s wife]，侄子[nephew on father’s side]，外甥[nephew on mother’s side]，婶婶[wife of father’s younger brother]，and 伯父[father’s older brother]. Students complained the system was too complicated and questioned why not just call them *friend* in general, especially in a modern society where transgender marriages exist. Such a response made the teacher dumbfounded.

### **Ignored Elements**

Although many cultural elements were included in this Advanced Placement Chinese course, the class still left out a large part of deep culture. The teacher did not touch on topics like personal space, notions of leadership, social interaction rate, theory of disease, definition of insanity, concept of past and future, definition of obscenity, notions of adolescence, concept of cleanliness, problem-solving, concept of ‘self’,

intolerance of physical pain, preference of competition or cooperation, relationships to animals, and concept of beauty.

The student interview results also indicated several areas that students were interested in yet had not been fully explored in the class, namely religions, politics, roles of women, and pop culture. Elements of culture with a big C like history, fine arts, and literature were also rarely paid close attention. Moreover, the teacher did not teach cultural highlights in the textbook since she was against teaching culture through English texts:

文化教学基本上，因为我就觉得这些课本现在基本上所讨论的文化点一般都用英文来说出来的，这是我自己其实很感兴趣的，就是说怎麼能够在文化上面也用这个 target language 给他们去渗透...并不是说做不到的[Basically the teaching of culture, I feel like these cultural points now discussed in the textbook are generally expressed in English. This is what I am personally very interested. That is to say how can we use target language to instill cultural aspects...this is not impossible.]

It was a pity that Ms. Liu did not put much focus on introducing diversity within Chinese culture. As China is a big country composed of many provinces and numerous different ethnicities, the Chinese society is by no means a singular cultural society. Nevertheless, the teacher seemed to present only the dominant Chinese culture. For example, the cultural differences between northern part of China and the southern part of China were not highlighted in the class.

Above all, the teaching of culture did not demonstrate discursive construction of culture (Kubota, 2004). Friday current event report could have been a perfect timing for

extended discussion on existing ideologies or struggles for power. However, the teacher did not take advantage of the student presentation and develop the class activity into discursive construction of culture.

In short, the second research question explored the teacher's general approaches to the teaching of culture. Research findings showed that culture was mainly taught in the target language, Mandarin Chinese. Through the approaches of cultural information, cultural comparison, cultural values, cultural change, culture as context, elaborated discussion, introduction of idioms, and interconnectivity, the teacher highlighted cultural elements like celebrations and food in surface culture and courtesy as well as concept of time in deep culture. However, still a great number of cultural topics remain ignored such as religions and politics despite students' interest in these topics.

### **Research Question Three— Rethinking the Pedagogical Practices**

The researcher observed a wide variety of pedagogical practices employed in the class. On one hand, the teaching of cultural values and cultural comparisons indeed helped the learner better understand Chinese perspectives like valuing education that were taught in an explicit way. Cultural change, when being involved with the change of attitudes, also provided students the updated perspectives in the modern Chinese society. Given the aforementioned example, living together before marriage is a practice acceptable for Chinese people born after year 1990 but not for those born in the 1970s. Learning such a cultural change helped American students know more about the changing perspectives towards marriage in China.

On the other hand, the approach of teaching cultural information alone has its limitations in building the connection between cultural products or practices and the

perspectives behind. For example, when teaching how to say *dryer* in Mandarin, Ms. Liu mentioned:

大家知道中国人怎麼烘乾衣服？...把它放在太阳下面，不是把它放在机器里，不是放在机器里，中国人是这样子。每一个国家的文化不一样，...在中国因为是自己家有这个阳台，然後把衣服都晾起来...有的家真的是连里面穿的衣服也会晾在外面（wow!），所以你觉得喔有点儿不好意思，这是一个文化。

[Do you know how the Chinese dry clothes? ... putting them under the sun, not in the machine, not in the machine. The Chinese are like this. Every country has its own culture...In China because you have balconies in your place, you hang up all your clothes. Some families even hang out their underwear (wow! Students were surprised.) So you feel a little bit embarrassed. This is a kind of culture.]

Through this example of cultural information sharing, students learned a common practice in China. However, they might not understand the Chinese perspective about drying clothes under the sun, being that the practice helps save energy and money, or even produce the smell of sun dried clothing the Chinese like.

The sharing of cultural information might even raise a caveat in the formation of cultural stereotypes. For example, when sharing information about colleges in China, Ms. Liu mentioned that teacher's colleges are famous for food service, and that some other Chinese universities are known for pretty female students or the ugliest male students. She wanted students to name American universities with such special nicknames. Another instance came from the teacher's sharing of helpful ways to be admitted in Chinese universities. According to her, if the student has personal connection with core

leaders of the government like 习近平[Xi Jinping], admission to top universities is in the bag. Examples like these may reinforce stereotyped perspectives.

The one-way teaching of cultural knowledge could also generate skewed learning of the perspectives. Although there were several heritage students in the class, Ms. Liu was the only native speaker who grew up and received formal education in China. Since the teacher acted like an authoritative transmitter of cultural knowledge, students tended to accept the China image received in class as true facts. One student interviewee thought that Chinese women had to adopt their husband's last name as seen in a Chinese movie Ms. Liu showed the class. However, the truth is that modern Chinese women rarely keep this old practice. Still other few students admitted that they were not sure if China is the same as they learned in class as they had never been there. The only connection with China they had was through the instructor.

The principle of using only the target language to learn culture may sacrifice golden opportunities to carry on an extended discussion that facilitates learning of Chinese perspectives. For instance, sometimes students appeared intrigued to answer reflection questions after film watching. They wanted to comment the movie characters or question the Chinese way of doing things they felt foreign and hard to understand. However, the limited language competence forced them to switch to English, which was immediately discouraged by the teacher. Failing to quickly transfer their opinions back to Mandarin, students often uttered their frustration in a phrase, 算了[forget it; never mind]. The conversation then ended, and so did the chances to further exchange or learn the perspectives.

Since Chinese classical literature was hardly present in the class, students missed the opportunities to decode practices or products in contemporary China by help of the perspectives derived from the ancient classics. As mentioned earlier, Ms. Liu told students that even in modern China fathers were not supposed to cry because of their roles as men and the strong, which sounded weird to the American learners. Although the teacher once talked about the Chinese folktale 梁山伯与祝英台 *Liangzhu* [Butterfly Lovers], she did not make good use of this classical piece to introduce the Chinese concept of female inferiority. Students were not told that the female character had to dress up as a man in order to go to school because women were forbidden to receive education at that time. If there had been more teaching on how the cultural perspectives evolved from such traditional cultural products, it might have been easier for the learners to understand the reason why certain values like men cannot cry still prevail in contemporary Chinese culture.

Likewise, the teaching practice of culture as context for language teaching might not necessarily involve any learning of Chinese perspectives. When Ms. Liu described a popular practice of singing karaoke overnight among Chinese young people, students learned only the cultural practice without building any links to Chinese perspectives. The teaching of culture for the purpose of testing also pulled students away from exploring cultural perspectives in a comprehensive manner.

In summary, the third research question looked into the role of observed pedagogical practices in helping the learner connect cultural products/practices and the cultural perspectives. The approaches of cultural values and cultural comparisons were observed to offer positive impact on building the connection, whereas the teaching of



cultural information, especially through the sole transmitter, might not necessarily lead to comprehensive understanding of the perspectives. Advocacy of the target language, poor use of classics, and focus on culture as context all demonstrated drawbacks for exploring cultural perspectives in the Chinese-speaking world.

#### **Research Question Four— Development of Cultural Awareness**

The fourth research question served to find out students' development of cultural awareness of their own. Student interview data constituted the answer to the final research question. The researcher asked interview questions concerning whether students noticed any similarities or differences between Chinese culture and their own ethnic cultures. If the interviewees affirmed that after taking the course they had learned more about not only Chinese culture but also their own ethnic cultures, I then invited them to share the ways they came to know more about their own cultures. Lastly, all the interviewees were requested to talk about the ways they personally thought might be helpful for them to further reflect upon their own cultures.

It is worth stating that the participant students had a difficult time answering the interview questions, though they were provided the chance to preview the questions. They all agreed that the course revealed to them many cultural differences and similarities. However, they had a hard time giving the researcher concrete examples. Therefore, it took me much time and efforts to probe the answers. The following are the interviewee's responses. I separated the responses into two groups in order to help the reader discern the differences between the heritage students and non-heritage students.

### Non-Heritage Students

**Wendy.** I interviewed five non-heritage students, Wendy, Sarah, Daisy, Allen, and Connie. Responding my interview questions, Wendy first gave me few examples of cultural differences she observed from the class, “Oh, when she’s (the teacher) talking about, oh American, like too much freedom of speech (laughing), (pondering) yeah like how there is no word for ‘bless you.’ You don’t say anything when someone sneezes (laughing).” She later told me that watching movies helped her better understand both Chinese culture and American culture. Movies based on China’s national college entrance exam, *Gaokao*, showed her how different educational systems work in China and the United States. Above all, she grew a profound understanding of the relationship with the authority figure in China and realized that American student-teacher relationship was characteristic of less politics.

In addition to in-class activities like film watching, Wendy discovered several cultural differences on a class trip to Taiwan. She was surprised to see numerous skin-lightening products advertised in most of the convenience stores she went into. She was even shocked to hear a Taiwanese commenting her sitting with her African American friend, “Ah, Black and White next to each other! Very good!”

**Sarah.** Unlike Wendy, Sarah could not give specific examples about cultural differences, though she was sure that differences exist in terms of holidays, beliefs, customs, and food between Chinese culture and her own culture. In regard to similarities she maintained, “Hmm, there probably are (sounded uncertain). Not that I can think of. I mean there is some commonalities within any cultures in general. I can’t think of anything very specific, but like, I don’t know. A lot of people have similar values even

though they have different ways to communicate them I guess.” For Sarah, the best way to help her further reflect upon her culture is visiting other countries.

**Daisy.** In a similar vein, Daisy had a hard time giving me any concrete examples about cultural similarities and differences she noticed from the course except for the roles of women in China. To the question whether she learned more about not only Chinese culture but also her ethnic culture through the class, Daisy honestly answered, “I feel like I know more about Chinese culture but not so much about my ethnic culture.” In order to increase cultural awareness of her own culture, Daisy considered that spending more time with elder relatives in her family might be helpful.

**Allen.** In response to the same interview questions, Allen considered it helpful when the teacher asked the class if what happened in China was the same case as that in the United States. He liked such a moment of reflection which really forced him to stop and rethink about American or Jewish culture. The moments of reflection brought his attention to similarities between China and the United States. Allen observed, “...America and China, the top two economies like very fast growing...it’s kind of shocking how similar life is...China is much more similar to the U.S. than Japan...there isn’t much like differences between say Shanghai and Beijing versus between New York and LA, or something like that.”

Along with similarities, Allen also noticed cultural differences when Ms. Liu forced the class to pause for a moment and make connections between China and the United States. According to Allen, “And then it’s not like you’re not aware of it. It’s just like commonplace. You don’t think about it. I think that comes up every once in a while... Ms. Liu said you get a lot of shots in China for a lot of things. Here you get kind

of very few shots like vaccines, that kind of it. Again, it's not like I didn't know, I didn't like realize that, I just didn't. You just kind of think about it more and it's memorable too. Now it's like now I realize in America we don't get a lot of shots whereas like China they do, for example. It's not like anything bad. It's just like new, like you see like different. You realize like America, say the United States something the United States practices or they are compared with the rest of the world. You just get like an expanded view like if I, thinking about American practices, it's not, it's no longer, like I just know American practices. Like I see where they are in relation to everything else, like that happens a lot..."

In addition to reflection, Allen regarded personal experience as an important way to know more about culture. He compared culture learning to going to college, "Even though we know about them, it's not like they hit home as much as we still haven't had that experience yet." Hence, personal experience is what Allen values in culture learning.

**Connie.** The Japanese American student, Connie, shared her findings about cultural similarities and dissimilarities. Given her observation, Chinese culture was similar to Japanese culture as they both highlight politeness and etiquettes such as refraining from finishing the last bit of food in the bowl so other people could have it and greeting people in a very structured manner. As for dissimilarities, Connie mentioned that cooking was less efforts in America compared with Japan or China where people had to cook several dishes to go with rice for every meal.

Nevertheless, Connie could not think of any specific examples that evidenced more self-awareness of her Japanese American culture resulting from the AP Chinese course. When asked about any ways that might help her better reflect upon her culture,

Connie focused on the learning of history and politics, especially “the relationship between 中國和別的地方在 Asia, the relationship China has with other places and how China interacts in the world with (other countries)” [the relationship between China and other places in Asia, the relationship China has with other places and how China interacts in the world with (other countries)].

### **Heritage Students**

**Fiona.** Three heritage students volunteered to be interviewed. Fiona was a Hapa student whose mother was from Germany and father an American Born Chinese. Recalling cultural differences and similarities she experienced from taking the course, Fiona argued that music is the shared interest. As for differences, she found that the Mandarin teacher really focused on grades and the importance of doing well in school. She was test-oriented and a lot pushier than American teachers in the same school. In Fiona’s words, “...因為老師希望我們做最好的，別的老師 like 馬馬乎乎” [...because the teacher wanted the best of us. Other teachers are like so-so.] Ms. Liu’s serious attitude motivated Fiona to pursue better academic performance.

In terms of developing cultural awareness, Fiona considered cultural comparison a good way provided that it should not be limited to compare only Chinese culture and American culture. Speaking of another course she took, Chicano Latino Literature, Fiona shared that students of various ethnic backgrounds gathered to learn Spanish culture and history via English. However, she found it less interesting to learn cultural differences in the AP Chinese course as the comparisons mostly happened between the teacher’s native culture, Chinese, and American culture the class was familiar with. Fiona looked forward to learning different cultures other than Chinese and American ones.

**Henry.** Henry was a heritage student born in the United States. Both his parents were born in Beijing, yet his father was raised in Shanghai. Although Henry only attended weekend Chinese school for two years, he spoke Mandarin at home with his grandmother on his father's side. When the grandmother was not around, Henry's parents mostly spoke English to him. In the past few years, Henry had been to China twice to live and study with students at a soccer school during summer time. Despite his exposure to Chinese culture at home, Henry was surprised to learn how different parenting could be in China and the United States. In his opinion, through watching the movies in class and listening to Ms. Liu talk about how she interacted with her children Henry realized his parents were more Americanized and less strict.

However, parenting difference seemed to be one of the very few differences that drew Henry's attention. I asked him if he was shocked to see any differences from film watching, Henry replied, "I don't know if that is shocking cause I think it's kind of experience that when I went to China and I lived with them (students from the soccer school) ... I've seen like that classroom setup and ...like little dreams they have. That's something I saw, I even did it myself in China, so from the movies I didn't think I have seen something shocking."

Although he had known much about Chinese culture before taking Mandarin, Henry desired to enhance his understanding about Chinese culture by means of mastering the reading and writing skills. He would also like to know how to conduct daily practices in Mandarin so that he could better survive during his next stay in China.

**Jeremy.** Another heritage student born in the United States, Jeremy, came from a family with his father speaking Cantonese and his mother and grandmother speaking

Taishan dialect. Different from his non-heritage peer, Jeremy was not surprised at the Chinese culture taught in the class:

我早知道在中国他们的宿舍住很多人，比美国多人...嗯，还有我知道他们高中不一样的，只有高一，高二，高三，还有高三他们有那个高考，一个大的考试，跟 SAT 差不多一样，可是我的同学不知道[I already knew that in China there were many people living in their dormitories, a lot more than those in the United States...Hmm, and I also knew that their high schools are different. They only have first grade, second grade, and third grade in the high school. Also, in the third year of the high school they have *Gaokao* (National College Entrance Examination). A big exam, just like SAT, but my classmates did not know.]

Although Jeremy was aware of the great portion of Chinese culture long ago, he still hoped to learn more about cultural topics like the Cultural Revolution in the history of China, which he had no chances to explore in other courses.

Despite his Chinese background, Jeremy sensed few differences between the Chinese culture he learned in school and that he had been exposed to at home. According to Jeremy, the Chinese he learned at school was Mandarin spoken in northern China, whereas the Chinese he spoke at home belonged to southern part of China. Learning Mandarin Chinese was challenging for him as it required the learning of more formal words and phrases. Nevertheless, it also aroused Jeremy's curiosity to know if there were equivalent language use in Cantonese or the Taishan dialect, which resulted in more opportunities to explore his home languages and the corresponding ethnic cultures with other family members.

Finally, considering the ways that might motivate him to further reflect upon his own culture, Jeremy stated that simply watching Mandarin TV channels more often would do him more benefits. He also expressed an interest to continue taking Chinese language courses in university.

In conclusion, the researcher interviewed five non-heritage students and three heritage students in total. Through comparison between American culture and Chinese culture, interviewees noticed some cultural differences and similarities, and therefore developed self-awareness of own culture to varying degree. For non-heritage students they tended to spot the cultural differences between the two countries, China and the United States. However, to some of the students such comparisons did not meanwhile produce more understanding or interest for their own ethnic cultures. The non-heritage students concluded that watching Chinese movies, traveling to China, or reflecting practices taken granted before helped development of cultural awareness.

Heritage students were not too surprised at the Chinese culture they saw from media in the class. Though they already had a general cultural understanding about China as a whole, the course brought into light cultural differences within the same group that they did not pay much attention. In this class they also expected to delve into a deeper level of Chinese culture and better fit into local Chinese life. Film watching was not effective for the heritage students' self-awareness. They regarded watching Chinese TV programs, comparing diverse cultures, and continuing language learning as helpful ways to reach more understanding about their heritage culture.



## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter begins with a summary of the study, including recapitulation of the study purpose, needs, conceptual framework, research questions, methodology, and a summary of the findings. Based on the recurring themes emerging from the findings, an organized discussion is then presented to compare the findings to prior research. After the discussion, the researcher proposes a few recommendations for future research and discusses implications of the present study. Finally, the chapter comes to an end with conclusions from the study.

#### **Summary of the Study**

The teaching of culture has been a thorny problem for teachers who teach foreign languages like Mandarin Chinese in the United States. Although foreign language teachers generally admitted the significance of cultural competence (Wang, 2006), many of them are not well-prepared to teach cultural topics (Sercu, 2006) as they are challenged in regard to what to teach and how to teach in the realm of culture (Wang, 2006; Wong, 2012).

Although the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 1996) published Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (5C standards) with culture as one of the five goal areas, little research has paid close attention to teaching strategies and learning realities connected to the 5C standards in Chinese education (Chang, 2010). Since the 5C standards (ACTFL, 1996) offered guidelines for AP Chinese Language course and Examination that leads Chinese education in the United States (Chang, 2010), the present study focused on, but was not

limited to, how the cultural goal area of the standards is implemented in an AP Chinese course.

To be more specific, this qualitative case study intended to look into how culture teaching and learning developed in an AP Chinese course in a U.S. high school. The study aimed to address four research questions. The first question explored the concept of culture as perceived by the teacher and the students. The second question focused on the teacher's general approach to the teaching of culture. The third question examined how these pedagogical practices in teaching culture helped or hindered students to build the relationship between products/practices and perspectives of the cultures of the Chinese-speaking world. The last question investigated the ways students came to know about their own cultures throughout the process of learning Chinese culture.

The Iceberg Concept of Culture (Indiana Department of Education, as cited in Moule, 2005) and the cultural goal area of the standards (ACTFL, 1996) were used to investigate findings for the first research question. Different teaching theories like Teacher's Approach to Culture (Dytynshyn & Collins, 2012, p. 9) adapted from Menard-Warwick's (2009) categories of approach offered lens to the second question centering on pedagogical realities. The collected data analyzed by such frameworks also provided answers to the third and fourth questions.

In terms of methodology, this qualitative study was a non-participatory observational case study focusing on an AP Chinese course offered at a high school in the State of California. This AP Chinese course and the participants were selected through purposeful sampling strategy. Twenty-one non-heritage and heritage students aged from 16 to 18 met up for approximately one hour every day to take the course. In order to

collect data, the researcher conducted unobtrusive classroom observations and one-on-one oral interviews with both the instructor and eight volunteer students in fall 2016. The total of 38 audiotaped teaching hours and all the interviews were transcribed for analysis. Triangulation and member checking were adopted to ensure validity of the study.

### **Summary of the Findings**

The teacher and the student interviewees perceived culture as celebrations, customs, practices, beliefs and values. Both the teacher and the students understood that the concept of culture could be fluid and contextual. The teacher was aware of the two categories of big culture and small culture, yet she found it challenging to teach small culture given her residency in the United States. In spite of the challenge, the teacher believed in the importance of sharing all types of perspectives with her students so as to expose the learner to rich culture. Above all, the teacher valued incorporation of language and culture in her classroom. In her opinion, the teaching of language should be framed in cultural context so that the learning of culture could motivate more language learning. It was worth mentioning that students exhibited a vague cultural identity, though they were clear about defining culture in their own words.

In terms of the observed pedagogical practices on cultural topics, the teacher insisted on teaching culture in the target language, Mandarin Chinese, which was in accordance with the teacher's contention from the interview. Common approaches of culture teaching also included cultural information, cultural comparison, cultural values, cultural change, culture as context, elaborated discussion, introduction of idioms, and interconnectivity. Cultural elements highlighted in the classroom involved both surface

culture and deep culture. Nevertheless, many cultural elements in deep culture remained omitted in the classroom such as religions and politics.

The researcher then reviewed the observed approaches in respect to how they helped students bridge the learning of cultural products/practices and the cultural perspectives. Effective building of the connections came from teaching of cultural values and cultural comparisons. However, teaching of cultural information alone trapped the learners on the level of cultural products or practices without bringing them to the level of cultural perspectives. Relying on the teacher as the main transmitter of cultural knowledge also reinforced stereotyping of the target culture. Use of Mandarin only in the classroom and treating culture teaching as context for language teaching hindered understanding of perspectives in the Chinese-speaking world.

Lastly, student interviews found out the ways that helped students know more about their cultures through the process of Chinese learning. Although the interviewees were positive about discovering more cultural differences and similarities after taking the course, they showed varying levels of identification with own cultures. Interviews with three heritage students and five non-heritage students also yielded different findings.

The non-heritage students noticed more cultural difference between China and the United States than their heritage counterparts. Cultural comparisons between the two countries brought the non-heritage students more cultural knowledge about China but not increased awareness of their ethnic cultures. However, the same cultural knowledge about China caught the heritage students' attention as the Chinese culture learned in class was new to them in different aspects. The heritage students desired to explore the parts of

Chinese culture they could not learn at home and therefore developed more interest in their ethnic culture.

No matter what levels of cultural awareness they possessed, the interviewees benefited from various ways to establish cultural awareness. Watching Chinese movies was considered effective for non-heritage students instead of heritage students. Traveling to China and reflections on routine practices helped the non-heritage students. As for heritage students, watching Chinese TV programs and continuing to learn Mandarin as well as diverse cultures helped their development of cultural awareness.

## **Discussion**

### **Perceptions of Culture**

The research findings drawn from the interviews showed that both the teacher and the students identified key characteristics of the term, *culture*, in a way similar to scholars' (Bennett, 1998, Moran, Abramson, and Moran, 2014; Moule, 2005) definitions. First, most of the interviewees mentioned *values* in their personal definitions of culture, which was in concordance with how Moule (2005) defined culture. Second, many interviewees recognized that culture was shared by *a group of people*, a significant characteristic distinguishing culture from personality (Bennett, 1998). Such an understanding is related to another prominent feature of culture, *sense of belonging* (Moran, Abramson, and Moran, 2014).

It is probably this sense of belonging that decides how the participants identified which culture they felt most connected with. For example, the Jewish male student expressed a deep sense of belonging to his Jewish community and therefore affirmed his cultural identity as Jewish. However, the Jewish female student sensed a weak belonging

to her Jewish community and hence showed uncertainty to claim Jewish culture as her ethnic culture. In addition, the biracial student identified with neither of her heritage cultures but the local city culture because it was the place where her cultural belonging nested.

The interview findings also rendered that both the teacher and the students understood cultural components to be elements in various levels of the cultural iceberg (Hanley, 1999; Ruhly, 1976; Weaver, 1986). They talked about topics in surface culture like food, language, and celebrations to name a few. The cultural entities in deep culture like concept of time, courtesy, and ideals of childrearing were considered as part of culture too. Therefore, content of culture teaching and learning could be expected as multifaceted.

In regard to culture, a heightened sense of small C culture instead of big C culture was entrenched in the teacher's cultural instruction. Such an emphasis adhered to Bennett's (1997) contention arguing that the small C culture was of key importance to intercultural communication. However, the teacher's preference on the small C culture was deviant from the message promoted by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 1996). The ACTFL advocated both the big C culture and small C culture as the central threads of cultural instruction.

### **The Lens of the ACTFL's Guidelines**

The recorded observational data concurred with some of the cultural goals the ACTFL (1996) set up for foreign language teaching. Apparently through the AP Chinese course the students "gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures" (ACTFL, 1996,

p. 9). The interview data also testified to the abundant knowledge about Chinese culture students had learned in the course, such as Chinese educational system and college life.

Nevertheless, the observed teaching of culture did not completely follow the cultural standard that expected the learners to “demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied” and “demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied” (ACTFL, 1996, p. 9). Despite the fact the students were taught cultural practices like “patterns of social interactions” (ACTFL, 1996, p. 43) and cultural products such as “books, tools, foods, laws, music, and games” (ACTFL, 1996, p.43), they were not helped in all cases to pay explicit attention to the cultural perspectives regarding “meanings, attitudes, values, and ideas” (ACTFL, 1996, p. 43). In a nutshell, the students need more explicit linkage to connect surface culture and deep culture so as to understand the root causes of cultural misunderstandings.

Additionally, the present study found that students were provided with opportunities to “acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures,” as suggested by the ACTFL (1996, p. 9) in the goal area of connections. For example, the teaching of cultural information like the systematic terms of address helped students recognize the viewpoint of observing the pecking order and respect for seniorities in Chinese culture. Likewise, teaching of Chinese idioms like 长兄如父 [Eldest brother is like father] conveyed the patriarchal and hierarchical nature of the Chinese society and culture.

Furthermore, the teacher’s pedagogical focus of cultural instruction was a near miss in the area of comparisons, one of the five content goal areas the ACTFL (1996)

developed. The standard required students to “demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own” (ACTFL, 1996, p. 9). Although the instructor gave students ample opportunity to compare Chinese culture and American culture, she seemed to forget that not all students in the class had the same American upbringing.

Their diverse ethnic backgrounds implied diverse home cultures which could be African American culture or Latin American culture for instance. The pedagogical practice of cultural comparison fell short in including the full range of ethnic cultures represented in the class. Aligned with one of the interviewees’ desire to see more cultural comparisons happening between different cultures, the classroom observational data called attention to inclusiveness. Lack of comparisons between various cultures might explain the reason why some of the student interviewees failed to articulate cultural differences and similarities between Chinese culture and their own, and therefore fumbled their way to a deeper self-awareness via the course.

### **Stumbling Blocks and Stereotyping**

As captured in the actual teaching practices, some of the dominant cultural approaches were found fraught with stumbling blocks that might build stereotypical thinking. To begin with, the present study attested to Lazaraton’s (2003) and Smith’s (2013) astute observation that culture teaching was imbued with facts. As Byram and Feng (2004) imputed stereotypes to the facts-oriented approach in the language classroom, some of the factual knowledge taught in the AP Chinese course also stereotyped Chinese culture. More importantly, the cultural facts held true by the Mandarin instructor might not be perceived as true facts by other groups of Chinese



people. Blind acceptance of the so-called cultural facts without scrutinizing the issues of identity, discourse, and power (Kramsch, as cited in Ho, 2011; Kubota, 2004) could possibly lead to stereotyping.

Second and related, the present study found it common to see the participant teacher as the sole transmitter of cultural information, which could be another contributing factor to formation of stereotypes given Smith's (2013) judgement. Even though the teacher tried to use dialogic approach (Byram & Feng, 2004; Rajabieslami, 2014) or initiate elaborated discussion at times, the extended classroom discussion was often cut off abruptly. Since the teacher believed that culture could be best delivered in the target language, the students were pressed to discuss cultural topics in Mandarin only. Many of them appeared frustrated and quickly quit the discussion. In the end, the teaching and learning of culture went back to the teacher's monologue.

As seen in the classroom practices, the teacher's monologue tended to become an introduction of the monolithic culture as described by Smith (2013). In all likelihood the teaching of culture facilitated learning of a singular Chinese culture or even a stilted view of the Chinese-speaking world. Although the interconnectivity approach (Smith) possessed a huge potential to stop cultural fallacies, it did not lend much strength to culture learning in this case study. The teacher did employ different media to present cultural topics in her classroom. However, the various media mainly centered on the same topic and presented similar cultural perspectives. Disparate views and varied comments towards the same cultural issue from Chinese society were rarely enlisted. Hence, the learners might not be cognizant of the subtle and implicit nuances existing in the target culture and the society.

Without connecting to texts of dissenting voices, the cultural discussions were merely half-baked solutions for cross cultural understanding. The discussions on cultural differences between China and the United States could also be disguised pitfalls leading to stereotypes. The observed culture teaching and learning just exemplified Kubota's (2004) warning against the ACTFL's (1996) intention to eliminate cultural stereotypes through teaching knowledge about the target culture and cultural differences.

Comparisons between cultural differences independent of the discursive construction of culture (Kubota, 2004) were more of a tendency to reinforce and propagate stereotypes.

### **Learning Needs**

As Wang (2006) affirmed the necessity to accommodate students' learning needs in Chinese Culture Curriculum, the present study identified a negligence of students' learning needs in the observed teaching of culture. As with the student interviewees in Wong's (2012) study, the student interviewees in the present study also asked for more cultural learning about contemporary China. Although the participant teacher valued teaching of cultural change, she and her students seemed to be interested in different dimensions of the contemporary Chinese culture. Students would like to learn pop culture, religions and politics in modern China, which the teacher was reluctant to explore in great detail. As for heritage and non-heritage students who shared different learning needs, the teacher could have better catered to their individual needs in order to bring out the best outcome of culture teaching and learning.

### **Missed Opportunities**

Lastly, the present study found few missed opportunities for better incorporation of language and culture. Responding to one of the interviewees' wish to know more

about women's roles in China, the teacher could have infiltrated this cultural topic when teaching Chinese characters involving the female radical as recommended by Fan (1996). Moreover, in the classroom observations there was scant teaching of idioms despite their documented benefits for culture learning (Yeh, 2014). Furthermore, the researcher did not find teaching activities extracted from resources provided by heritage Chinese schools, though Pu (2012) argued that heritage Chinese schools could lend further support to the teaching of Chinese culture in P-12 schools.

### **Recommendations**

The following are the researcher's recommendations emergent from the present study. Given the limited time and scope of the attempted study, the researcher was unable to conduct a longitudinal study investigating the whole school year of the AP Chinese course or even the complete four years of the Chinese class in the high school. Future in-depth research involving a longer research time might help enrich people's understanding on the same research topic.

Based on the same limitations, this study did not take a close look into the texts of cultural highlights in the textbooks since they were not the teacher's focus in her teaching of culture. However, future research targeting on the cultural texts in the foreign language textbooks might contribute valuable insight into culture teaching and learning in the language classroom. Moreover, field trips to China or Taiwan were not included in my study because of the research timing. However, it might be worthy to investigate the impact of these oversea field trips to the target country on the participants' culture learning.

How the students' cultural identities relate to their motives in learning of culture and language could be another research topic that deserves recognition. As the research findings showed that heritage students and non-heritage students had varied cultural identities and came to the language class with different motivations to learn the culture and the language, more research on how the learners' cultural identities interact with their learning motivations would help solidify a better understanding of their learning performance in the language classroom.

In addition, unlike scholars who expressed the wish to use English to teach American students more Chinese culture (Hsu, 2014), the participant teacher considered use of target language an imperative for culture teaching and learning in order to enhance the learner's cultural understanding and linguistic skills at the same time. Even though the research findings questioned if the use of target language is really facilitative to cultural discussions, more research is encouraged to investigate the roles of target language and native language in the teaching and learning of culture.

### **Implications**

Despite the limitations of the present study, the research findings generated several pedagogical implications. For second or foreign language teachers who aspired to balance language teaching and culture teaching in their classrooms, the findings of the study may inspire them to reflect upon their current pedagogical practices. They might be encouraged to examine the dominant cultural approaches they have adopted and steer the direction of cultural instruction away from discrete and static cultural facts as well as stereotyped thinking. The practitioners may also want to investigate the learner's interests

at the beginning of the language class so as to have the cultural curriculum better reflective of the students' learning needs.

As for teachers who teach Chinese as a second or foreign language, this research study is a reminder for them to rethink what type of Chinese culture they expect the learner to know. They may also want to question themselves about the ideologies behind the selections as to what to teach. The process of self-reflection would probably help Chinese teachers to develop self-awareness of the Chinese culture in their mind and reconsider how close it is to a changing and diversified Chinese-speaking world.

Since cross-cultural understanding is the ultimate goal for learning of a second or foreign language, the present study researched how students developed cultural awareness and sensitivity throughout the language and culture course. The findings may challenge the widely-held assumptions that cultural awareness naturally comes with foreign language learning. For language education practitioners, now might be a good time to revisit the question if their teaching of language and culture actually invites self-awareness about the learner's own culture and enhances cultural sensitivity that contributes to successful intercultural communication. They may also think about whether cultural differences presented in class a viable route to a developed understanding of otherness or simply reproduction of perpetuated stereotypes.

All in all, the educational community could benefit from the present study as it revealed the educational realities of cultural instruction in American secondary education, especially in the realm of Teaching Chinese as a Second/Foreign Language. For parents or people who care about Chinese education in North America, this case study surely brings to light a real side of the classroom practices that might enlighten the future

direction of Chinese education in the United States. Given the challenges of teaching culture in such a difficult language like Chinese, considerations may be taken regarding how to better prepare future learners with Chinese cultural background knowledge before their first exposure to the language in American secondary education.

### **Conclusions**

Not dissimilar to foreign language teaching and learning in other parts of the world, Chinese education in the United States has experienced the problem of properly incorporating culture teaching into language teaching, though the importance of cultural competence for intercultural encounters has been widely admitted. For a long time, the teaching of culture has been either isolated from language teaching or assigned a peripheral role to assist language learning.

Although the 5C standards (ACTFL, 1996) have long been published as the guidelines for cultural instruction in the field of Teaching Chinese as a Second/Foreign Language, extant scholarship has found a paucity of research studies concerning how the cultural goal areas of the 5C standards have been implemented at Mandarin classrooms in American high schools. To address the gap, the present study sought to explore the actual pedagogical practices and encountered difficulties challenging the teaching and learning of culture in secondary education in the United States.

In this qualitative case study, I attempted to examine how culture teaching and learning took shape in an AP Chinese course within an American public high school located in the State of California, the United States. By means of classroom observations and interviews with both the instructor and eight students, my study focused its inquiries on the teacher's and the learners' concepts of culture as well as actual cultural approaches

and learning experiences in the classroom. Above all, the present study also investigated how the students' cultural awareness developed through the course of AP Chinese.

Research findings shed light on culture teaching and learning in Chinese education in the United States. Although cultural instruction is not omitted from the observed language classroom, it was found with several upsides and downsides. It was encouraging to know that the instructor included both surface culture and deep culture in her perceived notion of culture and the actual classroom practices. It was also good to know that the teacher highlighted cultural change and the small C culture. Nevertheless, several caveats deserved attention.

Except for frequent appearance of cultural products and practices, the introduction of divergent cultural perspectives was not a common theme in the observed classroom as the teacher contended. Teaching of discrete cultural information and values was defective due to a lack of elaborated discussion on discursive construction of culture (Kubota, 2004) and proper adoption of the interconnectivity approach (Smith, 2013) that highlights dissenting voices. Coupled with the practice of teacher being the sole transmitter of Chinese culture, a homogeneous view of Chinese people and Chinese society therefore emerged.

Even though the participant teacher argued that language should be closely entwined with culture, an integrated approach was not put to good use for the purpose of culture learning. Cultural instruction still served as the context of language learning instead of the core topic. The Mandarin first strategy also deprived students of further opportunities to explore Chinese culture.

In addition, not all the interviewed students developed a deeper awareness about their own cultures through approaches like cultural comparisons in the AP Chinese course. This finding might be due in part to a lack of sense of cultural belonging and partly because cultural comparisons only happened between Chinese culture and American culture rather than their ethnic cultures.

In summary, given the limited time and scope of the study the researcher outlined few research areas that deserve further exploration. The paper finally concludes with educational implications from the present study. I hope that the findings of the study will lead to a developed understanding of culture teaching and learning in Chinese education in the United States and therefore help better serve the needs and interests of the learners of Mandarin Chinese.



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## APPENDIX A: THE ICEBERG CONCEPT OF CULTURE

# The Iceberg Concept of Culture

Like an iceberg, the majority of culture is below the surface.

## Surface Culture

Above sea level

Emotional load: relatively low

food ▪ dress ▪ music ▪

visual arts ▪ drama ▪ crafts

dance ▪ literature ▪ language

celebrations ▪ games



## Deep Culture

Unspoken Rules

Partially below sea level

Emotional load: very high

Unconscious Rules

Completely below sea level

Emotional load: intense

courtesy ▪ contextual conversational patterns ▪ concept of time  
 personal space ▪ rules of conduct ▪ facial expressions  
 nonverbal communication ▪ body language ▪ touching ▪ eye contact  
 patterns of handling emotions ▪ notions of modesty ▪ concept of beauty  
 courtship practices ▪ relationships to animals ▪ notions of leadership  
 tempo of work ▪ concepts of food ▪ ideals of childrearing  
 theory of disease ▪ social interaction rate ▪ nature of friendships  
 tone of voice ▪ attitudes toward elders ▪ concept of cleanliness  
 notions of adolescence ▪ patterns of group decision-making  
 definition of insanity ▪ preference for competition or cooperation  
 tolerance of physical pain ▪ concept of "self" ▪ concept of past and future  
 definition of obscenity ▪ attitudes toward dependents ▪ problem-solving  
 roles in relation to age, sex, class, occupation, kinship, and so forth



**APPENDIX B: PROPOSED TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

(adapted from Ho, 2011, p. 66-67)

1. In TCFL/TCSL teaching and learning, what do you understand the term 'culture' to mean?
2. What topics do you consider most important for your students to learn? Please briefly describe how you have taught it/them in the classroom.
3. Think about the cultural content in your Chinese textbooks. What are your opinions about it? Please explain.
4. Can you recall any ways of culture teaching that you have used in your Chinese classes? Discuss the ways of culture teaching you often use in the classroom and comment on how you use them.
5. Think about your culture teaching approach. Why do you take that approach? What are the benefits of your approach for your students' learning of Chinese?
6. How much time do you usually spend on your culture teaching? Do you think the time is adequate? Please explain.
7. Are you aware of any emphasis on culture in the curriculum, educational policy and assessment in your educational institution? If any, how is that emphasis represented?
8. Do you think the target culture should be incorporated into Chinese classes or should be taught in separate culture courses? Please explain.

**APPENDIX C: PROPOSED STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

(adapted from Ho, 2011, p. 67-69)

1. What ethnic culture do you most identify with?
2. How long have you been learning Chinese?
3. What do you understand the term ‘culture’ to mean? What cultural topics would you like to learn?
4. What is your experience of culture learning in the AP Chinese course? What are the common activities you do in the classroom? How helpful are they for your culture learning?
5. Through the process of Chinese language and culture learning, do you notice any similarities or differences between Chinese culture and your own ethnic culture? Give examples.
6. Do you think that after taking the AP Chinese course, you have known more about not only Chinese culture but also your own ethnic culture? If yes, in what ways do you come to know more about your own culture?
7. If you are not provided with chances to develop cultural awareness of your own in the course, what ways do you think might be helpful for you to further reflect upon your own culture?

## APPENDIX D: PROFILE OF PARTICIPANT STUDENTS

### PROFILE OF PARTICIPANT STUDENTS

	Gender	Age	Race/Ethnicity	Ethnic Culture	Home Language	Speak Chinese at Home	Years of Chinese Learning
S1	F	16	Mixed Race	Japanese American	English	No	4
S2	M	17	White/Japanese	American	English	No	3
S3	F	17	White/Asian	Chinese American	English	No	11
S4	M	17	African American	Black Community /American	English	No	4
S5	F	17	Asian	Mongolian	Mongolian /English	No	4
S6	F	17	Chinese	American	English	No	3
S7	M	17	Philippine	American	English	No	4
S8	F	17	Asian	American	English	No	3
S9	M	17	Asian American	American	English	No	3
S10	F	17	Chinese	Chinese	English	No	3
S11	M	17	Asian American	American	English/ Mandarin	Yes	4
S12	M	17	Asian	Chinese	Chinese	Yes	8
S13	M	17	Asian American	American	English/ Cantonese	Yes	3
S14	M	17	White	American	English	No	3
S15	M	17	White	American/ Jewish	English	No	4
S16	F	17	White	American	English	No	3
S17	M	17	White	White/ American	English	No	4
S18	F	18	White	No	English	No	4
S19	F	17	White	Jewish?	English	No	3
S20	M	17	White	American	English/ French	No	4

**APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT FORM****INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

**CONSENT TO BE A RESEARCH SUBJECT****Purpose and Background**

Ms. Yu-han Lin, a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco, is doing a study on Culture Teaching and Learning in an Advanced Placement Chinese (AP Chinese) course. Since culture teaching and learning is an important yet often neglected part in foreign language education, the researcher is interested in exploring how culture teaching and learning progresses in an AP Chinese course in a U.S. high school.

I am being asked to participate in this study because I am a high school student taking AP Chinese course.

**Procedures**

If I agree to be a participant in this study, the following will happen:

1. I may be video recorded in class activities the researcher observes.
2. I will participate in an interview after class, during which I will be asked about my Chinese learning experience, my understanding about my own culture and Chinese culture that I learn from the course.

**Risks and/or Discomforts**

1. It is possible that some of the interview questions may make me feel uncomfortable, but I am free to decline to answer any questions I do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time.
2. Participation in research may mean a loss of confidentiality. Study records will be kept as confidential as is possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Study information will be coded and kept in locked files at all times. Only study personnel will have access to the files.

**Benefits**

Apart from additional culture learning materials, there will be no direct benefit to me from participating in this study. The anticipated benefit of this study is a better

understanding of culture learning and intercultural communication.

### **Costs/Financial Considerations**

1. There will be no financial costs to me as a result of taking part in this study.
2. I will not be reimbursed or paid for my participation in this study.

### **Questions**

I have talked to Ms. Yu-han Lin about this study and have had my questions answered. If I have further questions about the study, I may call her at [REDACTED] or email her at [REDACTED]

If I have any questions or comments about participation in this study, I should first talk with the researcher. If for some reason I do not wish to do this, I may contact the IRBPHS, which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach the IRBPHS office by calling (415) 422-6091 and leaving a voicemail message, by e-mailing IRBPHS@usfca.edu, or by writing to the IRBPHS, Department of Psychology, University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94117-1080.

### **Consent**

I have been given a copy of this consent form to keep. PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. I am free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. My decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on my present or future status as a student in the school and my grades received from the course.

My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in this study.

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Subject's Signature

Date of Signature

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Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date of Signature

## APPENDIX F: PARENTAL INFORMED CONSENT FORM

### PARENTAL INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of the Research Study: Culture Teaching and Learning in an Advanced Placement Chinese Language Course

Researcher: Yu-han Lin ( [REDACTED] )

This is a research study about culture teaching and learning in an Advanced Placement Chinese Language Course. Your child has been invited to join the research study to help people know more about the topic in secondary education. Please spend as much time as you need discussing the study with your family or anyone else you wish to. You have the right to decide whether your child joins the study or not.

Your child's in-class learning activities will be observed for eight weeks this semester. If your child agrees to take interview questions, he/she will be asked questions about their culture learning experience in the course. The interview will take less than 20 minutes. All in-class learning activities and the interview will be audiotaped for the research purpose only.

No risks are involved during the research study. You are welcomed to ask any questions about the study whenever you want. If your child decides not to continue the study at any point of the study, he/she can stop and the grades of the course will not be affected. You may also contact the IRBPHS, which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects. You may reach the IRBPHS office by calling (415) 422-6091 and leaving a voicemail message, by e-mailing IRBPHS@usfca.edu, or by writing to the IRBPHS, Department of Psychology, University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94117-1080.

Your child will benefit from the study in a way that it will help the learner better understand their learning process. When this study finishes, the researcher will write a report about what was learned. This report will not show your child's name or that the child was in the study. I will make every effort to keep personal information from unauthorized disclosure.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Please note that participation in the study or not will not affect your child's grades of the course.

As parent or legal guardian, I authorize \_\_\_\_\_ (child's name) to become a participant in the research study.

Parent or Legal Guardian's Signature

Date

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