

Representation of Chinese Culture in English Textbooks: A Corpus-driven study of Two Editions of Senior High School English Textbooks Published by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Publishing House

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Abstract: In the context of globalization, the cultural role of foreign language textbooks has become increasingly salient. Through corpus search and manual screening, this study takes the Oxford Shanghai Edition of senior high school English textbooks published by Shanghai Educational Publishing House in 2006 and the Shanghai Edition published in 2020 as research objects. It systematically examines the representation and evolving trends of Chinese cultural content in the two editions. Findings show that both editions construct an image of China as culturally rich, technologically advanced, and open to the world, covering themes such as cities, figures, technology, and intangible heritage. The 2020 edition, however, demonstrates greater breadth, depth, and balance in cultural representation. It integrates visual and textual elements more effectively and embeds Chinese topics more extensively in writing and cultural awareness tasks, though listening and speaking activities remain less culturally infused. The study highlights a conceptual shift in textbook design from internationalization toward cultural self-awareness, offering empirical evidence and pedagogical insights for integrating Chinese culture into English education and fostering students' cultural confidence.

Keywords: Senior high school textbook, English textbooks, cultural representation, Chinese culture, Corpus linguistics.

1. Introduction

In the context of the concurrent simultaneous development of globalization and localization, foreign language education has transcended its traditional instrumental role and has become an important vehicle for cultural transmission and national image building. As the most widely used international language, English serves not only as a medium for linguistic communication but also as a channel through which learners' cultural and national identities are implicitly shaped. Fundamentally, a textbook is a meaning-bearing construct composed of texts and images selected according to particular standards. Although it appears neutral and objective, it inevitably embodies certain ideologies and social norms [1]. Consequently, examining the cultural identity components embedded in English textbooks has become a significant area of inquiry in foreign language education research.

In recent years, the Chinese Ministry of Education, in the English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools (2017 Edition, revised in 2020), has explicitly emphasized the cultivation of "cultural awareness." It requires textbooks to "help students develop understanding and identification with Chinese culture, enhance national consciousness, and strengthen cultural confidence [2]". Guided by this policy, the principles of decentering the "OTHER" and enhancing the expression of Chinese culture have become key orientations in the compilation of new textbooks. The new edition of senior high school English textbooks published by Shanghai Educational Publishing House (hereafter the new edition), which has been in use in Shanghai since 2022, was thoroughly revised and rewritten under this framework. Its thematic selection, discourse presentation, and cultural representation all demonstrate a clear shift toward Chinese national cultural

orientation.

Before the implementation of the new edition, most senior high schools in Shanghai used the Oxford Shanghai Edition of English textbooks (hereafter the old edition), published in 2006 through collaboration between the Shanghai Curriculum Reform Committee and Oxford University Press. Adapted from English First! On Target! and Oxford English, the old edition was characterized by a stronger tendency toward internationalization in both content design and value orientation.

Based on these two textbook series—the Oxford Shanghai Edition (2006) and the Shanghai Edition (2020)—this study constructs two corpora of texts to analyze topics and materials closely related to China and Chinese culture. It examines the themes, distribution, and modes of presentation of Chinese cultural content in both editions, exploring how these textbooks portray China and Chinese culture and how they shape learners' perceptions and identification with Chinese culture. Furthermore, it reveals the evolution of textbook compilation philosophies from internationalization to cultural self-awareness, offering empirical evidence and theoretical insights for integrating Chinese culture more effectively into future textbook design and for strengthening students' cultural confidence.

2. Research Design

2.1. Research Questions

This study focuses on the themes, distribution, and modes of presentation of Chinese cultural content in the old and new editions of senior high school English textbooks published by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Publishing House. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses are conducted to

address the following research questions:

- (1) What China-related topics are discussed in the old and new editions of senior high school English textbooks?
- (2) What kinds of national images are constructed through these China-related topics?
- (3) In what ways do the two editions differ or resemble each other in the distribution and presentation of Chinese cultural content?
- (4) How do the differences in the distribution and presentation of Chinese cultural content reflect shifts in the underlying textbook compilation philosophies?

2.2. Corpus Construction

The research corpus consists of two editions of senior high school English textbooks published by Shanghai Educational Publishing House: the Oxford Shanghai Edition (old edition, published in 2006) and the Shanghai Edition (new edition, published in 2020). The old edition includes six volumes, covering the three years of senior high school (from Book 1A to Book 3B), while the new edition comprises seven volumes, including Compulsory Books 1–3 and Elective Books 1–4.

All textbook materials were digitized and standardized for analysis. Non-textual elements such as images, tables, and punctuation were removed, retaining only the main text, reading passages, and task instructions. The cleaned textual data were saved as plain text files and organized into two separate corpora: the Old Edition Text Corpus and the New Edition Text Corpus. Each corpus contains approximately 130,000 tokens.

2.3. Research Methods

This study adopts a corpus linguistics approach and proceeds through the following steps:

- (1) High-frequency word analysis: With the corpus analysis software AntConc 4.2.4, high-frequency word lists were generated for both the Old Edition Text Corpus and the New Edition Text Corpus. The resulting lists were then manually examined to identify and quantify words closely related to China and Chinese culture, thereby providing an overview of

China-related topics represented in both editions.

- (2) Collocation and concordance analysis: The Collocate function in AntConc 4.2.4 was employed to examine the collocational patterns of the node words “China” and “Chinese”. Concordance line analysis was further conducted to explore the contextual uses of these keywords, allowing for the interpretation of the national image of China constructed through lexical choices in the two editions.

- (3) Qualitative content analysis: A close reading of the textbooks was undertaken to annotate and categorize all content related to China and traditional Chinese culture. Comparative analysis was then carried out to identify similarities and differences between the two editions in terms of the distribution and modes of presentation of Chinese cultural content.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. High-frequency Words about China

High-frequency words refer to lexical items that occur with relatively high frequency within a corpus [3]. By identifying and counting China-related words in the two self-built corpora, an overview of the China-related topics represented in both editions of the textbooks can be obtained from a lexical perspective. Table 1 presents the high-frequency words related to China and their corresponding frequencies in the Old Edition Text Corpus and the New Edition Text Corpus. Only words with a frequency of ten or higher were included, while those with fewer than ten occurrences were excluded.

In some cases, certain words appear in fixed collocations. For instance, in the New Edition Text Corpus, the word “Kun” only occurs in combination with the word “opera”, forming the fixed phrase “Kun opera” (a traditional type of opera in China). To ensure semantic clarity, such cases were treated specially in Table 1: when a node word shows a fixed collocational tendency and is closely related to Chinese culture, its collocate is included in parentheses, thereby indicating the full expression and specifying the cultural reference more precisely.

Table 1. High-frequency China-related words and their frequencies in the two corpora

Old Edition Text Corpus			New Edition Text Corpus		
Rank	Word	Frequency	Rank	Word	Frequency
1	China	90	1	Chinese	195
2	Shanghai	71	2	China	72
3	Li	69	3	Li	48
4	Chinese	62	4	festival	46
5	Sunqiao	28	5	Taichi	40
6	Beijing	27	6	Kun (opera)	30
7	Hong (Kong)	27	7	Miao	28
8	Spring (Festival)	27	8	(Chinese/China’s) lunar	27
9	Ma	22	9	Ming	20
10	(Shanghai) Bun	20	10	Xi’an	18
11	Zhang	15	11	Beijing	18
			12	Shanghai	17
			13	Ye	17
			14	Yuan	16
			15	Zhang	16

As shown in Table 1, both the quantity and frequency of China-related high-frequency words are higher in the New Edition Text Corpus than in the Old Edition Text Corpus.

Given that the overall text volume of the two corpora is comparable, this difference suggests that the newly published senior high school English textbooks not only include more

content related to China but also cover a wider range of China-related topics.

Further examination of the concordance lines of these high-frequency China-related words in the two corpora reveals that the topics concerning China in both editions mainly concentrate on the following areas:

(1) Major Cities in China.

Both corpora contain high-frequency words referring to major Chinese cities. Among them, “Beijing” and “Shanghai” appear as shared high-frequency items in both editions. Beijing, the capital of China, has served as the capital city for five dynasties throughout China’s long history. Its political significance and symbolic cultural meaning are self-evident. Owing to its global recognition and rich tourism resources, Beijing has consistently been one of the most popular destinations for international visitors. Consequently, introducing Beijing’s tourist attractions to foreign friends in English has long been a recurring topic in senior high school English textbooks.

The prominence of “Shanghai” is comparable to that of “Beijing”. As China’s largest international economic and financial center as well as a renowned global tourist destination [4], Shanghai enjoys high international visibility. Moreover, since both editions were primarily designed for schools and students in Shanghai, including topics related to Shanghai allows students to better understand and appreciate the city they live in, fostering a sense of belonging and pride through language learning.

In addition to the shared high-frequency words: “Beijing” and “Shanghai”, other cities are also discussed in the textbooks. In the Old Edition Text Corpus, the word “Hong Kong” appears with a frequency comparable to that of Beijing. Given that the old edition was adapted from British original textbooks, this prominence can be attributed to Hong Kong’s distinctive historical, geographical, and social background [5]. Around the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, Hong Kong was far more visible in British society than most mainland cities of China, which explains its higher frequency. As a free port and coastal economic hub [6], Hong Kong was also among the earliest regions to engage with global trends. Hence, it was often used in the old edition as a representative example when discussing new cultural phenomena of the time, such as “fast food.”

By contrast, in the New Edition Text Corpus, Xi’an—the ancient capital of thirteen dynasties in northwestern China—makes its first appearance in English textbooks. In the decade following the publication of the old edition, China’s overall national strength and sense of cultural pride grew considerably. This transformation is directly reflected in language education, where textbooks began to guide students to “tell China’s stories well” and to move away from Western-centered narratives, addressing the long-criticized issue of “cultural aphasia” in English education [7]. In the new edition, Xi’an, with its profound historical and cultural heritage, serves as an example of “a city where history comes alive.” The inclusion of such topics exemplifies the textbooks’ role in “giving voice for China” and “telling China’s stories” in English—an approach that not only enhances linguistic self-representation but also nurtures students’ cultural confidence and national pride.

(2) Chinese Figures

Both corpora include high-frequency words that represent common Chinese surnames, such as “Li”, “Ma”, “Zhang”, and “Yuan”, which point to the presence of “Chinese figures”

within the textbooks. English textbooks focus on developing students’ four core language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—and often set up various scenarios in which students use their language skills to improve their proficiency. In these scenarios, fictional Chinese figures frequently appear: sometimes their actions are described in English to help students understand grammatical structures; at other times, students are asked to play these fictional characters in dialogues or writing exercises to practice language skills. In the Old Edition Text Corpus, the majority of the 69 instances of Li, 22 of Ma, and 15 of Zhang refer to such fictional characters.

In contrast, the New Edition Text Corpus introduces not only these functional fictional characters but also real historical and contemporary figures. These figures are no longer interchangeable “background” names in exercises, but protagonists with their own narratives and cultural significance. For example, in the 48 instances of “Li” in the new edition, alongside fictional characters like “Li Ming” and “Li Hua”, there are real individuals such as the Tang Dynasty poet Li Shangyin, and the agricultural scientist Li Zhikang, known for his pioneering work in rice breeding.

“Telling China’s stories well” naturally involves showcasing Chinese figures. The new edition introduces prominent individuals from different fields and historical periods—ancient Chinese poets Li Shangyin and Tao Yuanming, scientists Li Zhikang, Yuan Longping, and Ye Peijian, and athlete Yao Ming. These individuals have left great works in literature, advanced the nation’s scientific and technological capabilities, or achieved global recognition in sports. They serve as exemplary role models for high school students, helping shape their worldview and values.

While previous English textbooks often focused on well-known foreign figures to expand students’ global perspectives, the new edition balances this by incorporating outstanding Chinese figures. This approach aligns with today’s global context: fostering dialogue with other cultures while also strengthening cultural confidence and safeguarding China’s cultural core.

(3) China’s Technological Development

Descriptions of China’s advanced scientific and technological achievements are evident in both the old and new versions of the textbooks. In the Old Edition Text Corpus, the term “Sunqiao” refers to the Sunqiao Modern Agricultural Park located in the Pudong New District of Shanghai. It is China’s first comprehensive modern agricultural development zone [8]. The textbook introduces the “colorful agriculture” practices of the park through reading material, highlighting the crucial role of technological innovation in the development of modern agriculture.

In the New Edition Text Corpus, there is also a focus on China’s modern scientific and technological advancements. The high-frequency term “(Chinese/China’s) lunar” mainly appears in a passage from Unit 4 of the elective section, titled *The Story of China’s Lunar Missions*. This article narrates the development and achievements of China’s lunar exploration program, showcasing the ongoing progress of China’s space industry and its ambitious plans for the future.

Science and technology are primary productive forces, and China’s rapid development is closely linked to continuous technological innovation. Therefore, telling the story of technological advancements is a key aspect of telling China’s stories well.

(4) China's Intangible Cultural Heritage

China's rich and diverse ICH (intangible cultural heritage) constitutes the "soul of the nation" and the "root of civilization [9]." Education, in turn, plays a vital role in safeguarding and transmitting this heritage [10]. Discussing China's ICH in English textbooks not only broadens students' cultural knowledge but also fosters their cultural awareness and sense of responsibility in inheriting and promoting Chinese traditions through language learning.

Both the old and new textbook corpora contain high-frequency words related to China's intangible cultural heritage, though the New Edition Text Corpus features a notably greater number. In the Old Edition Text Corpus, only Shanghai Bun—a national-level intangible cultural heritage item—and Spring Festival—a UNESCO-recognized heritage of humanity—appear with significant frequency. In contrast, the New Edition Text Corpus presents a much richer representation of ICH elements, including Tai Chi, Kun opera, and Miao traditional costumes. Moreover, the coverage of the term "festival" in the new textbooks is far broader, encompassing a variety of traditional Chinese festivals such

as the Spring Festival, Lantern Festival, Qingming Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, and Mid-Autumn Festival. By embedding these traditional celebrations into English learning contexts, the new textbooks contribute to shaping students' cultural identity and deepening their sense of belonging to the Chinese nation.

3.2. High-Frequency Collocates of "China" and "Chinese"

While high-frequency words reveal the overall range of China-related topics in the old and new editions of the high school English textbooks, the lexical items that frequently collocate with "China" or "Chinese" offer a more refined picture of how China's national image is constructed in these materials. With AntConc 4.2.4, high-frequency lexical collocates of "China|Chinese" were identified in both the Old Edition Text Corpus and the New Edition Text Corpus. Here, the symbol "|" serves as a wildcard operator meaning "or." The detailed results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. High-Frequency Lexical Collocates of "China|Chinese" in the Two Corpora

Old Edition Text Corpus			New Edition Text Corpus		
Rank	Collocate	Frequency	Rank	Collocate	Frequency
1	space	18	1	culture	22
2	modern	14	2	traditional	20
3	developing	7	3	programme	14
4	tourist	5	4	qingtuan	12
5	national	5	5	city	11
6	traditional	18	6	festival	10
7	clothing	18	7	popular	10
8	ancient	7	8	lunar	10
9	calligraphy	5	9	dish	9
10	flight	4	10	UNICEF	8

By examining the data in Table 2, it can be observed that in both the Old Edition Text Corpus and the New Edition Text Corpus, the lexical collocates with "China|Chinese" do not display strong emotional polarity. Furthermore, categorizing the listed high-frequency collocates reveals that the thematic distribution of the node word "China|Chinese" is largely similar across the two corpora. These collocates can be generally grouped into three major categories:

(1) Traditional Chinese culture. Examples include "traditional", "clothing", "ancient", and "calligraphy" in the Old Edition Text Corpus, as well as "culture", "traditional", "qingtuan", "festival", and "dish" in the New Edition Text Corpus.

(2) Technological development. This category covers collocates such as "space", "developing", and "flight" in the Old Edition Text Corpus, and "lunar" in the New Edition Text Corpus.

(3) International communication. This theme encompasses a broad range of interactions, including inbound tourism, international communication practices, and China's participation in global organizations. In the Old Edition Text Corpus, the collocate "tourist" clearly relates to inbound tourism and therefore represents international engagement.

Concordance line analysis shows that in the New Edition Text Corpus, the collocate "programme" refers to the Chinese culinary documentary *A Bite of China*, which was produced in both Chinese and English versions. After its broadcast

overseas, the documentary generated remarkable popularity, sparking a global "Chinese cuisine craze [11]." Hence, the word "programme" can also be categorized under the theme of China's international communication.

Additionally, the collocate "UNICEF" in the New Edition Text Corpus refers to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) Office in China, which exemplifies China's active participation in global governance and international cooperation.

Given the high degree of thematic similarity in the lexical collocates of the node word "China|Chinese" across the two corpora, it can be inferred that both editions construct largely consistent representations of China's national image. Specifically, China's image in the two textbook editions can be summarized from the following three perspectives:

(1) An ancient civilization with a profound and enduring cultural heritage. Both the old and new editions emphasize China's long history and deep-rooted cultural traditions. Through cultural symbols such as clothing, cuisine ("qingtuan" / "dish"), art ("calligraphy"), and traditional festivals, the textbooks portray China as a time-honored civilization characterized by historical continuity and strong cultural confidence.

(2) A modernized nation that values scientific and technological innovation. Both editions, to varying degrees, present China as a technologically advanced nation. They highlight China's achievements in aerospace technology—

manned spaceflight in the old edition and lunar exploration in the new edition—as representative cases showcasing the country’s growing technological prowess. These examples collectively depict a China that is ambitious, innovative, and steadily advancing toward modernization.

(3) A friendly and open country actively engaging with the world. Both editions also project an international image of China as open, inclusive, and globally engaged. China welcomes travelers from around the world to explore its vast landscapes and experience its diverse culture. In the Old Edition Text Corpus, the high-frequency collocate “tourist” refers exclusively to foreign visitors, reflecting China’s openness and hospitality. In the New Edition Text Corpus, collocates such as “programme” and “UNICEF” illustrate China’s active participation in international communication and cooperation. Through cultural outreach and collaboration with international organizations, China is no longer merely “being seen” but is now proactively engaging and communicating with the world—responding through action to global curiosity about China: “What is China like?” and “What will China do?”

3.3. Distribution and Presentation of Chinese Cultural Content

In addition to linguistic features, the distribution of Chinese cultural content across the textbooks also reflects differences in textbook compilation philosophy and pedagogical orientation. By comparing how China-related topics are distributed across the volumes of the old and new textbook editions, it is possible to further uncover shifts in the strategies used for constructing cultural content.

The Old Edition Textbook Series was structured according to school semesters, consisting of six volumes in total—from Book 1A for the first semester of Grade 10 to Book 3B for the second semester of Grade 12. In contrast, the New Edition Textbook Series adopts a “compulsory–elective” structure, comprising seven volumes in total: Compulsory 1–3 and Elective 1–4. Through detailed manual reading and annotation, the distribution of China-related topics in the two textbook editions was identified. The results are presented in Table 3 and

Table 4, which illustrate how Chinese cultural content is integrated across the two editions.

Table 3. Distribution of China-Related Topics in the Old Edition Textbooks

	Book 1A	Book 1B	Book 2A	Book 2B	Book 3A	Book 3B
Number of Topics	9	7	8	2	2	2
Percentage (%)	30.00%	23.33%	26.67%	6.67%	6.67%	6.67%

Table 4. Distribution of China-Related Topics in the New Edition Textbooks

	Compulsory 1	Compulsory 2	Compulsory 3	Elective 1	Elective 2	Elective 3	Elective 4
Number of Topics	6	3	8	1	2	6	3
Percentage (%)	20.68%	10.34%	27.59%	3.45%	6.90%	20.68%	10.34%

From Table 3, it can be observed that the distribution of China-related topics in the old edition of the textbooks presents a pattern of “more in the early stages and fewer later on.” The largest number of China-related topics appears in Book 1A for the first semester of Grade 10, followed by Book 1B for the second semester of Grade 10 and Book 2A for the first semester of Grade 11. However, beginning from Book 2B for the second semester of Senior 2, the number of such topics drops sharply. This distribution suggests that the old edition introduced a relatively large amount of China-related content at the beginner level, but as students progressed, these topics were gradually replaced by more international or general themes. This reflects a pedagogical logic of “from the familiar to the global, from the local to the international,” yet it also reveals a lack of deep integration of Chinese culture in the advanced learning stages.

In contrast, the new edition demonstrates a more balanced and progressively reinforced distribution. As shown in

Table 4, although Elective 1 contains relatively few China-related topics, the overall curriculum maintains consistent inclusion of Chinese content across different levels. Notably, the compulsory volumes and several elective modules feature a concentrated presentation of China-related themes. This design aligns with the new curriculum standards’ emphasis on

the continuous cultivation of cultural awareness, highlighting the importance of embedding Chinese cultural elements throughout the entire high school learning process and avoiding a “strong start but weak finish” approach to cultural education.

Senior high school English education focuses not only on developing students’ listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, but also on cultivating their global awareness. Therefore, the distribution of China-related topics across different content sections in the textbooks also deserves close attention. Both the old and new editions of the textbooks organize each unit around sections corresponding to these language skills and cultural enrichment, differing only in structural details.

Specifically, each unit in the old edition is divided into six sections: Reading, Grammar, Listening, Speaking, Writing, and More Reading (reading materials about culture home and abroad). The new edition, however, integrates listening and speaking into a single component and refines the structure into five sections: Reading and Interaction, Grammar Activity, Listening and Speaking, Writing, and Cultural Focus. Table 5 summarizes the distribution of China-related topics across these content sections in both editions of the textbooks.

Table 5. Distribution of China-Related Topics Across Content Sections in the Two Textbook Editions

Textbook Edition	Reading	Grammar	Listening and Speaking		Writing	Culture	Total
			Listening	Speaking			
Old Edition	10(33.33%)	6(20.00%)	2(6.67%)	2(6.67%)	3(10.00%)	7(23.33%)	30(100%)
New Edition	7(24.14%)	6(20.69%)	0(0.00%)		5(17.24%)	11(37.93%)	29(100%)

In the old edition, China-related topics are primarily concentrated in the Reading and Cultural Extension sections, together accounting for more than half of the total. This indicates that the old edition tends to present Chinese content mainly through reading materials and cultural enrichment texts, emphasizing students' understanding and accumulation of cultural knowledge. In comparison, the Grammar section represents 20.00% of all instances, suggesting that some China-related topics were used as examples for grammar instruction—reflecting an initial attempt to integrate linguistic form with cultural content. However, the relatively low proportion of China-related topics in the Writing, Listening, and Speaking sections reveals a limited incorporation of Chinese themes into language skill training, particularly indicating a weakness in promoting listening and speaking proficiency through culturally relevant materials.

In the new edition, the distribution pattern of China-related topics has undergone a marked transformation. The Cultural Focus section has become the primary carrier of Chinese themes, accounting for 37.93%, which highlights the new curriculum's emphasis on fostering cultural awareness. Through this dedicated cultural module, the textbook aims to deepen students' understanding and appreciation of Chinese culture. Compared with the old edition, the proportion of China-related topics in the Reading section has slightly decreased but still remains significant, indicating that reading continues to serve as the main channel for cultural input. Notably, the share of topics in the Writing section has increased considerably, suggesting that the new edition places greater emphasis on guiding students to express Chinese

culture in English, thereby reinforcing the integration of language output and cultural confidence.

However, the Listening and Speaking section contains no China-related topics, revealing that the integrated oral training still lacks sufficient cultural content—reflecting a structural imbalance characterized by “strong cultural input but weak communicative output.” Overall, the new edition demonstrates improved coherence and depth in its treatment of cultural content, especially through its focus on Chinese themes in cultural extension and writing activities. This design embodies the principle of “telling China's stories well.” Nonetheless, the absence of Chinese topics in oral skill training suggests that future revisions should strive to achieve a better balance between cultural input and communicative competence, promoting the coordinated development of cultural identity and language use.

Finally, attention is given to the modes of presentation of Chinese cultural content in the two textbook editions. Both cultural texts and pictures serve as vital vehicles for conveying meaning in language materials[12]. As a form of multimodal pedagogical resource, a textbook integrates visual and textual elements to facilitate learning[13]. Accordingly, in English textbooks, Chinese culture may appear in textual form, visual form, or through text–picture co-occurrence. Through close reading and systematic annotation of both editions, the modes of presentation of Chinese cultural content were identified. Table 6 summarizes how Chinese cultural elements are represented across the two textbook corpora.

Table 6. Modes of Presentation of Chinese Cultural Content in the Old and New Editions of the Textbooks

Textbook Edition	Text–picture Co-occurrence	Text Only	Picture Only	Total
Old Edition	13(43.33%)	10(33.33%)	7(23.34%)	30(100%)
New Edition	18(62.07%)	10(34.48%)	1(3.45%)	29(100%)

As a multimodal teaching medium that integrates both text and images, the way cultural content is presented in textbooks directly shapes students' cognitive engagement and level of cultural acceptance. Overall, the new edition places greater emphasis on text–picture integration when presenting cultural materials. Specifically, in the old edition, 43.33% of Chinese cultural content appeared in a “text–picture co-occurrence” format, whereas this proportion increased significantly in the new edition. This shift reflects the new textbooks' stronger tendency to enhance learners' cultural perception and understanding through a combination of visual and textual channels.

Meanwhile, the proportion of cultural content presented through pictures alone declined sharply—from 23.34% in the old edition to 3.45% in the new one—indicating that the new edition gives greater attention to the coherence between pictures and texts, thereby reducing the risk of fragmented or superficial cultural information. In contrast, the proportion of text-only presentations remains relatively similar across both editions, as textual material continues to serve as the fundamental vehicle for cultural transmission.

4. Conclusion

With corpus linguistics as the primary research tool, this study examined the old and new editions of the senior high school English textbooks published by Shanghai Educational Publishing House. Through analyses of word frequency,

collocation patterns, and close textual reading, it systematically investigated the themes, representations of national image, distribution, and modes of presentation of Chinese cultural content, thereby fully addressing the research questions proposed at the outset.

In terms of themes, both editions encompass four major areas related to China—major Chinese cities, representative figures, scientific and technological development, and intangible cultural heritage, while the new edition demonstrates a markedly greater thematic richness, reflecting a deeper and broader engagement with Chinese culture. Regarding national image, both editions portray a consistent vision of China as a nation characterized by a profound cultural heritage, strong technological capacity, and an open, friendly diplomatic attitude.

Significant differences emerge in the distribution and modes of presentation of cultural content. The old edition displays a “front-heavy” distribution pattern, with most Chinese-related topics concentrated in the first two years of study and largely confined to reading and cultural sections, while listening, speaking, and writing sections contain few such topics. In contrast, the new edition shows a more balanced and sustained integration of Chinese culture across both the compulsory and elective modules. It introduces a dedicated “Cultural Focus” section, increases the proportion of writing tasks featuring Chinese topics, and enhances text–picture integration, thereby promoting the alignment of

cultural input with linguistic output. Nonetheless, the absence of Chinese themes in the listening–speaking sections remains a notable limitation.

These differences reflect a fundamental shift in textbook design philosophy. The old edition adheres to an “internationalization-oriented” approach, progressing “from local to global” and treating cultural content primarily as a vehicle for language learning. The new edition, guided by the 2020 revised National English Curriculum Standards, places “cultural awareness” at its core, embodies the principle of “telling China’s stories well”, and emphasizes the synergistic development of cultural identity and communicative competence—signifying a transformation from “other-centeredness” to “cultural self-awareness.”

The findings offer several key implications for future textbook development:

(1) Broaden the scope of Chinese cultural content, deepening the exploration of traditional culture and historical figures while integrating contemporary achievements such as advances in new productive forces and rural revitalization, thus combining historical depth with contemporary dynamism.

(2) Address the imbalance in listening–speaking modules by embedding cultural materials into communicative contexts to resolve the issue of “strong cultural input but weak communicative output.”

(3) Optimize cultural content distribution across learning stages, establishing a foundation of cultural understanding in the compulsory phase and deepening it thematically in electives—for instance, through modules such as “The History of China’s Technological Development” or “Global Dissemination of Chinese Traditional Culture.”

(4) Innovate modes of presentation by leveraging digital resources to enhance the immediacy, interactivity, and experiential depth of cultural learning in classroom practice.

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