

The Analysis of Cultural and Intercultural Elements in Mandarin as a Foreign Language Textbooks from Selected Malaysian Public Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Language cannot be taught outside the culture of the society. A foreign language learner needs to learn the context and the cultural elements to avoid conflicts and misunderstanding arising from differing values, beliefs, and customs. Hence, foreign language instruction needs to emphasise intercultural communicative competence and include cultural and intercultural elements. Teaching materials such as textbooks and learning modules should also include cultural elements to develop students' intercultural communicative competence. Mandarin as a foreign language (MFL) courses has gained popularity among non-native speakers in local higher education institutions (HEIs) as the enrolment for this course has risen. However, there does not seem to be studies determining whether cultural elements are incorporated in the course and in the textbooks used. This study investigates whether the cultural and intercultural are incorporated elements in MFL textbooks from seven selected public HEI in Malaysia. Directed content analysis is used based on the cultural and intercultural framework for communication. The findings indicate that there were insufficient cultural and intercultural elements in most of the sampled textbooks. This means that in future, textbooks written for MFL should include cultural and intercultural elements for better understanding of the language.

Keywords: *textbook, content analysis, cultural elements, intercultural communicative competence, teaching Mandarin as a foreign language*

INTRODUCTION

Language does not exist in isolation but is part of a society and culture. This is especially true for foreign language instruction where language and culture are intertwined and cannot be separated (Brown, 2000; Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006, Kramersch, 1993; Liddicoat, 2001; Paige, et al., 2003; Shen, 2004; Ho, 2009; Xia, 2013). Communication between people of different cultural background may be misunderstood in an intercultural setting, as interpretations are based on assumptions and perceptions from one's own culture (Kramersch, 1993; Liddicoat, 2001). Distinction of vocabulary, syntax, language styles, non-verbal behaviour, values, beliefs, as well as customs between cultures could also cause conflicts and misunderstanding during intercultural communication (Lu, 2004; Shen, 2004; Sun, 2011). Thus, using a language without understanding the cultural background may lead to misunderstandings and conflicts (Brislin, 1995; Hammer, 1999; Wolfson, 1989). Although it would be

unrealistic to expect learners of a foreign language to achieve the communicative competence of a native speaker and assimilate into the target culture, the learner still needs to acquire the use of the target language in specific social and cultural contexts (Liddicoat, 2001; Risager, 1998). Learners need to learn the context and culture for communication (Gudykunst & Kim, 1992; Paige, 2003). Hence, cultural elements need to be included in the foreign language curriculum (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Jin, 2012).

The intercultural approach in foreign language teaching promotes linguistic competence as well intercultural communicative competence (ICC), and aims at developing awareness of the cultural differences which may interfere with communication and understanding between the learner's own culture and the target culture (Byram, 1997; Byram et al., 2002; Kramsch, 1993). The goals for the cultural learning include learning culture and its impact on human communication, behaviour and identity. There is cultural-specific learning, which involves the acquisition of knowledge and skills relevant to a target culture, and culture-general learning, which refers to the knowledge and skills that are generalizable and transferable across the culture such as cultural adjustment and learning in the cross-linguistics interactions (Paige, 1997; Paige et al., 2003). In recent years, cultural learning in a foreign language is focused on higher order learning outcomes rather than a static culture involving memorization of cultural facts (Liddicoat, 2001; Paige et al., 2003). Therefore, mastering a foreign language alone does not ensure one's competency in the intercultural communication, and ICC is not a naturally occurring phenomenon, numbers of researchers have pointed out that culture learning needs to be explicitly addressed in foreign language curriculum (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Jin, 2013; Kramsch, 1993; Robinson, 1978; Stern, 1983).

Thus, in light of the necessity to equip MFL learners in local HEIs with communicative competence to cope with the variety and complex social contexts, it is essential that teaching materials comprising of textbooks and modules are designed to include cultural and intercultural elements as well as relevant pedagogical strategies. Textbooks are an important resource for instruction in a course of study (Cunningsworth, 1995). As the core resource material in a course, textbooks serve as the basis for language input in the classroom (Tomlinson, 1998; Wu, 2010). In addition, when teachers use textbooks for planning their instruction, it can impact the teacher's delivery of content (Cunningsworth, 2002).

There was a rapid expansion in MFL courses in local higher education institutions over the past two decades (Fan, 2011; Hoe, 2014; Yap, 2011). At present, all 20 public HEIs in Malaysia offer MFL as an elective course, and three of the universities offered MFL as a minor programme (Hoe, 2014; Yap, 2011). MFL is also offered in Malaysian polytechnics, vocational colleges, as well as private universities and colleges in Malaysia (Hoe, 2012). The enrolment for MFL has been increasing in recent years as more Malaysian non-native speakers are taking this course. There was a total of 21,693 students enrolled for MFL courses in one semester in 20 public universities in Malaysia based on the statistics in 2011 (Hoe, 2014).

Most of the local public HEIs was employed textbooks which published from China (36.8%) and some compiled based on adaptation of China published MFL textbooks and local published MFL textbooks (26.4%) (Hoe, 2014). However, there was limitation of China MFL textbooks in terms of cultural and intercultural dimension, such as non-systematic and non-standard of cultural contents (Wang, 2014); and intercultural communication consciousness were insufficient and not given attention in the contents (Deng, 2012; Zhou, 2004). The MFL textbooks published from China was designed and developed based on the China social context, and not considered the characteristics of local peoples, culture and social environment, the textbooks were more adequate for the teaching of Mandarin as a second language, and not for teaching Mandarin as a foreign language as in Malaysia (Wang, 2016).

In terms of local published MFL textbooks, Tan's (2007) research discovered that majority of the local MFL textbooks was emphasized on linguistics skills, and the inclusion of cultural knowledge in the textbooks was insufficient. However, Tan did not elaborate in what extend the cultural knowledge was absent in the sample textbooks and suggestions for the cultural content for MFL textbooks was not provided. The research gaps need to be answered by further studies. Hoe's (2016)

survey on 20 local public higher education institutions (HEIs) and reported that majority of the public HEIs did not include much cultural information in the textbooks, only some information concerning Chinese festival and local festivals were found from some textbooks. Cultural knowledge was integrated through students' assignment as formative assessments and co-curricular activities in a few public HEIs. However, detail information on cultural and intercultural content from the MFL textbooks for each HEIs was not provided by Hoe (2016).

Due to the limited studies concerning the cultural and intercultural elements incorporated in the local published MFL textbooks, the present study seeks to fill the research gaps by investigating the cultural and intercultural elements presented in selected MFL textbooks or modules of local HEIs by employing a content analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural Elements in Foreign Language Textbooks

There are various cultural models which have been adopted for foreign language instruction. There are two major types of models: the static view of culture, and the dynamic view of culture (Liddicoat, 2001). The static view of culture treats culture as facts and artifacts such as information on the country, people, their lives, history, institution, customs, cultural icons such as literature, art, architecture or music while the dynamic view of culture considers culture as a set of practices in which people engage and involve with linguistic and non-linguistic practices of culture (Liddicoat, 2001). The language-speaker demonstrates intercultural competence when he knows how language is in the culture and understands the way of living in a particular cultural context (Liddicoat, 2001).

Risager (1991) has employed a framework to study cultural content in the foreign language textbooks comprising of micro and macro levels of the culture, as well as the intercultural issues. The micro level of culture refers to the social and cultural anthropology phenomena which covers the social characters, situation of interaction, the subjectivity of the characters in feeling, attitudes, values and perceiving. The macro level of culture relates to the social, political, and historical matters. The foreign language textbooks need to touch upon the intercultural issues and make comparisons between the target culture and the learners own culture to avoid the stereotypes and conflicts among cultures (Risager, 1991; Byram, 1997). This is because learners tend to interpret the situation according to their own culture and expectation, often leading to misunderstanding (Kramsch, 1993). Byram and Planet (2000) pointed out that making comparisons made the strange culture become familiar, and thus easier to accept. Learners will also acquire deeper understanding of their own culture and appreciate the differences between the two cultures (Liddicoat, 2001).

The teaching foreign language curriculum used in Europe and North America emphasized the Big C and Little c culture. The elements of Big C culture refer to achievement culture such as art, literature, music, architecture, heritage of civilization and thought (Lussier, 2011). Little c culture refers to behaviour culture, and culturally-influenced beliefs and perceptions, or ideas (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993, Lussier, 2011). Behaviour refers to customs, habit, dress, foods, and leisure, as well as ideas related to beliefs, values and institutions (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993).

The Little c culture (Tomalin and Stempleski, 1993; Lussier, 2011) and Micro-Level Culture (Risager, 1991) reflect similar characteristics, as they refer to behaviors and ideas such as customs, habit, foods, dress, leisure, beliefs, values, behavior, moral, institution and norm, social identity, social interaction, daily routines.

Cultural Elements in Mandarin as a Foreign Language Textbooks

Cultural content for teaching MFL was divided into two categories from the functional approach: communicative-culture and knowledge-culture (Zhang, 1990). Communicative-culture was referred to linguistic and non-linguistic cultural elements that influence the accuracy of the messages exchanged, which may result in miscommunication or misunderstanding when two people from different cultural backgrounds communicate, while knowledge-culture refers to the linguistic and non-linguistic cultural elements which do not directly influence the accuracy of the exchange of messages (Zhang, 1990).

Chen (1992) categorised the cultural elements of communicative-culture in language structure (语构), meaning (语义) and pragmatics (语用). The cultural elements in language structure was reflected in the grammatical structure, through the construction or formation of the vocabulary, phrases, sentences, rhetoric and idioms. It embodies the cultural features and characteristics, thoughts, principle and ideology of the people (Chen 1992, Liu, 2002; Xia, 2013), such as collectivism, emphasized on hierarchical and patriarchal. For example, the structure for the phrase “*Lǐ xiǎojiě 李小姐*” (Miss Li), places the surname “*Li 李*” before the noun “*xiǎojiě 小姐*” (miss) was contrary from the English and Malay language structure in which the surname is placed after the given name, as Chinese placed importance and respected hereditary ancestral surnames, placing priority to the family rather than the individual (Ding, 2010; Shen, 2004).

The cultural elements in “meaning” were displayed in vocabulary, lexis, idiom, proverb, saying, metaphor, and symbolization that demonstrated the unique concept, meaning and thoughts of the Chinese and the concepts may sometimes have no equivalent meaning in other languages or with diverse meaning (Chen, 1992; Liu, 2002; Xia, 2013). Learners may not understand the meaning of the vocabulary if they did not study the cultural meaning, and cause misunderstanding when communicate with the native speakers. There were many vocabularies in Mandarin which embodied the cultural elements in meaning, such as *lóng 龙* (dragon), *gǒu 狗* (dog), *zhú 竹* (bamboo), etc. (Liu, 2002). For example, *lóng 龙* (dragon) brought specific meaning in Chinese due to the extended and metaphorical meaning. *Lóng 龙* dragon is a symbol of power, strength, good luck, and growth in Chinese culture. “*Wàng zǐ chéng lóng 望子成龙*” literally means “hoping the son to become a dragon”, the dragon refers to the successful, excellent and outstanding people (Shi, 2009). Hence, the learners need to identify the cultural meaning which hidden in the target language. Other culturally vocabularies included “*xǐjǔ 喜酒*” (wedding dinner), “*bàinián 拜年*” (new year visit), “*kèqì 客气*” (courtesy), “*zǒu le 走了*” (passed away).

The cultural elements in “pragmatics” refers to the language used in cultural protocol, social context, custom, and interpersonal relationships (Chen, 1992; Shi, 2009; Xia, 2013). The cultural elements are concealed in speech act of greetings, appellation, leave-taking, appreciation, apologies, dining, gift giving, praise, compliments, privacy and taboos (Liu, 2002; Shi, 2009; Xia, 2013). For example, in Chinese greetings, the expression “*Nǐ hǎo 你好*” (Hello) is usually employed in formal situations or between unfamiliar people, for close friends, expression used such as “*Qù nǎr? 去哪啊?*” (Where are you going?), “*Chī le ma? 吃了没?*” (Have you eaten?) “*Qù shàngbān ya? 去上班呀?*” (Going for work?) which not mean to invade one’s privacy but just to show care and concern. Besides, Chinese rejected compliments and praises by saying “*nàlǐ nàlǐ 哪里哪里*” (there is nothing to be proud of) or “*Nǐ guòjiǎng le 你过奖了*” (you have overpraised me) to show humble (Ding, 2010; Liu, 2002). Due to the culture of courteous and modest, Chinese usually declined for the gift they received in the first place, and expressed “*Nǐ tài pò fèi le 你太破费了*” (You have spent too much money) or “*Nǐ tài kèqì le 你太客气了*” (You are too courteous) to show sorry for the money spent for the gift, but will only say “*xièxie 谢谢*” (thank you) after being persuade by the gift sender to accept the gift. Hence, the learners need to understand the culture that influenced the language and master the appropriate use of language during intercultural communication to avoid misunderstanding and conflicts.

Intercultural Elements for Foreign Language Textbooks

Intercultural competence is defined as the complex abilities that are required to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself (Fantini, 2009). Bryam’s model of intercultural communicative competence stated that the learners are guided to acquire essential competencies in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and awareness in order to develop intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997).

Intercultural knowledge enables the learners to explore and gain knowledge on the cultural products and practices such as the customs, social class, beliefs and taboos (Byram, 1997). Learners need to understand the processes of society and individual interaction in target culture and their own culture such as the levels of formality in the language and the interpretation of gestures, (Byram, 1997; Byram et al., 2002). The learners recognize the diversity in the ways of living and the socio-cultural context in target culture and the understanding of the relation (similarity and distinctive differences) between one's own and the target community (Lussier, 2007).

The intercultural skills mean the ability to use a variety of language strategies in order to adjust to different contexts and communicate with people from other cultures (Lussier, 2007). Learners are required to develop skills of interpreting and relating which involve the ability to identify ethnocentric perspectives and misunderstanding in intercultural interaction, and to reduce or avoid the conflicting situations. The skills of discovery and interaction involved the ability to identify the significance, connotations, similarities and differences in verbal and non-verbal interactions between target culture and learners own culture in order to establish effective communication (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006).

Intercultural attitudes refer to the ability to see other cultures and one's own from different perspectives with curiosity, openness and readiness. (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006). It involves cultural awareness and the understanding and acceptance of other cultures, the integration of other values and the ability to overcome stereotypes in relationships (Lussier, 2007).

Lastly, the learners need to have conscious awareness in evaluating or judging their own culture and other cultures, and able to mediate in the intercultural interaction with a degree of acceptance, rational perspective and position (Byram, 1997).

The learners may gradually become competent intercultural speakers and be able to mediate between the target culture and their own culture as they acquire the above competencies (Byram 1997; Byram et al., 2002). In order to promote and develop intercultural communicative competence, the foreign language materials and resources should provide the learners the opportunity for exploration in language and culture knowledge, allowing learners to make connections between their own lives and experiences and the target language and its speakers for meaning-making and interpretation, to raise awareness of language and cultures and their relationship, provide scaffolding for learning, and to stimulate intercultural reflection (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2009).

In present study, the cultural content investigated from the sampled textbooks was divided into cultural elements and intercultural elements. Generally. The cultural elements in MFL textbooks can be categorised into knowledge-culture (Zhang, 1990) and communicative-culture (Zhang, 1990). Knowledge-Culture proposed by Zhang (1984) was similar to Big C culture and Little c Culture which recommended by Kramsh (2013), Lussier (2011) and Tomalin & Stempleski (1993), and Macro-culture and Micro-culture as proposed by Risager (1991). Communicative-culture was included the cultural elements in language structure, semantics and pragmatics as proposed by Chen (1992). The intercultural elements investigated from the sampled textbooks were based on the theory of Byram (1997). All cultural elements and intercultural elements from the textbooks were identified based on the definition and classification of cultures given by the respective scholars as reviewed and discussed in the literature (also see Table 2).

METHODOLOGY

Content Analysis

Content analysis is a systematic analysis of text to make inferences (DeWitt, Alias, Chin & Naimie, 2013; Weber, 1990). The text is systematically analysed, interpreted and verified in order to investigate problems (DeWitt et al., 2013; Mayring, 2000). Thus, content analysis is a research technique which provides new insights, increases the understanding of the researcher in understanding a particular phenomenon, and informs practice (Krippendorff, 2013).

The present study employed the qualitative analysis of quantitative data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The text data were coded in explicit categories and then described using statistics (Hsieh &

Shannon, 2005). Weber (1990) reveals the best content analysis studies use both qualitative and quantitative operations.

Hsieh & Shannon (2005) define qualitative content analysis as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p.1278). The directed content analysis approach with deductive application in qualitative content analysis was employed in the present study. In directed content analysis, the researcher uses existing theory or prior research to aid in the identification of the variables in order to develop the coding scheme or the initial coding categories for data analysis (DeWitt et al., 2013; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Sample

The selection of the textbooks sampled for the study would need to take into the account issues of representativeness, access, size of the sample and the generalizability of the result (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). In order to address the issue of the sample being representative of the textbooks being used, seven sample textbooks from seven premier HIE in Malaysia course were selected (see Table 1). These sample were elementary-level MFL teaching materials (textbooks or modules) from the total of 19 local public HIE which offered MFL course (Fan, 2011).

Table 1 List of Selected Sample Textbooks for the Study

Sample	Book Title	Year Published
A	Mari Belajar Mandarin [来学中文]	2014
B	Mandarin Level 1 [华语壹]	2013
C	Communicative Chinese 1 [华语你我他]	2013
D	Mandarin 1 [初级华语]	2012
E	Conversational Mandarin Chinese 1[会话华语1]	2009
F	Mandarin for Beginners [初级华语]	2007
G	Bahasa Mandarin Fundamental Buku 1 [基础华语第一册]	2005

Defining the Categories

In order to define the categories, a coding scheme was outlined to guide the researcher in making decisions in the analysis of the content and organizes data into categories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The coding scheme was consisted of two main categories: the cultural elements and intercultural elements. The established categories were established based on the literature review as summarised in Table 2. The cultural elements to be studied in the present study consisted of Knowledge-Culture (Zhang,1984) and Communicative culture (Zhang, 1984, Chen, 1992). The elements of Knowledge-Culture (Zhang,1984) were similar to Little c culture (Kramsh, 2013; Lussier, 2011; Tomalin & Stempleski; 1993), Micro-Culture (Risager, 1991); Big C Culture (Kramsh, 2013; Lussier, 2011; Tomalin & Stempleski; 1993), Macro-Culture (Risager, 1991), as well as static view of culture (Liddicoat, 2001). Communicative culture (Zhang, 1984, Chen, 1992) was refers to the cultural elements in language structures, meaning and pragmatic in Mandarin as a foreign language.

Table 2 Cultural Elements and Intercultural Elements Investigated in Elementary Mandarin Textbooks

	Category	Indicators	Examples of evidence
A	Cultural Elements		
	Little c Culture (Kramsh, 2013; Lussier, 2011; Tomalin & Stempleski; 1993)	Customs, habit, foods, dress, leisure, beliefs, values, social identity, social interaction, beliefs, behavior, daily routines.	Etiquette when visiting, behavior in gift-giving and receiving, table manners, traditional attire, Chinese cuisine, beliefs in auspicious and inauspicious numbers, values of filial piety, politeness, honesty, modesty, tolerant, etc.
	Micro-Culture (Risager, 1991)		
	Big C Culture (Kramsh, 2013; Lussier, 2011; Tomalin & Stempleski; 1993)	Heritage of civilization and thought, such as art and crafts, literature, music, artifacts, architecture, etc.	Chinese characters, Chinese calligraphy, Chinese lanterns, paper-cuts, Chinese knots, Chinese ink painting, lion and dragon dance, chess, art of Chinese tea-drinking, etc.
1. Knowledge Culture (Zhang,1984)	Macro-Culture (Risager, 1991)		
	Static View of Culture (Liddicoat, 2001)		
2.Communicative - Culture (Zhang, 1984; Chen, 1992)	i. Cultural elements in language structure	Cultural elements reflected in the grammatical structures.	Language forms in address and appellation, forms of Chinese names, forms of dates and time, language forms in asking about someone age, and surname, etc.
	ii. Cultural elements in meaning	Cultural elements displayed through vocabulary, lexis, idioms, proverb, sayings, metaphors, and symbolization.	Address of congratulatory in festive events and occasions, Chinese family kinship titles, 12 symbolic animals in Chinese zodiac, meaning of Chinese cuisine, etc.
	iii. Cultural elements in pragmatics	Cultural elements reflected in language used, cultural protocol, social context, social custom, and interpersonal relationship.	Expressions in formal and informal greetings, leave taking, thanks, compliments, apology, invitation, expressions in gift giving and receiving, linguistic taboos, etc.

B	<p>Intercultural Elements (Byram, 1997; Paige et al., 2003)</p>	<p>Exploration in target culture and learner’s own culture towards the development of intercultural knowledge, skills, attitudes and awareness through activities and tasks, such as discussion on comparison of the similarities and differences between target culture and learners’ own culture, intercultural problem-solving tasks, etc.</p>	<p>Comparison of the differences or similarities between two cultures, such as comparison on formal greetings, non-verbal behaviors in greetings, appellations in greetings, address forms, kinship titles, Chinese name and student’s own name, gift- giving etiquette, family values, connotation of numbers, traditional festivals, cuisine, etc. Discussion or problem solving of intercultural issues which causes stereotypes or misunderstanding, such as greetings behavior between different cultures. Interactive tasks which involve target culture and students’ own culture.</p>
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Coding Process

The content analysis processes started with the selection of the unit of analysis (Cavanagh 1997; McCain 1988). Guided by the research questions of the study, the unit of analysis could be a letter, a word, sentence, portion of pages or words, the number of participants in discussion or the time used for discussion (Elo et. al., 2014). The evaluation units for Communicative-Culture were words, phrases, and sentences in dialogues and texts. The evaluation units for Little c culture and Big C culture elements included the dialogues or texts in the chapters as a whole. The evaluation units for the intercultural elements involved the input of intercultural understanding and intercultural awareness activities suggested in the chapters, such as discussion, tasks, role-play, and problem-solving. The investigated cultural elements were retrieved from the evaluation units.

A categorization matrix of analysis was developed to code the data according to the categories (See Table 2). All data were reviewed for content and coded for correspondence with or exemplification of the identified categories (Polit & Beck 2004). For each unit of analysis, the coder determined whether each category was present and ticked when present. The descriptive statistics on the frequency or prevalence of each category was calculated.

Trustworthiness

The researcher has given careful attention and concern to several research procedures and aspects in order to meet the trustworthiness of the method in the present study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative research which included credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

For credibility, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested procedures such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, referential adequacy and member checking.

In this study, the cultural elements of the materials were coded by the researcher and another coder. Coding guidance and training was provided to the coder to ensure the validity of the coding process. The consistency of coding was checked and assessed during the process of coding using peer debriefing and member-checking. Any differences arising between coders were reviewed, discussed and resolved. In this study, the coding scheme was developed based on the findings of

literatures reviewed. The coding scheme was established and covered a few categories of cultural elements.

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be transferred to other different settings, contexts or groups (Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen, & Kyngäs, 2014; Polit & Beck, 2012; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). In the present study, the sample textbooks chosen for the content analysis were representative of the textbooks being used in the local higher learning institutions. There is a remarkable homogeneity of the samples in terms of contents, themes selection, instructional design and learning outcomes. There is a possibility the findings and results of the present study could be generalise to other elementary-level Mandarin textbooks in other higher learning institutions of the region.

According to Zhang & Wildemuth (2009), dependability and confirmability are established through audits of the research processes and findings. In this study, dependability is determined by checking the consistency of the processes in the investigation, and confirmability is determined by checking the internal coherence of the research product, i.e. the data, findings, interpretations and the recommendations. Meanwhile, face validity as well as internal validity achieved through audit or inspection by panel of experts or co-researchers (DeWitt et al., 2013, Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The topics in the textbooks sampled were mainly on greetings, making introductions, family, numbers, time, dates, professionals, places, daily activities, making telephone calls, shopping, and eating out, which were topics scheduled for one semester. The presentation in the textbooks emphasized on the drilling of skills for speaking, listening, and reading. The main texts in all textbooks were presented in the form of conversational dialogue.

Generally, the contents and the design of the sampled textbooks were similar to the elementary-level MFL course offered in most of the Malaysian HIE. Thus, the research findings could be generalised. The selected textbooks were written by local writers who were mostly lecturers in the related HIE and published by local publishers from 2005 to 2014. The result of content analysis on the sampled Mandarin textbooks is based on the number of cultural elements in the sample (see Table 2).

Table 3 Percentage of Cultural Elements and Intercultural Elements in Sample of Textbooks

Sample	Total of Chapters in the book	Cultural Elements			Intercultural Elements (%)
		Little c Culture/ Micro level-Culture (%)	Big C Culture/ Macro level-Culture/ Knowledge Culture (%)	Communicative-Culture (%)	
A	11	44.4	18.2	45.5	27.3
B	8	50.0	0.0	62.5	37.5
C	3	100.0	0.0	100.0	100.0
D	10	60.0	0.0	60.0	20.0
E	8	37.5	0.0	62.5	25.0
F	10	50.0	0.0	60.0	10.0
G	8	25.0	0.0	62.5	12.5
Mean	58	52.4	2.6	65.1	33.2

*Percentage is for total of chapters in the sample

The percentage of chapters with cultural and intercultural elements observed in the sample textbooks are in Table 3. A total of 58 chapters from 7 textbooks were analyzed in the study. Communicative-Cultural elements were most frequently presented (mean = 52.4%) in the sampled textbooks while the Big C culture was least presented (mean = 2.6%) (see Table 3). Only sample A had some Big C culture elements in the textbook. However, Little c culture was fairly represented in the sampled textbooks with an average of 52.4% for the total chapters. There was one textbook (sample C) which had Little c culture content in all chapters.

There were eleven chapters in Sample A. The content of micro level-Culture emerged in 44.4% of the chapters while Communicative-Culture was in 45% of the chapters. Only 18.2% of the chapters touched upon Big C culture and 27.3% dealt with intercultural elements. This is considered a low representation of culture. Elements of Little c culture in sample A was related to formal greetings, making introductions in formal and informal situations, and food (Chinese tea and herb-tea). Big C culture was presented in two chapters: Chinese Characters and Phonetics. Content which reflect the three types of cultural elements in Communicative-Culture were forms of appellation, forms of Chinese name, semantics of Mr. and Miss in Chinese, making introduction in formal situation, expression in formal & informal greetings, apology, thanks, compliments, Chinese family kinship titles, form of dates and time, congratulatory speech in festive events, and politeness speech. However, there were no activities or tasks involving intercultural understanding in sample A, especially on comparing differences between cultures. Sample A only introduced some vocabulary related to other cultures in terms of festivals (Christmas and Deepavali), food (*McDonald*, *cola-cola*, *nasi lemak*, *satey*, and *roti canai*) and names of city and states in Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, Labuan, Johor, Sabah, Pahang, etc.).

In sample B, 50% of the 8 chapters included elements of Little c culture and 62.5% of the chapters included Communicative-Culture which is considered a moderate representation of culture. However only 37% of the chapters had intercultural elements and none of the chapters had any Big C culture. Elements of Little c Culture which was present in sample B were related to formal greetings, making introductions in informal situations, food, and telephone conversation. Some of the contents in sample B reflected three types of Communicative-Culture, which dealt with expressions in formal and informal greeting, apology, thanks, form of dates and time, Chinese family kinship titles, Chinese cuisine (buns, rice noodles, Chinese tea, *kuaytea*, and chrysanthemum), polite speech, and leave-taking. However, there were no activities or tasks concerning intercultural understanding or intercultural communication in sample B. There were only some vocabularies on ethnicities (*Malays*, *Indian*, *Iban*, *Kadazan*, *Bidayuh*), and food (*roti canai*, *nasilemak*, Indonesia fried rice, hamburger, french-fries, and cola-cola) which related to other cultures in Sample B.

There were three chapters in sample C. All the chapters had elements of Little c culture, Communicative-Culture and intercultural elements. However, there was no Big C culture in sample C. Elements of Little c culture in sample C were concerning formal and informal greetings, making introductions in formal and informal situations, food and drinks. Sample C only had two types of Communicative-culture, which are culture elements in meaning and pragmatics for formal and informal greetings, asking for surname in formal situations, forms in asking someone's age, polite speech, phrases of praise, informal greetings, Chinese cuisines (Chinese tea, bean-curd soup), and hosting a feast. Intercultural elements in sample C were merely reflected from some vocabulary related to food (Malay food, Indian food, and western food), and Malaysia's states and capitals. However, there were no instructional strategies proposed for the development of students' intercultural communication competence.

In sample D, the statistics showed that 60% of the 10 chapters dealt with Communicative-Culture and Big C culture. Only 20% of the chapters had intercultural elements and there was no Big C Culture. The elements of Little c Culture in sample D were presented in the topics concerning greetings, making introductions in formal and informal situations, family, dates and festivals. There was Communicative-Culture in sample D which reflected through language structure, meaning and pragmatics, such as formal and informal greetings, forms of appellation, forms of

Chinese name, apologies, making introduction in formal situation, Chinese family kinship titles, form of date and time, congratulatory speech, and Chinese zodiac. Similar to the earlier three samples, intercultural elements were only present superficially in sample D through some vocabulary (proper noun) on Malaysia's ethnics, states, countries and cities; and congratulatory address in festive events. There were no intercultural activities suggested in sample D.

Most of the content in sample E were related to Communicative-Culture, which was 62.5% of the content in the 8 chapters in the book. Little c culture and intercultural elements were insufficient, and was only 37.5% and 25% of the total content respectively. There were no elements of Big C culture in sample E. Little c culture only appeared in three topics: formal greetings, making introductions in formal situation and family. There was not much Communicative-culture elements found in sample E, only a little on expressions in formal and informal greetings, forms of appellation, forms of Chinese name, Chinese family kinship titles, and form of date and time. There were less intercultural elements in sample E. Only vocabulary on Malaysia states and cities, and forms of appellation used by Malays were presented in the textbook. There were no intercultural activities and tasks suggested in sample D.

Sample F was similar to sample E. About 60% of the content in 10 chapters was related to Communicative-Culture, while 50% was on Little c culture and only 10% was on intercultural elements. None of the chapters contained elements on Big C culture. The elements of Little c culture emerged in sample F was related to Chinese formal greetings, making first acquaintance in formal and informal situations, and introducing family members. The contents in sample F reflected three types of Communicative-Culture (Cultural elements in language structure, in meaning and in pragmatics), but only a few elements were presented such as expression in formal greetings, forms of appellation, forms of Chinese name, forms for dates and time, Chinese family kinship titles, making requests, and polite speech. Intercultural elements were reflected through some vocabulary in relation to the forms of Malay appellations. There were no intercultural activities and tasks in sample D.

Sample G has mainly elements of Communicative-Culture, which is 62.5% of the content. The representations for Communicative-Culture and intercultural elements were low, only involved 25% and 12.5% of the content respectively. Similarly, to most of the samples (except sample A), there were no elements of Big C Culture in sample G. Elements of Little c culture was only reflected in two topics: greetings and making first acquaintance in formal and informal situations. The content in sample G reflected three types of Communicative-Culture but only a few elements were presented, such as different forms of appellation, expression in formal and informal greetings, forms of Chinese name and surname, making introduction in formal situation, family kinship titles, different forms in asking about someone age, and forms of date and time. Intercultural elements were not found in Sample G.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The content analysis indicated that most of the sampled textbooks from local public HEIs did not provide sufficient and authentic target cultural knowledge. In most of the sampled textbooks, elements of Little c culture or Micro culture mainly reflected in the topics of greetings, making acquaintances, family, food and drinks as categorized by Kramsh (2013), Lussier (2011), and Tomalin & Stempleski (1993). Topics in other chapters such as numbers, dates, time, daily activities, places and shopping did not display the Little c Culture of the target culture. It is necessary to include elements of Little c culture in the textbook which involve issues such as customs, daily routines, social interaction, social group and identity, values, behaviours, and beliefs as categorized by Risager (1991), Tomalin & Stempleski (1993). Insufficient elements on Little c culture may due to the lack of related cultural knowledge and understanding of the target culture among the students, thus affecting communication with the target people in society. Misunderstanding and conflicts may arise due to the cultural differences between the target culture and students' own culture in terms of Little

c Culture. The possible explanation for the lack of cultural elements may be due to the course feature of the elementary Mandarin which mostly emphasized on communicative skills. Hence, the study recommended that the topic of greetings should emphasize the appropriate language used according to formal and informal situations, and also non-verbal behaviour. For the topics related to numbers, the connotation of numbers, especially for auspicious and inauspicious numbers in Chinese culture should be introduced. For topics related to food and drinks, the cultural elements particularly on types of Chinese cuisine and table manners are necessary to present in the textbooks. In the topic of shopping, the content could include introduction to Chinese cultural artefacts such as jade and traditional costumes and attire. Values of filial piety, politeness, honesty, modesty, and tolerance are appropriate to include in language texts or dialogues to expose the Little c culture to the learners.

The analysis revealed that the content of the MFL textbooks from the selected public HEIs pertained to elements of Big C culture (Kramsh, 2013; Lussier, 2011; Tomalin & Stempleski; 1993) or Macro-level culture (Risager, 1991) were not given emphasis and was absent in most of the textbooks. The insufficiency of Big C culture may have affected the communication between the learners and the speakers of the target language. Hence, it is suggested that knowledge of Big C culture should be provided in the textbooks to aid students to recognize and understand the Chinese culture. The study recommends that Big C culture can be presented as an extra short reading stuff at the end of each topic, such as Chinese characters, Chinese calligraphy, lion and dragon dance, art of Chinese tea, Chinese lanterns, paper-cuts, Chinese knot, Chinese ink painting, chess, and etc.

The findings also indicated that the content of the selected sampled Mandarin textbooks was mostly demonstrated the elements of Communicative-Culture as proposed by Chen (1992). However, the study revealed that the cultural elements of Communicative-Culture were implicitly presented in the texts, these elements were not highlighted nor provide further descriptions in the textbooks. Students may not understand or paying attention to the particular cultural points if no information given in the textbook and no further explanation were provided by the teachers. Culture and intercultural elements needs to be explicitly addressed in the curriculum (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Jin, 2013; and Kramsch, 1993). Essential cultural information could avoid learners making assumptions and stereotypes from their own culture or pre-existing cultural knowledge (Kramsch, 1993, Liddicoat, 2001). In terms of Communicative-Culture (Chen, 1992) language structures and grammar, cultural meaning in vocabulary, as well as pragmatics from texts and dialogues in different cultural context need to be pointed out and emphasized.

Findings of the study showed that there was a low percentage of intercultural elements in most of the sampled textbooks. However, intercultural elements (Byram, 1997; Paige et al., 2003) were reflected from some vocabulary in the textbooks but not being emphasized. Intercultural activities were also not provided in the sampled textbooks. Intercultural activities should carry out to enhance students' intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in terms of intercultural knowledge, skills, attitudes and awareness, such as cultural comparison (Risager, 1991; Byram; 1997), problem solving, intercultural tasks, intercultural interaction and reflection. In terms of cultural comparison, students are encouraged to discuss the differences or similarities between Chinese culture and students' own culture in formal greetings, non-verbal behaviors in greetings, appellations in greetings, address forms, kinship titles, Chinese names and student's own name, gift giving etiquette, as well as dining and visiting etiquette. It is important to find out the distinction between cultures to avoid interpretation of target culture according to learners' own culture and expectation which often caused misunderstanding (Kramsch, 1993). Making cultural comparisons could aid learners in making the strange culture become familiar, easier to accept the new culture (Byram and Planet, 2000), acquire deeper understanding of their own culture, appreciate and aware of the differences between the two cultures (Liddicoat, 2001). The intercultural elements can be further reinforced through role plays, tasks-based activities, and online discovery. Such activities are appropriate to propose and provide in the textbooks to develop students' intercultural communicative competence. The Big C culture (Macro-Culture) and Little c culture (Micro-Culture) were components of "knowledge" competence (Lussier, 2011) which also contribute to the development of learners' ICC.

Finding from the content analysis revealed that the content of the selected sampled textbooks was mostly focus on linguistics skills, i.e. reading, speaking and listening which supported the finding of Tan (2007) and Hoe (2016), rather than cultivating cultural and intercultural understanding and awareness. The content analysis from present study was also filled up the research gaps of Hoe (2016) study in the survey of integration of cultural elements in MFL among twenty local public higher education institutions (HEI) as the analysis was not comprehensive due to the lack of detail information on cultural and intercultural content of the MFL textbooks from each HEIs. The directed content analysis conducted in present study has compensated Tan's (2007) study which was not given emphasis on the analysis of cultural content from the nine surveyed MFL textbooks from local HEIs.

CONCLUSION

Result from the study revealed that current MFL textbooks from local public HEIs do not provide sufficient cultural and intercultural elements for the learners. Hence, there is a need for more textbooks and modules in MFL compiled with appropriate and adequate cultural and intercultural elements. Language teachers should ensure the textbooks are included appropriate and sufficient cultural and intercultural content, as well as effective pedagogical strategies to enhance students' intercultural communicative competence in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and awareness (Byram, 1997). The results of the study also provided insight and useful information for the design and development of culturally oriented MFL textbooks especially for local public HEIs.

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Appendix A: Cultural Elements in each Chapter of the Sample Mandarin Textbooks

Sample	Chapter	Cultural Elements					Intercultural Elements
		Little c Culture/ Micro level-Culture	Big C Culture/ Micro level- Culture/ Knowledge Culture	Communicative-Culture			
				Cultural elements in “language structure”	Cultural elements in “meaning”	Cultural elements in “pragmatics”	
A	1. Hanyu Pinyin (Phonetic) 汉语拼音	-	√	-	-	-	-
	2. Chinese characters 汉字	-	√	-	-	-	-
	3. What is your name? 你叫什么名字	√ Making introduction in formal situation	-	√ forms of appellation, forms of Chinese name	√ semantic of Mr and Miss in Chinese	√ asking Chinese surname in formal situation	-
	4. Greetings 问候	√ Chinese formal greetings	-	-	-	√ expression in formal & informal greetings	-
	5. Polite expressions 礼貌用语	√ Chinese politeness speech	-	-	-	√ apology/ thanks/ compliments	-
	6. My Family 我的家	-	-	-	√ Chinese family kinship titles	-	√ names of the national states and cities
	7. My University 我的大学	-	-	-	-	-	-
	8. Numbers 数字	-	-	-	-	-	-
	9. Dates & Festivals 日期与节日	-	-	√ form of dates and time	√ congratulatory speech in festive events	√ politeness speech	√ name of festivals in other culture (Christmas/Deepavali)
	10. Inviting 邀约	-	-	-	-	-	-
	11. Food & Drinks	√ Chinese tea,	-	-	-	-	√ western & local food

食物与饮料	herb-tea				(hamburger/coke/nasilemak/satay/roti canai)
Total (chapters)	4/9	2/11	5/11		3/11
%	44.4%	18.2%	45.5%		27.3%

Sample	Chapter	Cultural Elements					Intercultural Elements
		Little c Culture/ Micro level-Culture	Big C Culture/ Macro level-culture/ Knowledge Culture	Communicative-Culture			
				Cultural elements in “language structure”	Cultural elements in “meaning”	Cultural elements in “pragmatics”	
B	1. Greeting and Daily Expressions 问候语和日常用语	√ Chinese formal greetings	-	-	-	√ expression in formal & informal greetings/apology/ thanks	-
	2. Feeling and Senses 感知	-	-	-	-	-	-
	3. Numbers and Time 数字和时间	-	-	√ form of dates & time	-	-	-
	4. Daily Routine and Activities 日常活动	-	-	-	-	-	√ types of foreign languages (Arabic/ French)
	5. Personal Description 自我介绍	√ Making introduction in informal situation	-	-	√ Chinese family kinship titles	-	√ national ethnicity (Malays/Indian/Iban/ Kadazan/Bidayuh); names of national states and cities
	6. Food & Drinks 饮食	√ Ordering Chinese food and drinks in Chinese restaurant	-	-	√ Chinese cuisines (bun, rice noodles, Chinese tea, kueytea, chrysanthemum)	√ politeness speech	√ local & western food (roti canai/nasilemak laksa/curry/hamburger french-fries/ cokes)
	7. Telephone Conversation 通电话	√ etiquette in making calls and answering	-	-	-	√ politeness speech, leave taking	-

		phone(cultural behavior)					
	8. Shopping购物	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Total (chapters)	4/8	0/8	5/8			3/8
	%	50%	0%	62.5%			37.5%

Sample	Chapter	Cultural Elements					Intercultural Elements
		Little c Culture/ Micro level-Culture	Big C Culture/ Macro level-culture/ Knowledge Culture	Communicative-Culture			
				Cultural elements in “language structure”	Cultural elements in “meaning”	Cultural elements in “pragmatics”	
C	1. Knowing Your Friend 认识朋友	√ Chinese formal greetings; making first acquaintance in formal and informal situation; leave taking	-	-	-	√ expression in formal & informal greetings; asking surname in formal situation;forms in asking someoneage,politeness speech,speech of praise	√ names of national states and cities
	2. First Day of School 上学的第一天	√ Making first acquaintance in formal and informal situation	-	-	-	√ politeness speech, informal greetings	√ types of foreign languages (English/ Spanish)
	3. Eating Out and Shopping 外出用餐与购物	√ Ordering Chinese food and drinks in Chinese restaurant	-	-	√ Chinese cuisines (Chinese tea, bean-curd soup)	√ politeness speech thanks/ give a feast	√ local & western food (<i>roti canai/nasilemak</i> /curry/hamburger steak/ cokes/curry head-fish/ fried vege with <i>belacan</i>)
	Total (chapters)	3/3	0/3	3/3			3/3
	%	100%	0%	100%			100%

Sample	Chapter	Cultural Elements			Intercultural Elements
		Little c Culture/	Big C Culture/	Communicative-Culture	

		Micro level-Culture	Micro level-Culture/ Culture Knowledge	Cultural elements in "language structure"	Cultural elements in "meaning"	Cultural elements in "pragmatics"	
D	1. Hello你好	√ Chinese formal greetings	-	-	-	√ formal & informal greetings	-
	2. Good Morning 早上好	√ Chinese formal greetings	-	√ forms of appellation, forms of Chinese name	-	-	-
	3.How Are You你好吗	√ Asking wellbeing	-	-	-	√ Apologies	-
	4. What is your name? 你叫什么名字	√ Making first acquaintance in formal and informal situation	-	√ forms of Chinese name	√ Chinese surname; forms of appellation; Chinese name	√ asking Chinese surname in formal situation	-
	5. I am Malaysian 我是马来西亚人	-	-	-	-	-	√ nationality(Chinese/Malaysian) ethnicity (Malays/ Indians/ Thais); world cities
	6. My Family我的家	√ Chinese family	-	-	√ Chinese family kinship titles	-	-
	7. What is your telephone number? 你的电话号码是多少	-	-	-	-	-	-
	8. What is your Profession 你做什么工作	-	-	-	-	-	-
	9. What is today's date? 今天几号	√ 12 animals sign in Chinese zodiac; zodiac of the year	-	√ form of dates	√ congratulatory speech; Chinese zodiac	-	√ congratulatory speech(<i>SelamatHari Raya</i> / Happy Deepavali/ Merry Christmas

10. What is the time now? 现在几点	-	-	√ form of time	-	-	-
Total(chapters)	6/10	0/10	6/10			2/10
%	60%	0%	60%			20%

Sample	Chapter	Cultural Elements					Intercultural Elements
		Little c Culture/ Micro level-Culture	Big C Culture/ Micro level-Culture/ Knowledge Culture	Communicative-Culture			
				Cultural elements in “language structure”	Cultural elements in “meaning”	Cultural elements in “pragmatics”	
E	1. Hello你好	√ Chinese formal greetings Making first acquaintance in informal situation	-	-	-	√ expression in formal & informal greetings	-
	2. Who is he?他是谁	√ Making introduction in formal situation	-	√ forms of appellation, forms of Chinese name	-	-	√ forms of appellation in other ethnics
	3. Numbers数一数	-	-	-	-	-	-
	4. My Family我的家	√ Chinese family	-	-	√ Chinese family kinship titles	-	√ names of national states and cities
	5. What is today’s date? 今天几号	-	-	√ form of dates	-	-	-
	6. What day is today? 今天星期几	-	-	-	-	-	-
	7. What is the time now? 现在几点	-	-	√ form of time	-	-	-
	8. What are you doing? 做什么	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Total(chapters)	3/8	0/8	5/8			2/8
	%	37.5%	0%	62.5			25%

Sample	Chapter	Cultural Elements					Intercultural Elements
		Little c Culture/ Micro level-Culture	Big C Culture/ Micro level-Culture/ Knowledge Culture	Communicative-Culture			
				Cultural elements in “language structure”	Cultural elements in “meaning”	Cultural elements in “pragmatics”	
F	1. How do you do?你好	√ Chinese formal greetings; Making first acquaintance in informal situation	-	-	--	√ expression in formal greetings	-
	2. What is this? Who are they? 这是什么? 他们是谁?	√ making introduction in formal situation	-	√ forms of appellation, forms of Chinese name	-	-	√ forms of appellation in other ethnics
	3. What day is it today? 今天星期几	-	-	√ forms for dates	-	-	-
	4. What is the time now? 现在几点	-	-	√ forms for time	-	-	-
	5. What do you want to buy? 你要买什么	-	-	-	-	-	-
	6. Who else are there in your family?你家有什么人	√ Chinese family	-	-	√ Chinese family kinship titles	√ politeness speech	-
	7. Watching Television看电视	-	-	-	-	-	-
	8. Today’s Weather 今天的天气	-	-	-	-	-	-
	9. Making a Telephone Call 打电话	√ etiquette in making calls and answering phone (cultural behavior)	-	-	-	-	-
	10. Making a Visit拜访	√ Visiting etiquettes	-	-	-	√ politeness speech	-
	Total(chapters)	5/10	0		6/10		1/10
	%	50%	0%		60%		10%

Sample	Chapter	Cultural Elements					Intercultural Elements
		Little c Culture/ Micro level-Culture	Big C Culture/ Micro level-Culture/ Knowledge Culture	Communicative-Culture:			
				Cultural elements in "language structure"	Cultural elements in "meaning"	Cultural elements in "pragmatics"	
G	1. Greetings问候	√ Chinese formal and informal greetings;	-	√ forms of appellation,	-	√ expression in formal & informal greetings	-
	2. What is your name 你叫什么名字	√ Making first acquaintance in formal and informal situations	-	√ forms of Chinese name	√ Chinese surname	√ asking Chinese surname in formal situation	-
	3. Professional职业	-	-	-	-	-	-
	4. Numbers数目	-	-	-	√ Chinese family kinship titles	√ forms in asking about someone age	-
	5. Time时间	-	-	√ form of time	-	-	-
	6. Dates日期	-	-	√ form of date	-	-	-
	7. Places哪里	-	-	-	-	-	-
	8. Daily activities日常活动	-	-	-	-	-	√ restaurant <i>Nyonya</i>
	Total(chapters)	2/8	0	5/8			1/8
	%	25%	0%	62.5%			12.5%