

**CULTURE AND LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY IN CHINESE FOREIGN  
LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

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Fiona Bewley

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The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, a thesis/dissertation entitled:

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**Examining Committee:**

Duanduan Li  
Co-supervisor

Patricia Duff  
Co-supervisor

Qian Wang  
Additional Examiner

## **Abstract**

Culture is central to a language learner's trajectory to develop communicative competence. Textbooks are often the first point of contact to a foreign language (FL) learner's target culture. It's the textbook's responsibility to authentically help learners in their construction of cultural knowledge. With this responsibility comes a significant amount of power. For instance, many foreign language materials choose to reinforce inequality and nationalist cultural and linguistic ideologies. This thesis explores the language ideology behind the cultural representations in two popular series of Chinese foreign language (CFL) textbooks published in China: *New Practical Chinese Reader* and *America: Integrated Chinese*. Although many studies explore cultural representations in English FL textbooks, there is a scarcity of comparable studies focusing on CFL textbooks. Borne from my own experience, I often found CFL materials to be culturally reductive and outdated. A handful of scholars are challenging the cultural aspects and ideological orientations of CFL textbooks, and this thesis adds to that body of research. By way of thematic analysis, I chose a semiotic framework to connect pictures and texts about culture themes and analyze the latent ideologies of the textbook series.

The prominent themes I found in the series published in the U.S. (Liu, Y. 2010) relate to basic language functions. Although the textbook employed traditional approaches to grammar sections and pattern drills (Zhou, 2011, p. 144), overall its approach attempts to be more interactive and communicative than the series published in China. Cultural themes in the materials published in China illustrate traditional learning styles and emphasize traditional culture. Both series reduce culture to nationalist ideology, which feeds into native-speaker bias, and are outdated in their representation of technology in FL use.

I conclude that textbook authors must shift the focus of textbooks onto the learner's needs. Additionally, teachers and students must be aware of the types of representations they come across. They must employ open and communicative methods to deconstruct them. Finally, textbooks authors must match learners' realities through more use of technology, more open-ended communicative style exercises, and instead of idealizing native speakers, they should promote the goal of reaching communicative competence.

## **Lay Summary**

Culture is central to a language learner's experience and communication skills. Although cultural dimensions of language learning represent a field with growing popularity, there are few studies on culture in Chinese foreign language (CFL) materials. In CFL materials, culture is often presented as a fixed notion. There are many different Mandarin-speaking cultures internationally and a vast range of learners, and culture is not as simple a construct as the CFL textbooks would like us to believe. I look at some of the problems with cultural representations by analyzing themes in two CFL textbooks series: *Integrated Chinese* (IC), published in the US, and *New Practical Chinese Reader* (NPCR), published in China. IC focuses on the culture of student life and NPCR on traditional Chinese culture. I found that IC teaches basic skills and NPCR teaches more formal ways of communication. I argue that textbooks must shift from stereotypical representations and traditional learning styles to focus more on current learners' lives and needs.

## **Preface**

This thesis is the original work of the author Fiona Bewley.

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## **Dedication**

For Dominic, because words matter.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The shift in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) and education away from a grammar-translation approach to the development of communicative competence placed new importance on the teaching of target culture in foreign language pedagogy. The study analyzes four Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) textbooks, *Integrated Chinese, Level 1, parts 1 & 2* (Liu, Y., 2010) and *New Practical Chinese Reader 1 & 2* (Liu, X., 2010), by exploring the types of cultural representations that may influence Mandarin language learners' experiences and the language ideologies underpinning them. Analysis of language ideology has become a central device for uncovering cultural representations. The guiding belief of this study is that all language manifests ideology irrespective of its intent. The personal grounds for this research are rooted in my own eight-year long Mandarin learning journey. Below I briefly introduce my own experience before defining (language) ideology and its roles in textbooks.

The intention of this study is not to disparage certain textbooks because they express an ideology or contain skewed representations of culture; it is to raise awareness of the influence of language ideology on learners, and to suggest methods for more effectively addressing the issue. This study will not only add to current scholarship in SLA but also make second and foreign language learners, teachers, and textbook publishers more sensitive to the existence of language ideology, especially in cultural representations in textbooks.

### **1.1 Background**

When it comes to Chinese textbooks, the existing research is much smaller than that in the field of English as a foreign or second language. The main studies of cultural representations in Chinese textbooks are those of Curdt-Christiansen (2008), Hong and He (2015), Ying Li (2016), and Chen & Black (2016). One ethnographic study that influenced me enormously is

Edward McDonald's (2011) linguistic ethnography *Learning Chinese, Turning Chinese*. In chapter two of his book he "examines some of the common textbooks currently used at university level and the different *traditions of language learning* that lie behind them" (p. 7, emphasis his own). He argues that "these traditions, deriving from both Chinese and Western sources, each carry their own historical baggage and are not necessarily suited to the needs of contemporary students" (p. 7). Edward McDonald's book and his unyielding critique of Chinese language materials inspired me to continue with Chinese studies at the graduate level. He writes that although

the majority of current textbooks claim to be organised in line with the communicative paradigm, in practice they tend to mix elements from all three paradigms [communicative, grammar-translation, and classical] within an overall framework whose aims and methods are often not clearly articulated and which reflect usually implicit and unanalysed assumptions about the nature of teaching and learning. (p. 47)

As Macdonald points out, although Chinese textbooks claim to be "in line with the communicative paradigm" by their use of simple dialogues between two learners, some of the dialogues are illogical and awkward – far from anything representing real life communication. For example, Chinese textbooks could limit comprehension for language learning students by their "characterization of teachers and students as forming a family immediately [which] calls to mind the Confucian world view" (p. 48). This automatically creates a hierarchy within the classroom and is neither compliant with communicative methods nor necessarily useful for a learner who is accustomed to an entirely different teaching style. McDonald (2011) raises many elements of Chinese textbooks that baffle students. Some of these I experienced myself, especially during the early stages of my language learning.

Consider the regular use of the polite pronoun 您 *nín* in dialogues in the textbooks. I found it is actually not normally used between two Mandarin students. Moreover, textbooks

insist on using *nín* rather than introducing honorifics such as the use of a surname and 先生 (Mr.) or 小姐 (Ms.) (McDonald, 2011, p. 50). This brings us to another misleading gateway into a regular conversation with Chinese speakers: “你好吗？” A common translation in textbooks is “How are you?” yet this phrase does not function as “How are you?” does in English. Not only is this misuse an enormous linguistic faux pas in many CFL materials; it lacks any cultural footing and often hinders an authentic conversation with a Mandarin speaker. Textbooks would serve students much better if they taught more regularly used situationally dependent greetings such as “回来了？ You’re back” or “买东西了？ You’ve been shopping?” –which would also provide extensive cultural understanding at the same time. As McDonald (2011) observes, trying to provide translated equivalents for Mandarin learners in their own contexts (his was Australia) “often [results in] a kind of ‘Englese’ that would never actually be used in a Sinophone context” (p. 52). If educators fabricate target language material and the culture within them to suit their own view of how the language *should* be spoken, then how can the learners be expected to efficiently navigate the target language and culture? McDonald (2011) provides the following summary:

In analysing textbooks such as these, it is hard to avoid a strong sense of puzzlement. From the point of a student of Chinese, it would seem that, far from facilitating their entry into sinophone culture, textbooks seem to be designed to make that process as difficult as possible and to prevent the “outsider” from ever becoming “insider”. (p. 54)

The misrepresentation of Chinese culture or the simple inability to provide language learners with examples of authentic language use lends deeper credence to the commonplace assertion that *Chinese is one of the hardest languages to learn*.

Some background on Chinese heritage and language is essential for this study. The Chinese government recognizes 56 official ethnic groups. The dominant Han Chinese ethnic

group makes up 92% of the mainland Chinese population, 98% of Taiwan, and 95% of Hong Kong (Hong & He, 2015, p.92). Mandarin (*putonghua* on the mainland and *guoyu* in Taiwan) is the native tongue of the majority of Han, Hui, and Manchu ethnic groups and the official standard language in China. Mandarin is spoken worldwide, in large diaspora communities, and is one of four official languages in Singapore. It is also spoken extensively among Chinese ethnicities in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, where it is known as *huayu*. For clarity throughout the study, the term *Mandarin* will be used interchangeably with *Chinese* to indicate that language. On occasion *Chinese* refers to an ethnicity and encompasses more than simply Mandarin speakers.

### **1.1 Research Outline**

In order to analyze a representative selection of cultural themes, I have chosen the following two series of textbooks for my study: *New Practical Chinese Reader 1 & 2*, (NPCR) and *Integrated Chinese 1 & 2* (IC). IC is published in the United States and is a popular Mandarin textbook series at the post-secondary level, both in North America and other countries in the world. NPCR is a long-standing popular textbook series published in China, which is also used in many countries outside China. These two series are two of the most popular textbooks in CFL classrooms worldwide (Zhou, 2011).

My research questions are as follows:

1. What cultural themes are present in the selected CFL textbooks?
2. How do these themes reflect the language ideology of their authors and assumptions about the ideal reader?
3. What are the differences and similarities between the cultural themes in these textbooks?
4. What are the implications of these cultural themes in these textbooks for Mandarin learners, teachers, and textbook authors?

## 1.2 Theoretical Framework

### 1.2.1 Communicative competence in SLA

Scholarship examining the representation of culture in foreign language textbooks has, of late, begun to question the motivation of textbook authors. As *communicative competence* has eclipsed *grammar-translation* as the dominant approach in second language education, textbooks have changed their emphasis. Citing Hymes (1971), Edward McDonald (2011) defines a *communicative approach* to language teaching as one that includes “not only knowledge of the language-internal aspects of a language – its pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar – but also an understanding of the appropriate use of language in social contexts” (p. 41) Undoubtedly, achieving communicative competence includes grammatical competence, though the communicative approach focuses on the use of culturally appropriate language across a variety of social situations. As Savignon (2017) points out, “Speakers need know not only grammatical structures but also norms of usage and appropriacy in a given social context” (p. 2).

A communicative approach affords foreign language learners more agency than the conservative idea of fostering accuracy and **grammatical/lexical control**, primarily. The communicative approach focuses on understanding of context before placing too much value on, say, correctness. Bialystok and Hakuta (1994) support the common view that learners of additional languages require much more than a grammar-translation approach to communicate competently: “It is thus not sufficient to learn just the grammatical forms of the language. There is a relationship between the forms of language and how they are used to express meanings and intentions in appropriate ways” (p.162).

“Appropriacy” refers to culturally specific pragmatics in different contexts. If learners are to develop communicative competence, their learning must go beyond grammar-translation

methods so that they understand how to speak or communicate appropriately in contexts where their L2 is used. Ellis (1994) expands on the subject:

Early work in SLA research did not entirely neglect pragmatic aspects of learner language. However, they were attended to only insofar as they helped to explain how learners acquired grammatical competence... Only recently, however, have researchers considered the acquisition of pragmatic competence in its own right. (p. 23)

Ellis describes how the notion of pragmatics entered the world of SLA as communicative competence and replaced traditional grammar-translation techniques with more context-centered, communicative methods. But this development has also focused attention on the *contents* of context, i.e. the values, beliefs, ideas, objectives, and notions of common sense that foreign or second language (L2) learners now constantly encounter in their studies.

### **1.2.3 Communicative competence in CFL materials**

In the 1990s, Chinese instruction in the United States began to see a rise in communicative and proficiency approaches, represented by the new series of Chinese language textbooks entitled *Integrated Chinese* (Zhou, 2011). “On the communicative dimension,” Zhou (2011) observes, “*Integrated Chinese* uses topics as units of organization so that information gaps can easily be taken advantage of in proficiency-oriented classrooms, if a teacher intends to go into that area” (p. 144). Here Zhou is referring to a technique employed by IC that encourages students to ask teachers for extra vocabulary if say, their state, country, or hobby was not on a list. Zhou (2011) continues, “Equally popular [to *Integrated Chinese*] in teaching Chinese as a foreign language TCFL textbook adoption in the 1990s was *Practical Chinese Reader*, and now *New Practical Chinese Reader* has probably become more popular than any other TCFL textbook since its publication in the early 2000s” (p. 144). Although NPCR, as Zhou (2011) explains, have added “some communicative tasks” (p. 144), he criticizes the series for giving teachers “the comfort zone they need in classroom applications [of the textbook] regardless of

their training and pedagogical orientation” (p. 144). This means that, unlike IC, the layout of NPCR does not encourage teachers to implement communicative methods. The content and exercises in NPCR do not help students initiate and shape their own language learning trajectory.

Many textbooks nowadays claim to take a communicative approach, though they often fail to provide an accurate depiction of how they do it. Teaching communicative competence involves educating students on their target language culture. The interpretation of culture differs from person to person – especially considering their relationship to the material, be it textbook author, publisher, teacher, or student. These interpretations influence the way in which we use language. How to represent culture in teaching materials is part of language ideology. The following section discusses definitions of ideology and language ideology.

#### **1.2.4. Ideology**

“The word ‘ideology’,” Friedrich (1989) writes, “is associated with a confusing tangle of common sense and semitechnical meanings” (p. 300). Scholarship is divided when it comes to a concrete definition. Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity (1998) identify three common definitions. In the first definition, ideology refers to social norms that go deeper than culture: In the broadest instance, ideology is taken to be the more intellectual constituent of culture, “the basic notions that the members of a society hold about a fairly definite . . . area such as honor... the division of labor” (Friedrich, 1989, p. 301)—or, we could propose, language” (p. 5). Generally speaking, ideology stands for universally accepted notions about a specific aspect of society, such as values, the ways in which people organize their lives and how they communicate.

The second definition of ideology from the Schieffelin et al. (1998) is a product of more recent theory, and “is not necessarily conscious, deliberate, or systematically organized thought,

or even thought at all; it is behavioral, practical, prereflective, or structural” (Schieffelin et al., 1998, p. 6). These first two definitions are neutral, whereas the third one takes a more critical approach. “The third major strand of ideology, often seen as following from the second,” they write, “is a direct link to inhabitable positions of power—social, political, economic” (ibid, p.7). First, ideology stands for certain beliefs, second these beliefs manifest in certain behaviors and structures (neutral view) and third, these structures are used for oppressive or political means (critical view). This third understanding of ideology is about uncovering power differences and the influential ideologies belonging to dominant social powers.

The basic division between neutral definitions of ideology and critical definitions of ideology characterize ideology scholarship (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994, p. 57). Kroskrity (2004) writes,

The distinction between neutral ideological analysis (focusing on ‘culturally shared’ beliefs and practices) and critical ideological analysis that emphasizes the political use of language as a particular group’s instrument of symbolic domination may seem more gradient than dichotomous (p. 501).

Many English foreign language (EFL) textbook analyses adopt a critical stance due to the way in which certain “Englishes” propagate dominant ideologies (Song, 2013; Xiong, 2012; Jumiah, 2016). Indeed, no applied linguist can ignore the body of work published over the past few decades devoted to the deconstruction of colonialist narratives in English textbooks. The expansion of Mandarin programs has taken a different course, and I therefore use a more neutral understanding of ideology for my coding and analysis stages. That being said, I adopt a more critical approach in my discussion section when talking about how China’s nationalist ideology influence the way in which Chinese is taught worldwide. A critical approach helps uncover China’s lack of representation of other ethnic groups and countries where Mandarin is widely spoken.

### **1.3.4 Language Ideology**

Language ideology is ideology as it is expressed through or about language. It is an accepted approach to analyzing certain uses of language in a given context. Language ideology is latent and always present irrespective of an author's intent. It comprises, as Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity (1998) note, the "representations, whether explicit or implicit, that construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world" (p. 3). Language ideology represents subjective beliefs and ideas that rationalize or justify "perceived language structure" (Silverstein [1979]; quoted in Woolard & Schieffelin 1994, p. 57). These beliefs and ideas constitute "shared bodies of commonsense notions about the nature of language in the world" (Kroskrity, 2004, p. 496) and refer "to the situated, partial, and interested character of conceptions and uses of language" (ibid.).

Context plays an important role in deciphering language ideologies. Kroskrity (2004) writes that language ideologies emphasize "a static uniformly shared culture" rather than capturing the "dynamic forces which influence change" brought about by social and linguistic variation (p. 500). But I argue that it is the context within which the language ideologies emerge that provides insight into how a society sees itself and also how it wants to be seen. For while language ideology as an analytical tool may appear static, it does deliver insight into language practices and beliefs that a fixed cultural perspective may not arrive at. Kroskrity (2004) provides an example of a critical approach to language ideology, namely the use of the "generic he" that underwent strong feminist scrutiny and is now deemed grammatically incorrect (p. 496). Similarly, one could argue that the recent creation of a neutral pronoun in Swedish – "hen" – was borne out of societal change through language ideology. As pointed out by Leeman (2012), these notions are "rarely, if ever, exclusively about language" (p. 43). Through language, they reflect

societal and cultural values at a given time. Acceptance by people in positions of power cultivates what is considered to be grammatically and politically correct. Leeman (2012) names a few examples including “what constitutes ‘correct’ usage” (p.43), which dissects the concept of language being a fixed entity and touches on native speaker bias; and “how particular groups of people ‘should’ speak in given situations” (p. 43), which identifies a kind of social conformity in language use. Leeman’s examples show that there is a decisive measure governing what is acceptable, and those who are accepted into social groups are expected to share the same norms and beliefs.

This ties in with Kroskrity’s (2004) idea of language as a boundary, that the ideology accompanying language use stems from the segregation of some ethnic groups and the recognition of others. Language ideology is an interface between language and society; its influence stems from its latent acceptance. Often, ethnic groups and society are not aware of certain beliefs: “Linguistic ideology is not a predictable, automatic reflex of the social experience of multilingualism in which it is rooted; it makes its own contribution as an interpretive filter in the relationship of language and society” (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994, p. 8). Language expresses the implicit beliefs, ideals, and values that society perpetuates.

For political leaders, curriculum developers, publishers, and authors, language ideologies can be used to shape cultural values. One example of this power is the numerous Confucius Institute projects across the globe (Paradise, 2009; Starr, 2009; Wang & Adamson, 2014; Wang, 2016). Wang (2016) states that they “aim at manifesting a new and positive image of the country” [China] (p. 2). Gil (2017), in his recent book *Soft Power and the Worldwide Promotion of Chinese Language Learning*, challenges the ways in which Confucius Institutes promote CFL and Chinese culture. Wang and Adamson (2014) report that the media in China propagates them

“as a successful national cause and a significant achievement in winning hearts and minds in the global community” (p. 229). Confucius Institutes pursue their “national cause” through the spread of Chinese culture, values, morals, and beliefs in their language materials. “There is evidence to suggest that the Chinese language is widely seen as a conduit through which knowledge and understanding of Chinese culture and China itself can be transmitted to the world” (Gil, 2017, p. 32). Considering China’s re-emergence as a global power, it’s in their national interest to control the way in which the international community interacts with them. Such control is often referred to as “soft power” (Gil, 2017; Lo Bianco, 2014). Nye (2004) defines it as a nation’s way to obtain what they want through appeal and selection as an alternative to coercion and payment. His examples of soft power institutions include cultural industries such as Hollywood and also universities.

Wang (2016), quoting Lo Bianco (2014), notes that language-based “nationing” has been “exercised beyond the political borders of existing citizens through the attraction of cultural activities and language education” (p. 2). When nation-states seek to influence learners using nationalist ideologies, it puts nongovernment textbook authors and publishers into a difficult position. On the one hand, educators want to promote cultural diversity and teach societal norms for students to communicate competently in their target language. Yet on the other, students need to find their own reality and express their own meanings in their target language. As Li (2016) points out, “Chinese teachers also encounter the challenging task of having to respect linguistic diversity while promoting the “common” standards in other countries” (p. 1). This puts teachers at a cross-section of international relations. Can culture be taught in such a way that observes students’ needs to acquire communicative competence and at the same time remain neutral

towards nationalist ideologies? The final section of this thesis looks into the role of nationalist ideology in culture instruction and suggests a method of how to address it.

Language ideology permeates our lives and shape how we view the language we use on an everyday basis, as well as the others we may speak. If teachers and learners alike are aware of that cultural essentialization, both can focus their attention on discussing and understanding the target language and culture. This introduction has created a framework for my study of CFL textbooks. The following chapter makes the case for textbooks as a site of investigation by reviewing previous studies of textbook language ideology. Afterwards I present an approach for analyzing culture based on the work of other researchers.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review: Language Ideology and Culture in Textbooks**

This chapter discusses research into the ideology and culture of language textbooks. First, I provide examples of previous research that focus on the language textbook as a site of investigation. Then I discuss some key studies that examine language ideology and culture in foreign language textbooks.

### **2.1 Language textbooks as a site of investigation of language ideology**

As noted in the previous chapter, for many years now, textbooks have been objects of investigation in SLA and applied linguistics. Scholars have gained insight into common ideologies, depictions of power, social norms, and sociopolitical trends by exploring ways in which textbooks make meaning. FL textbooks are crucial components across many curricula and have a powerful influence on learners. For beginner students, textbooks are often the first point of contact with their target language culture. “Since textbooks are institutionally sanctioned artifacts used within formal educational encounters such as school lessons,” observe Weninger and Kiss (2015), “learners are likely to treat these textbooks as carriers of truth” (p. 54). Not only do textbooks provide insight into institutional ideology; they typically represent language learner’s first exposure to their target culture.

Curdt-Christiansen (2008) regards Chinese heritage language textbooks “as social and cultural artifacts” (p. 111). Like many other scholars, Curdt-Christiansen believes that a textbook’s setting gives it meaning. Textbooks are artifacts that represent a certain time and reflect “social and historical practices” (Kramsch & Vinall, 2015, p. 11). Mooznah and Owodally (2014) argue that they are “historically shaped and historically situated, and thus are constrained in particular ways” (p. 335). As such, textbooks anchor certain values, belief sets, and ideologies in circulation at the time of their publication. Weninger and Kiss (2015) describe language

education material as “static and observable” “time capsules” that “present an insight into language pedagogy at some point in time” (p. 50). Mooznah and Owodally argue that context provides the most significant information of any textbook analysis (p. 326). Treating textbooks as artifacts means studying them as ethnographers would a cultural object (Wang, 2016).

Weninger and Kiss (2015) support this view and urge researchers to approach “textbooks as both cultural and pedagogical artifacts, and offer insight into the interplay of representations along with the pedagogic use to which they are put” (p. 63). Textbooks, in other words, can tell us about the social ideology of a particular period or place, as well as its pedagogical approach.

The research on textbooks’ power to influence and reflect culture requires more scholarly attention. Azimova and Johnston (2012), whose work investigates language ownership in Russian FL textbooks, note that critical analyses of foreign language textbooks are only beginning to appeal to researchers. “In light of the central importance of the textbook in language teaching, it is surprising that until recently, relatively little research attention was paid to textbooks or to a critical examination of the representations they offer” (p. 337). This is not the case for studies of English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) textbooks, where the volume of research largely outweighs that of other foreign languages. Examples include: Shen & Su, (2015); Weninger & Kiss, (2013); De Costa, (2016); Liu & Qu, (2014); Camase, (2009); Cortazzi & Jin (1999); Xu, (2013). This body of scholarship has been a driving force for work on textbooks for other foreign languages (typically also European ones). For instance, Elissondo (2001) and Leeman and Martínez (2007) investigate Spanish textbooks and the cultural values they reproduce.

Christiansen and Weninger (2015) observe that no textbook is ideologically neutral (p.142). Regardless of their intentions, textbook authors and collaborators, and publishers –

often, many are involved in the process – decide what should and should not appear in a textbook and in so doing invariably essentialize culture against an ideological backdrop. As Danesi (2007) points out, “Nothing sits redundant on a page in a textbook” (p. 92). The role of textbook authors and publishers is not to avoid essentialization but to accept that it happens and reflect on the choices they make. Since it is impossible to speak outside the framework of a language ideology, what is crucial is to look at how textbooks treat the ideology or ideologies that inhabit them. Before discussing how to deal with ideology in textbooks, researchers must first uncover them.

Heritage language education materials are a popular site to study language ideology and culture. By studying them researchers uncover “institutional responses” (Li & Duff, 2008, p.14) to the rise of immigrant populations who may choose to enroll in heritage-language programs. In Curdt-Christiansen’s (2008) work on Chinese heritage language textbooks, she defines ideologies “as particular kinds of historical and cultural perceptions of how the world works” (p.97). One example of this is Confucianism (Curdt-Christiansen, 2008, p.98). Confucian beliefs appear “in the context of Chinese schools both in China and abroad... the appropriate ways of behaving and acting include conformity, obedience and respect for authorities” (Curdt-Christiansen, 2008, p.97). Chinese heritage textbooks emphasize these values, because the authors (or institutions) believe that even though CHL learners only have family ties to Greater China, the Confucius values should live on. This is an example of how ideology interacts with cultural norms.

Elisondo (2001) examines Latino/a culture in introductory Spanish textbooks and asks the question as whom do ideological representations in foreign language education privilege:

As demonstrated by the issues analyzed in *Que Tal? Mosaicos and Entrevistas*, textbooks tend to present versions of reality that embody certain interests, reify certain interpretations and value judgments, and give prominence to specific pieces of information while rendering others invisible or – grossly – distorted. Looking at culture

from a sociocultural perspective urges language professionals to question not only what specific knowledge is taught but more importantly whose knowledge is privileged by the foreign language curriculum. (p. 95)

Significantly, textbooks often exclude certain groups or distort their representation. It's the job of researchers to decipher which ethnic group, culture, or society benefits from such an exclusion. According to Elisondo (2001), exclusion is a common tool that marginalizes certain groups. For instance, in a content analysis of Confucius Institutes textbooks, Hong and He (2015) find ideologies of monolingualism emphasizing the Han ethnic group, "while ethnic minorities are largely marginalized and nationalities outside China under-represented" (p.104). Overemphasis or recurrent representation of dominant Han ethnic group exerts power over other groups of Mandarin speakers. Scholars have criticized institutions such as the Confucius Institute for seeking to spread soft power around the world through language education (Paradise, 2009; Starr, 2009; Wang & Adamson, 2014). In his research on Chinese language learning, Gil (2017) focuses on the sociopolitical role of Confucius Institutes across the globe. He remarks:

In the case of China's external language spread, there is evidence to suggest that the Chinese language is widely seen as a conduit through which knowledge and understanding of Chinese culture and China itself can be transmitted to the world. (p. 32)

Gil suggests a deeper, more calculated motive behind the expansion of Chinese language programs beyond "teach[ing] language as culture" (Kramsch & Byram, 2008, p. 21). The more people know about China and its culture, the wider the reach of its ideology (Nye, 2004; Lo Bianco, 2014). Lu (2004) calls CFL education a "national mission" (quoted in Gil 2017, p. 5). The agenda to spread ideology through teaching a foreign language certainly affects the content of educational material. Consequently, observes Gil (2017), China "emphasises those elements it believes the rest of the world will find most enjoyable, interesting and admirable, while ignoring or playing down others, including those it deems to be subversive" (p. 6). Through this type of

selection, dominant ideologies push the agenda of “official language policies and national educational ideology” (Zarate, 1995, p. 24). Curdt-Christiansen and Weninger (2015) argue that market driven interests as well as state ideology shape FL education materials:

The central argument of this book is that learning a language, whether dominant or non-dominant, is an ideological engagement; representations and ways of being made available to learners are profoundly influenced by issues of economic accessibility, as well as dominant sociocultural, political and pedagogical paradigms, which in turn position learners vis-à-vis the worlds they encounter through these languages. (p. 1)

Marketability is one of the main driving factors in determining textbook content. This factor is often strongly linked to dominant sociocultural ideals, which inevitably results in a narrow representation of culture in FL textbooks. The two series in this study are popular worldwide; an approach of ‘one-size-fits-all’ towards culture may be economically profitable, yet at what cost for the learner? In their study of EFL textbooks in Iran, Tajeddin and Teimournezhad (2014) argue that emphasis on a single source culture makes the content less accessible to learners from other societies. Azimova and Johnston (2012) believe that textbooks often stick to conventional, widely accepted templates that can accommodate both market demands and national education ideologies:

The academic textbook market is a lucrative one, and the desire for profit – and the concomitant fear of alienating potential users – often leads textbook publishers to toe a very conservative line, to eschew controversy, and to maintain the status quo. (p. 347)

The generalizations propagated by textbooks aim at increasing sales while reinforcing widely accepted norms. Driven by these twin objectives, textbooks take a reductionist view of linguistic, cultural, and national ideologies.

Often, cultural aspects inform the ideology of textbooks in addition to state politics and economic considerations. In the following section I consider the national, racial, ethnic, and societal beliefs and values that can be found in textbooks. I focus on two key concepts in applied

linguistics for analyzing culture: the 4-Fs approach to culture and the distinction between ‘big C’ and ‘little c’ forms of culture. Finally, I look at a study by Weninger and Kiss (2013) that uses a semiotic approach to analyze Hungarian EFL textbooks.

## **2.2 Culture in textbooks**

In 1996, the American Council on Teaching Foreign Languages identified the five goal areas of foreign language learning, the five Cs: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons and communities (ACTFL, 1996). Today, FL teaching comes hand in hand with teaching culture. Nevertheless, Claire Kramsch, a prominent scholar in the field, believes that textbooks have been ineffective vehicles for introducing culture into the practice of FL teaching and learning. “It is doubtful,” she points out, “that current textbooks could be able to bring about appreciation of differences and critical understanding of one’s own and other cultures” (Kramsch, 1987, p. 115). Kramsch does not question the textbook as a learning source; she criticizes its failure to authentically represent either source culture or target culture. Has the status quo changed since the late 1980s? The answer is no. Textbooks today continue to provide unrealistic, reductive examples of source and target cultures, as later chapters in this thesis illustrate. The stereotypes they disseminate give students little opportunity to acquire genuine cultural competence.

A trap that many educators fall into is exoticizing culture. Kramsch and Byram (2008) call this phenomenon the “4-Fs,” which stand for “folk dances, festivals, fairs and food” (p. 21). They criticize this exoticized view of culture as it denies minority outside ethnic groups social agency and cheats them out of an equal voice. In a classroom setting, how would a teacher best introduce the 4-Fs without conveying essentialized norms? Kramsch and Byram (2008) point out that teachers are “challenged to teach not language and culture, but language as culture” (p.21).

Teachers' approach to culture, and to the language ideology in the material, impacts students' experiences. Hong and He (2015), in their content analysis of Confucius Institute textbooks, describe an exoticized view of minority groups in China. The only occasion that the textbook includes an example of ethnic groups, it reduces them to their customs and traditions. Hong and He (2015) find "that [the text] comments on minority ethnic groups by merely mentioning that most ethnic groups have dazzling costumes and furnishings, without actually describing them" (p.103). This example of the "4-F" approach to culture reduces the role of ethnic groups to their dress, conveying to students how China represents different ethnic groups. Because students' communicative competence depends on their ability to navigate through such examples, teachers who are aware of, and are able to discuss the biased representations like this one, may help students acquire communicative and cultural competence.

Hong and He's analysis addresses two levels. On the surface, "dazzling costumes" represent ethnic tradition in China. But behind the representation lies a culture of marginalization that goes unmentioned. Ethnic groups in China do not enjoy the same status as the main Han ethnicity, and their treatment reflects a certain set of beliefs and behaviors that exclude other ethnic groups. These two levels – the prevailing cultural tradition and what lies beneath it – is what Holliday (1999) calls large and small culture: "in simple terms, 'large' signifies 'ethnic', 'national' or 'international'; and small signifies any cohesive social grouping" (p. 237). Freire (1987) provides a distinction between the two: "culture is the way in which the People understand and express their world and how the People understand themselves in their relation to their world." (p. 86). As a group changes, so does their understanding of themselves, which implies that first, culture is fluid understanding in constant negotiation, and second that there are two levels in interpreting culture. The one level, how a group perceives itself and behaves

accordingly (small 'c'), and on the second level, how a group see themselves in their surroundings (large 'C'). Other scholars (Alemi & Jafari, 2012; Weninger & Kiss, 2013; Arabaski & Wojtaszek, 2011; Sercu, 2005) use the more widespread terms for the same concepts: big 'C' (or capital C) and little 'c' culture. Some examples are provided by Alemi and Jafari (2012): "big 'C' contains activities and artifacts of arts and literature" and little 'c' "contains the tradition, practices and values which are common to the individuals" (p.238). This suggests that big 'C' culture is tangible; it's something we can observe directly. Little 'c' culture, by contrast, is latent; but it governs our values and beliefs. Ziębka (2011) notes that little 'c' comprises phenomena such as "politeness strategies, social distance, genre, register, meaning and interpretation of communicative intentions" (p.265). These traits only appear in certain contexts. People who share a similar culture will view them differently from outsiders. Riley (2007) uses the metaphor of an iceberg to describe the difference between big 'C' and little 'c' culture (p. 41). What we see above the water is big C culture, but it represents only a fraction of the beliefs and norms that make up most of the iceberg's mass below the surface. Good educational materials should attempt to expose and teach little 'c' culture which provide great insight into specific cultural beliefs and values. My research focuses mainly on little 'c' culture – the specific language ideology embedded in the textbooks.

Although culture is latent, it is also dynamic and fluid and is able to mold and change with people's beliefs. It is important, therefore, that teaching culture is embedded in varied contexts. Tajeddin and Teimournezhad (2014) argue that textbooks intended to teach culture must reflect the learner's L1 culture. They cite Adaskou, Britten, and Fahsi (1990), who claim that "if the language is presented in context relevant to the learner's lives, they are more motivated to learn the language" (p. 10). Instead of trying to recreate or represent a learner's

reality, textbooks can openly encourage discussion, so that teachers and students talk about the target culture based on their own experiences. Kramersch (2004) writes:

The acquisition of another language is not an act of disembodied cognition, but is the situated, spatially and temporally anchored, co-construction of meaning between teachers and learners who each carry with them their own history of experience with language and communication. Culture is not one worldview, shared by all the members of a national speech community; it is multifarious, changing, and, more often than not, conflictual. (p. 255)

Textbook authors need to realize the dynamic, changing, and conflictual nature of culture and adjust textbook content accordingly. Any depictions that treat culture as a prescribed notion fail to provide students with the correct cultural reality to communicate competently. There are often large discrepancies between representations of culture and the culture experienced first-hand by students. Kramersch and Vinall (2015) describe their experience:

In both the teaching of Spanish (Kimberly) and of German (Claire) at the university level in the United States, we were struck by the increased discrepancy between what the textbooks traditionally offered with regard to the structures of the language and the approach to culture on the one hand, and, on the other hand the deeper ideological and political worldviews that students would have to understand to operate in a global economy. (p. 11)

As Kramersch and Vinall (2015) depict, FL language education materials often fail to adequately equip students for real life situations in their target language through the culture(s) associated with it. Language structures and cultural approaches found in textbooks often lack depth and genuine representation, and these monolithic representations of culture and language leave little room for learners' own interpretations.

One method for critically thinking about representations of culture is the Bhaba's *third space* concept (Kramersch, 1993a). The third space describes a "position where they see themselves both from the inside and from the outside" (Kramersch, 2013, p. 62). Language learners consider their position vis-à-vis a text or image; once aware of their own positioning

they then can judge more easily whether they accept the message behind the text or image. A third space is somewhere students can view FL materials critically. It's both a form of learning and a space where learners can negotiate what they have learned (Kecskes & Sun, 2017). Thinking in this third space frees them from ideas about belonging to a certain nation or identity. A third space can help students reject culture as a fixed notion (Kramsch, 1993a). Not only does a third space give students agency in their own language learning; it shifts the classroom dynamic as well.

## **Chapter 3. Methodology**

This chapter describes the methods and approaches of my qualitative research. I briefly discuss the merits of qualitative thematic analysis and a semiotic approach. After introducing my research questions, I discuss my research design, coding, and the process of thematic data analysis.

### **3.1 Research Questions**

1. What cultural themes are present in the selected CFL textbooks?
2. How do these themes reflect the language ideology of textbook authors and their assumptions about the ideal imagined learner?
3. What are the differences and similarities between the cultural themes in these textbooks?
4. What are the implications of these themes in these textbooks for Mandarin teachers, textbooks authors, and language learners?

### **3.2 Qualitative methods**

I chose a qualitative approach to capture the variable nature of how ideologies emerge from the treatment of culture in textbooks. Culture is unquantifiable, therefore, studies that tally frequency of certain cultural aspects fail to fully characterize their representation and how they might be interpreted.

Quantifiable ideas about culture, especially in a textbook analysis, sets any author up for immediate scrutiny. For instance, Hong and He (2015) noted frequencies of certain cultural aspects in their textbook analysis. Their results show which cultural aspects are more prominent, yet they provide no context to the instances they identify. Holliday (2007) warns against this approach to understanding culture as it focuses on single interpretations of culture rather than “allow meaning to emerge” during the research process (p. 11). Hong and He’s content analysis

fails to describe how textbooks make meaning. It is more informative to depict *how* the cultural aspects are presented. In this study, culture is understood in two ways, first as big 'C': "the way a social group represents itself and others through its material productions, be they works of art, literature, social institutions, or artifacts of everyday life" (Kramsch, 1993b, p. 2) and second, defined here by Nostrand (1989) in Kramsch (1993b) as little 'c': "attitudes and beliefs, ways of thinking, behaving and remembering shared by members of that community." (p. 2) To understand the belief sets and ideology of different groups, a qualitative approach can provide the analysis of different representations without removing them from their context. The qualitative lens can see both the background context as well as the foreground behaviour.

The qualitative nature of thematic analysis allows my research to look into the actions that the textbook describes within the framework of their meaning. My main objective is to discuss different cultural aspects and the ideologies they represent. As Holliday (2007) observes, "qualitative research presents a statement about reality and social life that has to be continually argued and reaffirmed" (p. 1). He sees qualitative research as a prerequisite for understanding human behavior, for "delv[ing] deep into the subjective qualities that govern behaviour" (Holliday, 2007, p.7).

Furthermore, qualitative analysis methods can deepen the focus of research compared to quantitative methods. Reliable results from qualitative research demand precise methodology due to the subjective nature of interpretation. "Qualitative research," explains Holliday (2007), "has to be carefully managed as a social activity which is as ideological and complex as those it studies" (p.1). One way to approach this is for researchers to engage in self-reflection. Clear documentation of the analysis process helps researchers consider their subjectivity and bias, which, in turn, helps them see how their subjectivity influences their analysis (Holliday, 2007;

Hennick, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). Throughout this thesis, therefore, I have closely documented each step of my coding process – data collection of themes by way of inductive categorization – and reflectively comment on my own position as a researcher.

My analysis incorporates all parts of the two textbook series chosen for this study, from prefaces, vocabulary lists, drill exercises, key phrases, and dialogue texts to communication exercises, illustrations, and images. In this, I follow Kress and Bezemer (2010), who stress that due attention must be paid to all modes available in a text. They define modes as “socially and culturally shaped resources for making meaning” (p.4). Modes can be used to represent what the world is like, how people are socially related and how semiotic entities are connected” (ibid, p. 4). Modes are constituted by signs and codes, and it is these signs and codes that I analyze in constructing an overall picture of cultural themes in CFL textbooks. The idea that a ‘mode’ can signify a deeper meaning is known as the semiotic approach (Weninger & Kiss, 2013). This approach underlies the analysis in this study.

### **3.3 The Semiotic Approach**

The method I have chosen for my thematic analysis is the semiotic approach based on the research of Weninger and Kiss (2013). They look at two EFL textbooks from Hungary “with regards to the semiotic logic that engenders certain interpretations” (p. 696) where they “questioned monolithic conceptualizations of culture” (p. 694). They argue that meaning in textbooks accrues from interaction between images, texts, and exercises. A semiotic approach assumes that text and image have “complex interrelations” which represent “meaning potential”. Meanings are not fixed but interdependent on the interpretation of their context. The process that leads this interpretation is semiosis. The task of the researcher is to uncover possible meanings: “A semiotic approach enables the analyst to describe the cultural meaning potential that task,

text, and image generate without insisting that such meanings will always be derived or proposing one preferred interpretation” (Weninger & Kiss, 2013, p.699). Their semiotic study of the Hungarian EFL textbooks found that “guided semiosis” occurred in students when they learn from controlled tasks. What’s more, this guided semiosis limits cultural interpretation because it forces students to only focus on certain elements such as grammar or vocabulary “at the expense of exploring cultural connotations” (Weninger & Kiss, 2013, p. 696).

Through their analysis, Weninger and Kiss conclude that learners’ interpretations of educational materials consist of continuous dialogues between vocabulary, images, exercises, example dialogues, and texts. Bal and Bryson (1991) claim that examining culture in textbooks using semiotic analysis “will not teach us what meaning must be definitely attributed to a work; it will not provide or even discover a meaning but will describe the logic according to which meanings are engendered” (quoted in Weninger & Kiss, 2013, p.701). In other words, a textbook analysis looks beyond the meaning of the textbook.

In this thematic analysis I wish to replicate Weninger and Kiss’s (2013) study, which they characterize as “a conceptual and methodological middle ground between critical analyses of cultural representations and studies of how meaning emerges in situated interaction” (p. 700). Due to the multimodal nature of textbooks, a semiotic approach can infer meanings from images, texts, illustrations, key phrases, vocabulary, etc. The important question is not “What does this image mean?” but “*How* is meaning conveyed?” Weninger and Kiss (2013) explain that their study focuses on “the formal dimensions of the meaning-making process, on how things can mean, rather than on empirical classroom data from distinct learning contexts” (p. 696). Researchers must ask themselves how best to uncover the meaning-making process, especially when the subject study is as dynamic a phenomenon as culture.

The representation of meaning provides clues about the author's intentions and belief systems. The aim of the thematic analysis is to reveal the belief systems behind the topics. The semiotic approach, Weninger and Kiss (2013) caution, "will not teach us what meaning must be definitely attributed to a work; it will not provide or even discover a meaning." Rather, it describes "the logic according to which meanings are engendered" (p. 700). The semiotic approach focuses on the meaning-making process, not on finding a particular interpretation of meaning, and helps draw conclusions between different representations.

The concept of semiosis stems from Charles Peirce's work on signs. Peirce, a prominent semiotics researcher, developed concepts in the 1860s that are now used by discourse analysts "to describe how linguistic utterance and nonlinguistic behavior are interpreted in social interaction" (Weninger & Kiss, 2013, p.702). He argued that signs, objects, and interpretants exist in a triadic relationship known as semiosis (Weninger & Kiss, 2013, p. 702). Danesi (2007) explains the nature of Peirce's theory in more detail: "The Peircean model is referred to as 'triadic' because it posits three main components in sign constitution: the actual physical sign, the thing to which it refers, and the interpretation that it elicits in real-world situations" (p.20). As Peirce (1980) himself put it, "A *sign* is anything which is related to a Second thing, its *Object*, in respect to a Quality in such a way as to bring a Third thing, its *Interpretant* into relation with the same object" (p.92). The purpose of a sign is to signify its object as faithfully as possible. The meaning of the object becomes visible through the interpretant, and without it the object cannot be determined and the sign fails to signify. Of course, people often make different associations between signs and objects. The task of a writer is to convey meaning in way that takes into account the possibility of different interpretations. This applies in equal measure to textbook authors:

Signs are elements in which meaning and form have been brought together in a relation motivated by the interest of the sign-maker. A sign made by a textbook “producer”/ “maker”/ “designer” is re-made (interpreted) by a “user”/ “reader” (who may or may not represent the imagined audience of the textbook maker. (Kress & Bezemer, 2008, p.13)

Because decisions made about what goes into a textbook are often made by many parties, not just a single author, this study looks into the logic or belief system that the signs represent without singling out or attempting to guess what an individual author’s beliefs are. Meaning-making is implicit; its process is hidden. Signs give readers insights into how culture is represented in the Chinese textbooks, and in turn, how language is used to disseminate certain ideologies.

### **3.4 Research Design**

The decision to analyze NPCR is borne out of years of frustration and confusion with the Chinese culture on display throughout the textbook series. As noted in Chapter 1, I chose IC as a comparison because since 1990 both textbooks dominate CFL programs around the world (Zhou, 2011). Moreover, I am familiar with the cultural representations throughout the entire series of NPCR and a comparison between a textbook series published in the U.S. and one in China are relevant to my research interests. I chose to only analyze the first two textbooks in each series due to time constraints. However, beginner-level courses are often the first contact that learners have with their target culture; therefore, choosing introductory textbooks is very important.

#### **3.4.1 Thematic Analysis**

In what is known as grounded theory, the analysis starts the moment the researcher begins to read the text under investigation (Hennick, Hutter & Bailey 2011, p. 208). Data collection, also referred to as the coding process, begins once the researcher is familiar with the content. Nowell et al. (2017) advise researchers to “become immersed in the data” (p.5). Many researchers suggest two read-throughs of the content during the coding procedure (Braun &

Clarke 2006; Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2014; Hennick, Hutter & Bailey, 2011; Holliday 2007; Grbich 2010). Coding involves a constant revision of interpretations, and the content must be viewed with an analytical eye. The process involves a constant back-and-forth between the data and the researchers' notes (Hennick, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). During my data collection process, I documented each step and reflected on my observations.

The coding process in my research is inductive. Although I had some pre-existing ideas about what cultural aspects appear in the textbooks after using the NPCR series for three years to learn Mandarin, I coded the themes inductively, letting the data “speak for itself” (Hennick, Hutter & Bailey, 2011, p. 218). Once the coding was complete, I organized the codes on a spreadsheet and sorted the examples under several main thematic groups. I repeatedly returned to the textbooks to reorganize the themes and collect more examples. The next chapter presents the themes and my findings. The discussion chapter then examines the ideology that informs the cultural aspects I identified.

### **3.5 The Coding Process**

In this section I introduce specific terms relevant to thematic analysis and discuss the process of coding. *Theme*: Guest et al. (2014) define a theme as “a unit of meaning that is observed (noticed) in the data by a reader of the text” (p. 50). Texts contain layers of meaning whose themes are easier to discover when seen as a whole. Guest et al. (2014) suggest that researchers consistently ask the question “What is this expression an example of?” Ryan and Bernard (2003) define themes as “abstract (and often fuzzy) constructs that link not only expressions found in texts but also expressions found in images, sounds, and objects” (quoted in Guest, et al. 2014, p. 19). The conveyer of meaning here is the sign or code. On its own, a code may not represent an object, though codes in their aggregate can point to meanings or themes in

a body of text. For my study, codes are textual descriptions understood as signs, as I mentioned in the previous section. Guest, et al. (2014) describe a code as “a textual description of the semantic boundaries of a theme or a component of a theme” (p. 4). Danesi (2007) defines codes as “systems of signs that people can select and combine in specific ways (according to the nature of the code) to construct messages, carry out actions, enact rituals, and so on, in meaningful ways” (p. 75). Codes signify an action or a message that, when interpreted in a specific context, signify layers of meaning. Three defining concepts for codes are representationality, interpretability, and contextualization (Danesi, 2007). As previously noted, codes convey a message; this constitutes their representationality. Understanding the meaning they convey takes a careful eye to decode or interpret them. Finally, the meaning conveyed by a sign is affected by the context in which it occurs, a process called decoding (Danesi, 2007, pp.77–78).

One example of the importance of context when analyzing codes is provided by Danesi (2007): “‘A simple handshake’ must be coupled with the language code ‘Hello’ or ‘Nice to meet you’ for it to indicate a greeting to those who are unaware of its meaning. Those, however, that know its function will leave out an obvious language code like ‘nice to meet you’” (Danesi, 2007, p. 77–78). In this example, the handshake gesture is the code that carries meaning.

When analyzing texts, Canale (2016) describes her “first pass” as “open coding”: “I used broad labels such as ‘culture as historical information’ ‘culture as products’ ‘culture as practices’ and ‘culture as world view’” (Canale, 2016, p. 228, footnote n.3). The categories I uncovered during my initial reading helped organize the codes before starting the second read-through. The first pass provided an opportunity to observe the meanings that appeared. In the second step, I found examples that supported those meanings and that added new themes. During the coding process, themes slowly emerged as I asked: what are the themes and how do they relate to each

other? The second step was more detailed. I noted down examples of themes that came up and re-thought them in relation to what I previously read (Hennick, Hutter & Bailey, 2011, p. 208). The process of coding is one of constant revision and consideration. See Appendix A for the a list of themes.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

After I finished coding I noticed many themes that stood out. The first step in my data collection was to establish some meta-themes, which, as described by Guest et al. (2014), are “conceptually comprised of two or more data-driven themes that correspond to your content codes...; they are at a higher level of abstraction and not directly observed in the data.” (p. 12). After collecting the themes of my textbook analysis in a spreadsheet, I read through and compared different themes, looking for similarities and differences. Both textbooks contain many sections devoted to greetings, customs, meeting people, and forms of address; great significance was placed on how to speak to and introduce colleagues, seniors, friends, and people of authority. I then grouped these prominent themes under a particular meta-theme e.g. culture of socializing and culture of learning to organize the large amounts of data. Another method I used to find overarching meta-themes was to map out my data using a coding tree, which helped make connections more visible. Often, codes fell under more than one category, opening up new associations that I had not noticed during the coding process. (See Appendix A)

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

In this chapter I address the following research questions (1 & 2) by analyzing the data and presenting the findings:

1. What cultural themes are present in the sample of CFL textbooks under consideration?
2. How do these themes reflect the language ideology of their authors and their assumptions about the ideal reader?

I will introduce the findings for NPCR and IC separately. For each textbook series I provide their cultural themes and discuss interpretations of their language ideology. My findings are grouped into three main theme headings, or meta-themes, namely: culture of socializing, culture of leaning, and culture of tradition. I chose these three meta-themes because they highlight the formal tone that the textbook used to depict students' social lives, learning styles and contact with culture. After the analysis of each textbook, I summarize my findings and describe an "ideal student" based on the respective work's implicit assumptions.

### **4.1 New Practical Reader Volumes I & II**

New Practical Chinese Reader (NPCR) series was first published in 2002. The second edition, which I am using for my analysis, was published in 2010 with minimal content alterations. Overall, the series has six volumes, and each volume comes with a textbook, workbook and MP3 CD. Volumes I to IV are similar in their layout. I choose Volumes I and II for this research because these are likely the first books used by Chinese language learners and their first contact to the target culture. Volume I includes lessons 1-14 and Volume II lessons 15-26. Each lesson includes two vocabulary lists, two lesson dialogues, pronunciation and memorization drills, conversation practice, communication exercises, and a short narrative piece (starting from lesson 7 in vol. I). Below is a list of meta themes I found significant in their

cultural presentations and worth semiotic analysis of their hidden ideologies from these chapters  
(see Appendix A for a full list of the themes):

Culture of socializing

Honorifics

Occupations

Origins and nationality

Culture of learning

Living in a dorm

Activities / hobbies

Nationality

Lifestyle

Learning Mandarin

Writing characters

Traditional Culture

Traditional dress

The arts

In the following sections, I address each theme individually.

**4.1.1 Culture of socializing**

As a whole, social interactions in NPCR are usually presented in rather formal contexts, such as socializing with teachers. Forms of address are determined by prescribed notions of politeness based on a student's or teacher's status. The textbook emphasizes the use of honorifics and other forms of address to display an appropriate way in which to interact as a CFL student.

Honorifics

The use of the formal second person singular pronoun *nín* 您 originated from Beijing and is frequently use in Beijing and some other Northern dialect areas, but elsewhere it is used only in special circumstances (Guo, 2008). NPCR employs this polite form of address in various instances: in an introductory conversation (Vol. I, p. 30, 42, 99), meeting a neighbour, and

offering someone coffee (Vol. II, p. 39). The textbook explains the use of this honorific as follows:

*nín* 您 is the polite form of 你, commonly used to refer to an elderly or a senior person during a conversation or to a person of the same generation when speaking on a formal occasion. People in Beijing are quite fond of using this form of address. (Vol. I, p.31)

In Beijing, the use of *nín* 您 is not confined to formal situations. There its use is defined by a specific social hierarchy. The textbook begins with examples of this honorific that emphasize its frequency, which leads students to expect formal social situations on a regular basis. But the book does not explain the correct context for the use of *nín* 您. For example, consider this fill-in-the-blanks exercise:

A: Nin yao kafei ma?  
B: Wo yao kafei.  
A: Ni ne?  
C: \_\_\_\_\_.

A: Would you (formal) like some coffee?  
B: I would like coffee  
A: And you? (standard)  
C: \_\_\_\_\_. (Vol. I, p. 21)

The examples here lack a context – e.g. a waitress asking customers or guests with different levels of politeness/formality – but the textbook provides little insight into how and with whom *nín* 您 should be used. The social status between speakers B and C clearly differs, yet without insight as to how, students are not given the tools to navigate similar situations in real life.

Another example of the use of *nín* 您 consists of a conversation between a Chinese L2 student, his brother, a journalist, a grandmother, and the student's teacher. The journalist addresses the teacher with *nín* 您 whereas the teacher only uses *nín* 您 with the grandmother, who responds with *nín* 您 only to the teacher. This follows the idea that *nín* 您 is used as a sign of respect to elders and people with higher social status, such as teachers (Vol. I, p. 31). Hong (1996) explains that “*Nin* expresses respect, politeness, distance, and unfamiliarity” and that the choice whether to use *nín* or *ni* (informal ‘you’) “is greatly determined by the relation between a

speaker and a hearer” (p. 133). It appears then that the relationship – rather than the occasion as the textbook suggests – chiefly determines the use of *nín* 您. This textbook’s emphasis on polite forms of address is informed by a language ideology that chooses to highlight social interactions as formal occasions. Moreover, the formal situation is incorporated into colloquialisms used in Beijing with no explanation about how to distinguish between the uses. Additionally the textbook fails to consider confusions with the use of *nín* 您 for students who are accustomed to using a formal second person singular in other language such as the French *vous* or the German *Sie*. Introductory dialogues in the textbook demonstrate to students that meeting someone in China involves exercising the correct use of politeness based on social hierarchy. Yet in view of the overemphasis on honorifics coupled with lack of explanation, students cannot be expected to communicate competently on the basis of this decontextualized exposure alone.

### Occupations

The theme of a person’s occupation in the textbook is introduced as both a form of address and an identity marker. Consider, first, the form of address 陈老师 Chen Laoshi (Vol. I, pp. 30-36), which combines the teacher’s surname (i.e., Chen) with her occupation (i.e., teacher).

The textbook gives an explanation regarding this type of address:

In China, a person’s position or occupation, such as the director of a factory, manager, section head, engineer, movie director, or teacher, is frequently used as a title to address people in preference to such expressions as Mr. or Miss. Surnames always precede the titles. It is considered impolite for a student to address a teacher directly by his / her personal name. (Vol. I, p. 31)

A person’s occupation is one of the first questions asked in introductory conversations. The textbook shows how to ask one’s profession on a number of occasions: Here in a dialogue between two characters :

陈老师：你好，你也是老师吗？Teacher Chen: Hi, are you also a teacher?

朋友：您好我不是老师，我是医生 Friend: Hi, I'm not a teacher, I'm a doctor

(Vol. I, p. 30, own translation).

Another example here in two pinyin fill-in-the-blanks exercise:

(1) A: Nín shì lǎoshī ma?

A: Are you a teacher?

B: Bú shì, wǒ shì \_\_\_\_\_.

B: No, I'm \_\_\_\_\_.

A: Nín ne?

A: And you?

C: Wǒ yě shì xuésheng, wǒ xuéxǐ  
Hànyǔ.

C: I'm also a student, I study  
Chinese.

(2) A: \_\_\_\_\_.

A: \_\_\_\_\_.

B: Shì, wǒ shì wàiyǔ lǎoshī.

B: Yes, I'm a foreign language teacher.

Nǐ \_\_\_\_\_? C: Wǒ bú shì  
wàiyǔ lǎoshī. Wǒ  
shì \_\_\_\_\_.

You? \_\_\_\_\_ C: I'm not a  
foreign language teacher,  
I'm \_\_\_\_\_.

(Vol. I, p. 65)

Asking someone's profession is depicted as an acceptable way to begin to get to know someone and at the same time show respect. Such a focus on occupations points to a belief that people are defined by their profession. Although the textbook introduces a range of occupations, it does not include any mention of less conventional careers or more contemporary jobs. The occupations listed are: director of a factory, manager, department head, engineer, movie director, teacher, merchant, lawyer, cadre, writer, shop assistant, journalist, and farmer. This list presents only career-based occupations and restricts people's role within society to a specific activity and

identity. The textbook should include more nuanced ways of talking about how people work, e.g. part-time jobs or freelance.

### Origins and nationality

The practice of getting to know someone in China often involves finding some commonality, be it a birthplace, a hometown or a school. This shared experience acts as a foundation for a relationship, or *guanxi* (Chen & Chen, 2004). The question “Where are you from?”, like “What do you do?”, is a way of finding out if you have something in common. In China, the question “Where are you from?” when meeting an obvious foreigner is customary. Here is an example of Ding Libo talking with his brother:

Brother - 那是谁?	Who's that?
Libo- 那是我们老师	That's our teacher
Brother- 她是哪国人?	What's her nationality?
Libo - 她是中国人。我们老师都是中国人	She's Chinese. All of our teachers are from China.

(Vol. I, p.33)

To answer the question ‘who’s that?’ Libo’s brother gives someone’s profession and nationality. What’s more, the brothers are studying Chinese in China, why is the nationality of their Chinese given due focus? The textbook emphasizes nationality by including the sentence that states all their teachers are Chinese. Nationalities are treated as identity markers, equal to other information such as occupation. Furthermore, NPCR uses nationality to make assumptions about people’s behavior and dress style. This usage of nationality does not serve as ‘way in’ to connect or get to know others. It simply reduces nationalities down to cultural stereotypes.

In one communication exercise, students are asked to create dialogues from pictures and to practice asking and answering the question “Where is she/he from?” This exercise explicitly assigns cultural norms to certain nationalities:

1. A man on The Great Wall of China practising Wushu (martial arts)
2. A man standing in front of the Statue of Liberty in New York
3. A woman wearing a beret standing in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris
4. A woman in a kimono (traditional Japanese dress) with Mount Fuji in the background and with a cherry blossom branch in the foreground. (Vol. I, p.35)

Prior to this exercise the textbook mentions five countries: UK, Germany, USA, France, and Japan. Apple (1999) finds that textbooks function as carriers of cultural messages, reinforcing ideals of national identity and race. The inclusion of some and exclusion of other nations strengthens existing bias. Although the purpose of this exercise is to enhance students' ability to talk about nationalities, it unnecessarily restricts students' answers to a small set of nations. It also urges students to make cultural assumptions based on clichéd national stereotypes. In doing so, it defines people's nationalities based on specific behaviors and geographies, which limits the variety of ways a particular culture can be expressed (Wang, 2016). The question "Where are you from?", ostensibly an effort to ascertain origins, serves in practice as an identity marker.

#### **4.1.2 Culture of Learning**

Activities / hobbies  
Dormitory life  
Learning Styles

The previous section discussed presentation of social interaction in NPCR: formal exchanges, establishing origins as a significant part of forming relationships, and restrictive and stereotypical concepts of nationality. The next section addresses the everyday occurrences of student life in NPCR. Students' learning culture plays a central role in the characters' lives in the NPCR textbooks. The main narrative of NPCR is set in Beijing based on a group of Mandarin learners, their friends and family, other Chinese students, and teachers. One male foreign student,

Ding Libo, is a Chinese Canadian and the other, a female, Lin Na, is British Caucasian. The remaining characters are Han ethnic Chinese.

### Activities and hobbies

Student life in the textbook is peppered with activities (things done as part of a daily routine) and hobbies (activities done for pleasure). Examples include trips to The Great Wall, Mount Tai and a place where Confucius used to teach; hobbies such as calligraphy, singing (both Beijing and Shaoxing Opera), painting (traditional Chinese watercolours); dancing and sports (such as basketball, walking in the park, taichi, jogging, football, and, swimming). Characters in the book have many hobbies and play sports regularly; their representation, however, is often coupled with examples of traditional culture. Consider the following dialogue between a language student and her Chinese friend, from lesson 6 Vol.I, titled “Let’s go Swimming”:

王小云： 林娜，昨天的京剧怎么样？  
林娜： 很有意思，今天天气很好，我们去游泳，好吗？  
王小云： 太好了！什么时候去？  
林娜： 现在去，可以吗？  
王小云： 可以。

Wang Xiaoyun: Lin Na, how was the Beijing Opera yesterday?  
Lin Na: It was good! The weather is so nice today, shall we go swimming?  
Wang Xiaoyun: Yes, great! What time shall we go?  
Lin Na: How about now?  
Wang Xiaoyun: Ok. (Vol. I, p.33, own translation)

The content of the dialogue and the lesson title suggest a focus on swimming and making plans.

Yet what dominates the pages is the large image of the two Beijing Opera actors. The casual tone with which the questions “How was the opera?” and “Shall we go swimming?” are posed appears to place the activities on equal footing, as if attending the Beijing opera and going

swimming are equally common occurrences. The occasion of the swimming trip is clear – the good weather – but what is the context for the opera? Is going to the opera a casual event?

Another example of student culture consists of students asking teachers to spend time outside of the classroom together. Ding Libo asks his teacher Chang Laoshi if he has time to play basketball. Chang Laoshi says no and no other time is rearranged (Vol. I, p. 74). Students socializing with their teachers is common in NPCR. For instance, characters in Lesson 23 visit the Great Wall together with their teacher Chen Laoshi (Vol. II, 2010b, p. 199). In both instances teachers are amicable towards their students and welcome their invitations and the atmosphere between them is open. That being said, students still use the honorific form *nín* 您 to address their teachers, which adds a formal tone to an otherwise casual setting.

### Dormitory life

All the students in NPCR live in on-campus dormitories. Campus dorms are a popular topic with examples of layouts of the rooms, maps of the campus (Vol. II, p. 154), students visiting one another in their rooms (Vol. I, p. 56), and eating together in the student dining hall (Vol. I, p. 58). Dormitory life is the focus of many dialogues. For example, when one foreign student, Ma Dawei, falls ill, his friend Ding Libo visits and urges him to see a doctor and tells him to bundle up “今天天气很冷，你要多穿点儿衣服” (It’s cold out today, you should wear more clothes) (Vol. I, p. 195, own translation). For the student characters in NPCR, living together is harmonious and socially beneficial. Students are friendly, helpful, and practical and freely offer unsolicited advice. Exchanges between students reinforce this positive atmosphere and conflicts do not occur. Students also help each other out such as when they fall ill (Vol. I, p. 195), when they have to exchange money at the bank (Vol. II, p.2), when filling out a form (ibid,

p. 28), when registering at the library (ibid, p. 31) and when finding a new place to live (Vol. I, pp. 187-189).

### Learning Styles

Students in NPCR are hard-working and study-focused. The lesson dialogues and example sentences paint a picture of diligence and success where studying plays a significant role in student life. For instance, in lesson 12 Ma Dawei is ill in bed with a cold. Ding Libo comes around and convinces him to visit the doctor's office “你不去看病，明天你还不能上课” (You really should go to see a doctor otherwise you won't be able to go to class tomorrow) (Vol. I, p. 195, own translation). Ma Dawei's health is portrayed as important to the extent that without it improving, he won't be able to attend class. Likewise, in lesson 25, Lin Na breaks her arm after being hit by a car and remarks: “上星期我汉字没有考好，现在又撞伤胳膊，真倒霉!” (Last week I did badly on the Chinese character test, and now I have hurt my arm. What bad luck!) (Vol. II, p. 251, book translation). In a third example from lesson 16, Ma Dawei goes to the post office to mail some books. He shows the books to the clerk before placing them in a package. Only then does he notice that he has his Chinese textbook in the pile too, leading him to explain: “对不起，这是我刚学的课文，我想练习练习” (I'm sorry, this is my Chinese textbook, I just want to practice.) (Vol. I, p. 76, own translation). This portrays Ma Dawei as a very committed student. Students in the textbook want to go to class, impress their teachers, do well on tests, and discuss their Chinese learning frequently.

This image of a passionate, diligent student is enhanced in a classroom activity in Vol. II: Ask three of your classmates in Chinese, how much time they spend each day on the following activities, and then report your findings to the whole class: 念课文，练习口语，做语法练习，

写汉字 (reading the textbooks, practicing pronunciation, doing grammar exercises, and writing characters) (Vol. I, p. 37, own translation). On top of the emphasis that the storyline of the textbook is about learning Mandarin, drills and exercises such as these help students talk about their Mandarin learning progress. Students are frequently encouraged to discuss their language learning practice and experiences in communication exercises and drills. In vol. I, the vocabulary used in a polysyllabic pronunciation drill prepares learners to discuss their language learning journey. The drill is in pinyin: “*shuo hanyu, nian shengci, xie Hanzi, tin luyin, kan luxiang, zuo lianxi, fanyi juzi, yong diannao*” (speak Chinese, read new words out loud, write characters, listen to a recording, watch a video, do some exercises, translate sentences, use a computer) (Vol. I, p. 77, own translation). Such depictions of Chinese and international students both adhere to a Confucian model of learning, as Clark & Gieve (2006) describes: “rote memorization”, “surface learning” and lacking in “critical thinking.” (p. 55). Many scholars contest whether Confucian beliefs towards education still exist in Chinese education (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006; Jin, 2006; Biggs, 1998). They argue that the education system is developing and adopting more western styles of learning (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006). That being said, the whole textbook series was published between 2010 and 2013, yet neither the content nor approach has changed since the textbook’s 1<sup>st</sup> edition was published in 2002.

### Traditional Culture

So far, I have addressed themes of behavior that reflect certain cultural values. The culture of social interactions and student life fall under the category of little ‘c’ culture. The following section briefly introduces some examples of big ‘C’ culture in the textbook. The majority of big ‘C’ aspects are representations of traditional Chinese culture. Following some lessons in NPCR, there are single-page discussions of certain aspects of Chinese culture:

### Volume I:

Chinese people's daily meals

Beijing Opera

Chinese styles of cooking and Beijing roast duck

Traditional Chinese medicine and Chinese herbal medicine

Students' Dormitory

Beijing, Shanghai, the Changjiang River, the Huanghe River,

The Great Wall

### Volume II:

Xi'an and the ancient Chinese capitals

Traditional Chinese garments

Traditional Chinese painting

Festivals and customs in China

Classical Chinese poetry, prose and novels

Main Historical Periods of China

These titles reveal a focus on historical and traditional culture to the exclusion of more modern representations of Chinese life. Lesson dialogues, drills, and exercises reinforce this focus:

wearing traditional Chinese dress, practicing martial arts, visiting The Great Wall, attending the Beijing Opera, and making traditional Chinese paintings are all activities undertaken by students and Beijing locals, alike. Below I address some of the prominent themes:

### Traditional clothing

Many of the illustrations that accompany the drills, communication exercises, and lesson dialogues show characters wearing traditional Chinese clothing. In a dialogue in Vol. II lesson 17, Wang Xiaoyun acts as if purchasing this style of dress is common:

丁力波： 小云，哪儿卖中式衣服？

王小云： 你不知道吗？你来北京多长时间了？

Ding Libo: Where can I buy Chinese style clothing?

Wang Xiaoyun: You don't know? How long have you lived in Beijing? (Vol. II, p. 50, own translation)

The tone of Wang Xiaoyun coupled with the illustration that accompanies the exchange (shown below) suggests that shopping for and wearing traditional clothing is a regular occurrence and that it is considered normal for foreigners to wear traditional Chinese clothes. (Vol. II, p. 50)

Another illustration shows two men and a woman wearing traditional clothing in a park (Vol. II, p. 259). This image further underlines aspects of traditional culture, one of the men plays a classical Chinese instrument – the erhu – while the other is taking his caged bird for a walk. One more example of the emphasis on traditional clothing and activities is in Vol. I. Under the heading “Traditional Chinese Garment,” the text notes, “China has always been repeated [sic] as the Kingdom of dresses” (p. 73).

### The arts

Some lessons in NPCR teach students the lyrics and notes of folk songs such as Jasmine Flower (茉莉花) and Kangding Love Song (康定情歌) (Vol. I, p. 235). Watching Beijing and Shaoxing Opera and singing and performing Beijing Opera appear in lesson dialogues, drills and communication exercises. For instance, Ding Libo’s father likes to sing Beijing Opera “我爸爸也有很多爱好，他喜欢唱中国京剧” (My father also has a lot of hobbies, he likes to sing Beijing Opera) (Vol. II, p. 100, book translation) Apparently, appreciation for Beijing Opera stretches so far that even newcomers in China learn it: “很多外国朋友都喜欢中国京剧，一些外国留学生还到北京来学京剧。现在，他们有的人会唱京剧，有的人还演京剧。” (Many of my foreign friends all like Beijing Opera, some foreign students even came to Beijing to study Beijing opera. Now, some of them can sing Beijing Opera while some others can even act (Vol. II, p. 173, own translation). This theme dominates many cultural activities. Its continual

representation is a strong source of national pride, which is evident in the section's brief introduction:

Among the roughly 300 forms of opera in China, Beijing Opera has enjoyed the greatest popularity and has the most extensive influence. As a unique art form representing Chinese culture it is loved by many people all over the world. (Vol. II, p. 73).

The passage hyperbolically portrays Beijing Opera as China's main cultural export and underlines its primacy within its culture. Its constant repetition throughout the book – together with many other traditional aspects of Chinese culture – leaves the textbooks void of popular or alternative culture.

#### **4.1.3 Summary and composite of and imagined ideal student**

So far, this chapter has discussed both little 'c' and big 'C' representations of Chinese culture in NPCR: formal social interactions, identifying people by their nationality, socializing with teachers, watching Beijing Opera, and wearing traditional clothing. Who are these representations meant to serve? Agnes He (2012) composited a profile of a "master Chinese heritage learner" by documenting a range of heritage language students. I employ He's technique using the examples of student life given in the first two volumes of NPCR and describe an ideal Chinese learner based on the cultural information provided in the textbooks.

I name this student Nina. Nina has a middle-class background. She is white and between the ages of 18 and 20. Nina likes travelling and has decided to learn Mandarin in Beijing. She enjoys dancing, singing, and going to classical concerts such as Beijing and Shaoxing Opera. She is fascinated by Chinese classical art and music, traditions, and celebrates their national holidays, too. Nina doesn't stay in regular contact with her family; when she does, she writes letters. She has many friends in Beijing and they all share similar values. She lives on campus in a dormitory and attends class every day. She is curious about Chinese literature and intends to visit China's

famous sights such as the Great Wall, Hainan Island, and Mount Tai (Confucius' hometown). Her favorite foods are Peking duck and hotpot. She likes to drink tea and coffee, and, when occasion permits, red wine. Nina studies hard and probably owns a bicycle. She likes to spend time with her classmates and peers; she avoids arguments or heated discussions. Nina is polite and does not talk out of turn. Nina likes shopping and dressing up in traditional Chinese clothes. She buys Chinese gifts for people at home. She might even sing Chinese folk songs or Beijing opera. Nina practices writing characters on a daily basis. She wants to do well but is modest about her progress in learning Chinese. If she is dating a guy, he studies Wushu or Tai Chi. They take regular walks in stone gardens and go to the Great Wall often.

#### **4.2 Integrated Chinese Level 1. Part 1 & 2**

In this section I present the findings from the first two books of the IC series. The IC series was first published in 1997. The most recent (3<sup>rd</sup>) edition, which I chose for my analysis was published in 2009. The series is made up of four textbooks, two for each level. I chose Level 1 parts 1 & 2 for my analysis. Both textbooks are divided into 10 chapters, each introducing a specific topic, such as family, sports, and dating. Each chapter begins with a "Relate and Get Ready" section in which students are asked questions about their own experiences related to the chapter topic. The main lesson is presented in two dialogues followed by a vocabulary list, grammar explanations, key sentences, communication exercises, and English translations of the dialogues. Together, the dialogues make up a narrative following the daily lives of a group of students as they learn Chinese in the U.S. and interact with their teachers and family members. As with NPCR, I have coded themes in IC portraying Chinese culture and categorized them into three meta-themes:

##### Culture of everyday life

Hobbies  
Sports  
Activities  
Shopping  
Food & Drink

Culture of socializing

Appearance  
Dating

Culture of learning Chinese

Student Life  
Culture of Learning  
Colloquialisms  
Mandarin Expressions

**4.2.1 Culture of everyday life**

Hobbies  
Sports  
Activities  
Shopping

This meta-theme includes references to daily routines, hobbies, sports, and errands such as shopping and going to the movies.

Hobbies

Hobbies play a central role in characters' daily routines in IC as a vehicle to spend time with other people. Student characters in the IC series lead busy lives and undertake many activities outside the classroom. The hobbies mentioned in character dialogues, in example sentences, and in the cultural notes cover a broad range of activities: going to the movies, dancing, listening to music, watching TV, going out for dinner, singing, watching soccer, watching a DVD, and going to concerts. One learning activity in vol. I, titled "How about you?" encourages students to discuss their own hobbies using additional vocabulary: "painting, chess, chatting online, playing computer games and window shopping" (Vol. I, p. 116). A cultural note explains the kinds of hobbies Chinese people like to do: "Playing mahjong 麻将 (májiàng) is one

of the most popular pastimes for many Chinese people... Besides mahjong, playing Chinese chess 象棋 (xiàngqí) is another popular pastime in China for many Chinese people” (Part I, p. 118).

### Sports

IC mentions the following sports: playing ball, ice skating, track, running, tennis, baseball, swimming, yoga, table tennis, and tai chi. Throughout the lesson titled “Sports” American soccer and football feature prominently. For instance, one example sentence states: “我男朋友看美式足球的时候，常常连饭都忘了吃” (My boyfriend watches so much American football he sometimes forgets to eat.) (Part II, p. 239, book translation). After introducing sports in the U.S., the chapter provides some background about sports in China:

In recent decades, China has consolidated its status as the leading sports power in Asia. In some sports events, such as table tennis and diving, China has enjoyed a dominant position in the world. By far the most popular sport in China, as in many other countries, is soccer, but ironically, China’s national soccer team is second-rate even in Asia (Part II, p. 252).

Although the cultural note introduces sports in China, it provides a comparison between the two countries’ sporting successes. This use of comparison to explain culture is a recurring tool in the IC series.

### Activities

I coded any undertaking done out of necessity or as part of a daily routine in the theme of “Activities”. The following daily activities recur throughout IC Part I: waking up, making breakfast, going to class, studying Chinese, going to school, having lunch, going to the library, talking with the language teacher, making dinner, taking a bath/shower, going to bed, writing letters, and drinking bubble tea. In Part II, activities represented include taking the bus, doing homework, meeting friends, watching TV, driving a car, talking on the sofa, and shopping. In Part II: activities include taking medicine, going online, and cleaning. What is significant here is

their repetition and placement. Characters perform these activities regularly, and the textbook encourages students to discuss them often. They frequently appear in example sentences, character dialogues, and communication exercises, which encourage students to talk about daily routines and contribute their own experiences. Examples from the exercises in Part II include:

Work with your partner and find out each other’s daily routine for studying Chinese. Then find out what happened yesterday (p. 146).

#### Busy Day?

Take a look at the chart and summarize who did what for how long yesterday [chart of characters and their activities follows] (p. 245).

Ask your partner about his/her plans for tonight, (1) for the coming weekend, (2) for the summer break, (3) for next semester, and (4) for next year (p. 262).

Work with a partner and find out when Wang Peng normally takes a shower, takes his medicine, goes online, and cleans his room [exercise given next to images and times of Wang Peng’s activities] (p. 296).

Other than the vocabulary lists, example sentences, and character dialogues, students aren’t given any direct prompts to complete the exercises. The open question style encourages students to speak freely about their daily routines, yet it provides enough information so that students can focus on formulating their answers instead of searching for content.

#### Shopping

Another regular activity of everyday life in IC is shopping. The theme of shopping is introduced at the beginning of in Part I, lesson 9 entitled *Shopping*, in the “Relate and Get Ready” students are asked:

In your own culture/community—

1. Do people haggle over prices in stores?
  2. Can merchandise be returned or exchanged?
  3. How do people pay for their purchases: in cash, with a check, or with a credit card?
- (Part I, p. 225)

Students discuss their own purchasing habits before learning how to talk about them in Chinese.

The cultural note that follows lesson 9 gives a short description of payments and prices in China.

In mainland China prices are usually non-negotiable in supermarkets and large department stores, but bargaining is routine in street-side stalls and small shops. There is no sales tax in mainland China. It is also not customary to tip in a restaurant, although upscale restaurants often charge a service fee. (Part I, p. 248)

This description dovetails with many similar comments made about China's payment culture. For example, in one character dialogue Li You purchases a shirt and a pair of trousers, then pays with cash after asking “一共多少钱?”(How much does it come to altogether?) (Part I, p. 226, book translation). Or in the following dialogue, when Wang Peng is exchanging a pair of shoes, he tries to pay before the shop assistant lets him know he doesn't have to: “对不起，我们 不收信用卡。不过，这双的钱跟那双一样，您不用再付钱了” (I'm sorry, we don't accept credit cards. But this pair of shoes is the same price as the other one. You don't need to pay again) (Part I, p. 249, book translation). Besides teaching students about sales and payment culture, shopping is an activity in and of itself: going to the store to browse (Part II, p. 38) or window shop (Part I, p. 116; p. 236). The act of shopping (Part II, p.44; p. 65; p. 204) and a discussion of the purchased items (Part I, p. 245; Part II, p. 11; p. 189) recurs throughout the textbooks.

Other exercises that focus on shopping asks students to compare prices, fit, and sizing of different products (pens, trousers, shoes, shirts). One communication exercise concentrates on shopping habits in Part I:

Is your partner a shopaholic? Find out your partner's shopping habits.

你喜欢买东西吗? (Do you like to go shopping?)

你常常去买东西吗? (Do you often go shopping?)

你喜欢买什么东西? (What do you like to buy?)

你喜欢买衣服吗? (Do you like clothes?)

你常常去哪儿买东西? (Where do you go to buy things?)

你常常跟谁一起去买东西? (Who do you usually go with to go shopping?) (Part I, p. 237, book translation)

This exercise pushes students to talk about their shopping habits, likes, and dislikes. It prepares students for daily life in a, commercial Chinese-speaking environment. And it presents shopping and consumption as an integral part of everyday life. The persistence of the theme of shopping, alongside the exercises that compare the characteristics of different products, emphasizes material culture. Moreover, these themes repeatedly appear as the topic of conversation. The social interactions in IC centre more around the activities students do daily. This provides students with basic skills in everyday language function.

#### **4.2.2 Culture of socializing**

Dating

Appearance

The second meta-theme concentrates on people and how they interact. IC introduces a network of characters with a storyline that unfolds over the course of its 20 lessons (in books I & II). The characters' social lives provide a backdrop for many of the dialogues. The communication exercises encourage students to talk about their families, make plans with friends, talk about dating, and describe people's appearances.

Appearance

In the IC series, descriptions of the appearance of people and objects abound. Early on, students learn to describe people's appearance. Bai Ying'ai 白英爱 is introduced with the following sentence: "She finds Wang Peng very 'cool' and very 'cute' (Part I, xxxi). Here and elsewhere, IC emphasizes appearances. In one example sentence, Wang Peng is described as tall and handsome "王朋高高的, 很帅" (Part II, p. 53), in another, sentence describing a person's

family “弟弟没有哥哥那么帅，那么酷” (the younger brother is not as handsome and cool as the older brother) (Part II, p. 71, book translation). One other describes a sister’s love interest: “我妹妹爱的那个很帅的男人” (That very handsome man that my sister loves) (Part I, p. 137, book translation). IC exercises regularly encourage the reader to compare appearances:

You: 我觉得 A 很帅/ 漂亮。 (You: I think A is handsome / pretty).

Friend: 可是 B 跟 A 一样帅/漂亮。 (Friend: But B and A are equally handsome / pretty.)

You: 不，不，不， B 比 A 帅/漂亮多了 (You: No, no, no, B is more handsome / pretty than

A.) (Part II, p. 16, own translation). The comparative nature of this exercise emphasizes appearance-based assessment and conversation. As part of the exercise, students are given a few more attributes to choose from for comparison: “Possible attributes to consider: 1. 高 (Tall), 2. 钱多 (Has a lot of money), 3. 学习好 (Studies well), 4. 打球打得好 (Good at playing ball)” (Part II, p.16, own translation).

These attributes are telling of what IC authors consider as important aspects of student’s dating life. Another example that emphasizes appearances is the constant reference to Wang Peng being described as tall, handsome, cool, and cute. In contrast, Gao Wenzhong – another student – is not similarly blessed. In a lesson, titled “Sports,” Gao Wenzhong complains “My gut keeps getting bigger and bigger!” (Part II, p. 228).

This dialogue between the two characters begins:

高文中： 你看，我的肚子越来越大了。

王鹏： 你平常吃得那么多，又不运动，当然越来越胖了

Gao Wenzhong: Look, my gut is getting bigger and bigger.

Wang Peng: You usually overeat, and on top of that you don’t exercise; of course you’re putting on more and more weight. (Part II, p. 228, book translation).

The characters make comments about their own appearance, others' appearances, and describe what objects look like. But they do not merely describe; they pass judgement. Evidently, the textbook's authors believe that this focus on appearances will speak to university students. In a cultural note preceding the sports lesson, students learn that commenting on weight may not be as accepted as it once was in China, however:

As living standards in China have improved in recent decades, the consumption of calorie-rich foods, especially meat, has been on the rise. Obesity has quietly become a problem for many people in urban areas, especially children. That change is reflected in sociolinguistic effects. Before the 1970s one could say “你胖了” (You've put on weight) and have it received as a compliment, but now one has to be really careful with that expression. (Part II, p. 252)

While this passage points to changing views when it comes to weight, it provides little insight into how students should behave nowadays apart from the caveat 'be really careful.'

### Dating

Comments on people's appearances appear in another context that recurs throughout the IC series: dating. The textbook sets the stage for romantic encounters down the line when introducing the characters: “Gao Wenzhong: 高文中 Winston Gore, an English student... has a secret crush on Bai Ying'ai.” (Part I, xxxi). Indeed, the textbook establishes a network of love connections between the characters at the outset. The storyline even includes romantic twist: Bai Ying'ai “白英爱 finds Wang Peng very 'cool' and very 'cute'” (Part I, xxxi), but Li You, another female student, ends up spending a lot of time with Wang Peng to practice her Chinese. Although the textbook doesn't specifically announce their relationship, they are an item. “They also often go out for fun, and they always have a good time. Li You has a very good impression of Wang Peng, and Wang Peng likes Li You very much, too” (Part I, p. 197). As a result, Bai

Ying'ai spends more time with Gao Wenzhong. The network of relationships brings out social interactions and dating culture in student life in the US context.

Glenn and Marquardt (2001) argue that dating culture, more commonly known now as “hooking-up,” greatly influences campus life culture (p. 4). Since the 1960s formal “dating” culture has changed to a ‘new system of courtship’ (Bogle, 2007, p. 778). The dating culture in IC displays traits of formal “dating culture”, for example, going to the movies and going out for dinner. The textbook avoids any mention of online dating and dating apps which are much more current ways of dating in real life.

Another example of Chinese dating culture comes in a phone call in lesson 16 “Dating” between Li You and a man she does not quite remember and in whom she has no interest. He informs her that a mutual friend gave him her phone number. He asks her out to dance but she says she is busy the following three weekends and that she has a boyfriend, besides. “Mr. Fei, I’m sorry,” she lies, trying not to be rude. “My cell phone is out of power.” (Part II, p. 181) In this instance, rejecting someone directly appears difficult. A subsequent cultural note explains the sensitive nature of rejection in China:

Chinese people are typically very concerned about “saving face,” not only for themselves but for other people as well. That is the reason a Chinese person would usually try to find excuses when turning down a request or an offer, instead of rejecting it bluntly. (Part I, p. 195)

In this spirit, Li You’s example shows students how one saves face, or, here, another’s face, in China. Overall, attraction governs dating culture. In IC, appearances and certain social norms – attributes such as “handsome”, “tall”, “cool,” and “cute” – fuel attraction, and people are expected to attend to social norms such as “saving face,” even when experiencing an unsolicited social imposition by others.

### 4.2.3 Culture of Learning

Culture of learning Chinese

Culture of student life

Local phrases

#### Culture of Learning Chinese

The third meta-theme in my IC findings explores the Chinese learning style.

Students in IC are hard-working and care about making progress. Examples include: comments about the speed and appearance of student's handwritten characters (Part I, p. 14; p. 43; p. 85), how often they practice new words and grammar (Part II, p. 14; p. 114), and whether students understand a grammar point or not (Part I, p. 88; p. 122). A further example shows how performance on a recent exam affects their mood: "I was very unhappy a few days ago. I did very well on the exam yesterday. I am a little bit happier now" (Part I, p. 10). Students are driven to speak Chinese, never complain about the work they have to do nor refer to difficulties with learning the language as a whole, they come to class every day and prepare their lessons beforehand. (Part I., p.267)

The classroom in IC is a Chinese-only environment, and the teacher doesn't speak English. There is a firm belief that using L2 to teach is better than using the student's L1. One example sentence reinforces the point: "In Chinese class, one should speak more Chinese and less English" (Part II, p. 39). The issue is controversial in the field of applied linguistics, however (Storch & Wigglesworth 2003), where it is now felt that strategic use of students' languages may be useful in certain contexts.

#### Culture of student life

Although readers learn that living in dorms is common, at some point one of the characters, Wang Peng, has had enough of dorm life (Part II, p. 200) – he finds dorms noisy and

the rooms small with nowhere to cook food – and begins to look for a new place. Apart from the description of Wang Peng’s experience in lesson 17, there are no other direct references to campus life. A cultural note provides readers with some insight into Chinese dorm life. It explains that living in dorms was mandatory until the late 1990s and that foreign students live in separate dormitories. Living conditions are improving but living off campus comes at a price (Part II, p.224). This explanation prepares students for what they might encounter if they were to go abroad to study Chinese.

### Local Phrases

Mandarin Chinese is spoken in many places other than mainland China. The Mandarin spoken in Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia differs from standard Mandarin. Expressions vary across mainland China as well. The textbook explains the different names for Mandarin: Modern Standard Chinese is known as Putonghua (“common language”) in mainland China; Guoyu (“national language”), but also Huayu (“language spoken by ethnic Chinese people”), in Taiwan and other Chinese-speaking communities such as Singapore and Malaysia. It is the lingua franca for intra-ethnic (among different Chinese dialect speakers) as well as inter-ethnic (among ethnic Chinese and other minority groups) communication in China. (Part II, p.1) This clarification will help students navigate their way around some of the different terms for “Chinese.” The term 汉语, “Han language”, which refers to Putonghua, the language of the Han ethnic people, is absent, however. The textbooks present alternative expressions to call students’ attention to usage variants. For example, the word “服务员” for waitress is “uncommon in Taiwan” (Part II, p. 35); the term for airline in Taiwan is different “people say 班机 instead of 航班” (Part II, p. 267); and for restrooms, “洗澡间 is often used in Taiwan to refer to a bathroom (with a toilet and shower or bathtub), 卫生间 is the most frequently used term for bathrooms in

mainland China” (Part II, p. 201). IC identifies a variety of colloquialisms in mainland China, too. For instance, the use of the 儿 ending. It is introduced in the context of someone asking “Where?”:

Here 哪里 (nali) is a question word meaning “where.” It is interchangeable with 哪儿. People in northern China, especially in Beijing, speak with an “儿 (ér) ending” quite often. For example, some people say 明儿 (míngér) for “tomorrow” instead of 明天 (míngtiān), and 这儿 (zhèr) for “here” instead of 这里 (zhèlǐ). (Part II, p. 64)

The textbook uses standard pronunciation but also explains northern accents. Another example is the verb “to turn,” which generally is “拐” in the north and “转” in the south. “转” is more formal in the north according to the textbook (Part II, p. 80). Another colloquialism is the verb to make plans “打算”, which is more colloquial than the synonymous “计划” (Part II, p. 258). The attention to different expressions, on the acceptance of variety depending on location, and the introduction of colloquialisms all reflect the authors’ view that the Chinese language is a diverse and flexible language. This reflects the author’s openness towards different Chinese speaking regions. I will discuss this in the final chapter in more detail and in comparison to the lack of such explanations in NPCR.

#### **4.2.4 Summary and composite of an ideal student**

The themes I presented above are examples of little ‘c’ culture presented in IC Part I and II. They describe daily routines, social norms, and style of Chinese learning. Different from NPCR, American culture is often used as a tool to introduce aspects of Chinese culture in IC since the series is published in the U.S. and widely used at American universities. Based on the evidence I have gathered, I present a composite of an imagined Chinese learner named Ian to illustrate the type of learner that the textbook illustrates.

Ian is a white American male in his early 20's learning Chinese at an American university. He is tall and very good looking, and is a good student. He leads a very active and sporty life, being a big fan of American football and basketball. He has enough money to afford a car and takes regular trips to New York and California. When he finishes his daily Chinese classes, he likes to meet up with friends, mostly women, and takes them out to dinner or the movies. Because he cares about his appearance, he works out regularly and doesn't overeat. He also likes to buy new clothes and shoes, play video games, eat American and Chinese food, and drink cola. He will visit China or Taiwan at some point and make a decision about which type of Chinese (northern or southern) pronunciation he prefers. He studies hard, wants to speak Chinese well, and often asks his Mandarin-speaking friends for help.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion**

Having presented the meta-themes I found in the two series of Chinese language textbooks, in this chapter I compare ideologies from NPCR and IC by addressing the following questions (Research Questions 3 and 4):

3. What are the differences and similarities between the cultural themes in these textbooks?
4. What are the implications of these cultural themes in these textbooks for Mandarin learners, teachers, and textbook authors?

### **5.1 Comparison**

In this section I highlight two main language ideologies: national ideology and learner ideology. Under each ideology I place the examples under sub-headings and compare the results from each textbook. Overall, NPCR tends to adhere to nationalist and traditional values. Although IC also engages in reductionist views of nationalities, its content depicts communicative learning styles through an emphasis on learning through social interactions.

#### **5.1.1 National ideology**

##### *Nationality as an identity marker and getting to know someone*

In both sets of textbooks, asking about a person's nationality is a way to get to know someone. There is greater focus on this aspect in NPCR, and in Chinese culture it is a common conversation starter. Origins are regarded, especially if shared, as a foundation to form relationships in China. The importance of nationality holds less weight in the social interactions depicted in IC, though here too it helps define people's identity.

In the globalized world we live in today, of course, place of birth is an unreliable indicator of who people are. Indeed, basing a person's identity on his or her nationality is reductive and can lead to native speaker bias vis-à-vis language learners.

Consider these examples. In NPCR student dialogue, Libo sees his teacher and asks Song Hua, “Where is she from?” – see section 4.1.1 under “origins”. Song Hua responds, “She’s Chinese. All of our teachers are Chinese” (Vol. I, p. 24, own translation). The teacher’s job and nationality are treated as equal pieces of information in getting to know someone. Libo learns these two facts before he learns the teacher’s name.

In a similar dialogue in IC, the conversation begins with the question “Are you a teacher?”:

李友：王先生，你是老师吗？  
王朋：我不是老师，我是学生。李友，你呢？  
李友：我也是学生。你是中国人吗？  
王朋：是，我是北京人。你是美国人吗？  
李友：是，我是纽约人

Li You: Mr. Wang, are you a teacher?  
Wang Peng: I’m not a teacher, I’m a student.  
Li You, how about you?  
Li You: I’m a student, too. Are you Chinese?  
Wang Peng: Yes, I’m from Beijing. Are you American?  
Li You: Yes, I’m from New York.

(Part I, p.40)

Similar to the dialogue in NPCR, the follow-up question is immediately about nationality: “Are you American?” and “Are you Chinese?” The interlocutors respond that they are from New York and Beijing, respectively. Again, the textbook suggests that occupation, nationality, and place of residence provide equally important information when getting to know someone.

Both these examples assume that nationality shapes who we are first and foremost and posits a binary: Chinese and non-Chinese. Bond (2006) argues “that the three most prominent markers of national identity are residence, birth and ancestry” (p. 611). Places of residence are linked to national identities in both textbooks. NPCR is set in Beijing, a fact that students are constantly reminded of. Many food references focus on northern and Beijing cuisines and

culture. The textbook even adopts the northern pronunciation of the 儿 “er” sound over a southern preference for an “n” sound at the end of certain words. What is more, no information is provided indicating that this is a Beijing-centric view, which denies students the opportunity to choose, say, which accent they would prefer to use.

By contrast, IC introduces and explains the difference in accents but it uses standard pronunciation. IC emphasizes residency by concentrating on only New York and California, both of which have a special “global fame.” The IC character Li You is from New York, and the characters Gao Wenzhong and Bai Ying’Ai take trips to New York and California. Li You also ends up travelling to Beijing with Wang Peng to visit his family. In another instance, Bai Ying’ai asks Gao Wenzhong whether he likes Chinese food. He answers: “我是英国人，可是我喜欢吃中 菜 I’m an Englishman, but I like Chinese food” (Part I, p.67, book translation). The assumption here is that being “English” might mean not “liking Chinese food,” hence the “but.” In real life, of course, there is no relationship between nationality and taste preferences, or between nationality and any other defining characteristics.

Another common way in which both textbooks convey nationality is the use of reductive exercises which encourage students to guess people’s nationalities. An exercise from NPCR I mentioned in the previous chapter (section 4.1.1 under “Origins”), encourages students to guess people’s nationalities from their dress, family background, and activities. In a similar exercise in IC, students must decipher the costumes of people dressed up for Halloween.

## G. Find out Who or What They Are

It's almost Halloween. Your friends put on costumes and props, and you want to know who or what they are. Therefore, you ask them the following questions to find out:

你是\_\_\_\_\_人吗？ or

Nǐ shì \_\_\_\_\_ rén ma?

你做什么工作？

Nǐ zuò shénme gōngzuò?

Here are their costumes and props:



Translation (my own): “Are you from \_\_\_\_\_?” or “What do you do for a living?”

(Part I, p.56). Both of these exercises treat nationality as something visible and discernible from appearance. It propagates the assumption that people can be defined by the way they dress and the jobs they have. The fact that IC uses a Halloween setting for this exercise may be an attempt to avoid the propagation of a reductionist view, but the exercise nevertheless encourages students to pass judgments about people’s appearances. Both textbooks, describe nationality, as being discernible from the outside. This strategy helps delineate the spheres of Chinese nationality, British nationality, Canadian nationality, and American nationality.

### *Big ‘C’ culture and national pride*

National ideology also propagates a strong narrative of national pride. In NPCR, repeated focus on elements of traditional culture fosters an international image of China for export. Images of pandas and men practicing martial arts at the Great Wall indulge stereotypes while withholding information about contemporary culture in China. IC entertains common American big ‘C’ culture through its representation of sports. Emphasis on basketball, American soccer, and American football restrict culture to US sporting success. IC

uses its representation of American daily life to describe sports in China. The textbook vaunts the US position as a sporting elite by belittling the Chinese soccer team. Conversely, NPCR utilizes China's sporting successes to promote national pride:

China has traditional sports such as martial arts, wrestling, qigong, and playing on a swing. Martial arts are also known as 'Chinese gongfu' by foreigners, which help people be fit and healthy. Modern sports started late in China, however, it enjoys a rapid development. Chinese teams ranked the first place in terms of the total number of gold medals, only second to America in terms of the total number of medals in the 29<sup>th</sup> Olympic Games held in Beijing in 2008. Sports are booming in China. (Part II, p. 171)

This passage refers only to traditional, and masculine sports and their modern-day success. Apart from the final sentence, it gives readers little insight into China's sporting culture except to highlight China's position on the global sporting stage.

#### *Eurocentric + China*

Another expression of ideology is the limited range of nationalities that are featured in the textbooks. In both series, certain nationalities stand out: Chinese, Canadian, British, and American. All the students and teachers described in the materials come from one of these countries with the lone exception of Bai Ying Ai, a Korean student, studying in the US, whose nationality gets only brief mention in IC (Part I, p. xxxi). Though one vocabulary list contains the Chinese word for Korea, Bai Ying Ai does not receive the "identity markers" of nationality that the Chinese, American, and British characters in IC enjoy.

The choice of nationalities in both NPCR and IC reflect a Eurocentric perspective to learning Chinese. Other than Bai Ying Ai, Chinese students, and Chinese teachers, there are no people of color in IC or NPCR. What's more, among the Chinese in both series there is no representation of ethnic groups other than Han Chinese. What type of reality does this represent for Chinese learners across the globe? The majority of Chinese language learners

are English native speakers in both series. Diversity in nationality and ethnicity are extremely underrepresented. As Kroskrity (2004) argues generally, “Language serves as an imaginary boundary between social groups. When shared, it assembles a natural border definitive in the existence of clusters of people, shaping their identity through the creation of an invisible periphery” (p. 509). Both textbooks are responsible for erecting an invisible language barrier that defines types of Chinese learners as well as Chinese native speakers. This type of barrier serves the dominance of the Chinese Han ethnic group and the Anglo world. Learners of Mandarin do not benefit from this exclusion because it provides them a distorted view of China and university culture generally, which in both China and the United States is increasingly racially and culturally diverse. As argued by Holliday (2011), “We construct essentialist discourses and practices to protect nationalist ideals and standards because doing so benefits the researchers, teachers and students who also benefit from the maintenance of global, national, and local inequalities” (quoted in Cole & Meadows, 2013, p. 29). Anglo learners of Chinese in both China and the United States are therefore given a privileged position that would not be as available to learners from other minoritized backgrounds—e.g., whether from Vietnam, Cameroon, or from non-White Anglo backgrounds in the U.S.

*The role of nationality in native speaker bias*

From the two textbook series, we can see a consistent narrative that propagates national ideology. So far, I have shown this by discussing the textbook’s choices of nationalities they represent, its selective big ‘C’ culture and national pride, and their assumptions about nationalities and the characteristics purported to accompany them. Normative ideas of nationality, i.e. Caucasians speak English, Chinese ethnic groups speak Mandarin and the one Korean speaks Korean feed into native-speaker (one nation-one

language) bias, a form of social conformity that has evolved with the development of national borders. According to Leeman (2012), this bias dictates “how particular groups of people ‘should’ speak in given situations” (p. 43). Both textbooks create situations that define certain ways of speaking and behaving and emphasize dominant national identities and corresponding language ideologies. IC, however, makes a concerted effort to explain the variety in different dialects of Chinese. For instance, IC directs learners’ attention to different uses of Mandarin in northern and southern China and in Taiwan. NPCR, by contrast, published in Beijing, only uses Beijing accents and makes no reference to other forms of pronunciation or variations.

Native-speaker bias should not be confused with attempts to authentically represent how the language is used. For instance, IC breaks down every five lessons to recap some common phrases in a section titled “How do the Chinese say it?” These sections offer insights into colloquial and everyday expressions in context. Distinctive examples of usage and clear explanations of the context prepares learners to use and understand expressions correctly. Where IC excels, NPCR falls short, failing to explain the everyday usage of common phrases. What’s more, its dialogues among the characters reproduce polarized views of what a non-native speaker of Chinese must do in order that he or she might become a “China hand,” someone knowledgeable in Mandarin and Chinese affairs (Vol. II, p. 269). The final lesson in vol. II titled “你快要成中国通了 You’re becoming a China hand” (ibid, p. 269, book translation) extends the normative view of nationality by describing, in detail, what a ‘老外’ (a common term for a foreigner) must do to become “Sincized” (Vol. II, p. 271). The dialogue takes place between the characters we got to know throughout the series. Song Hua, a Chinese man from Beijing, remarks to his group of foreign friends that after a year they are already becoming China hands. He explains:

宋华: 你不但学习了汉语, 而且还认识了很多中国朋友, 中国的情况知道得不少, 你快要成“中国通了”

Song Hua: Not only have you learned Mandarin, but you've made many Chinese friends, and you know a lot about China. You're becoming a China hand. (Part II, p. 270, own translation)

When a fourth person enters the conversation, Song Hua tells him that they are talking about becoming China hands:

宋华: 我们在说, 我们这些老外快成“中国通”了。力波当然就不用说了。

Song Hua: We are talking about the fact that you foreigners are becoming China hands. Libo is certainly one of them. (Part II, p. 270, book translation)

Libo is a Chinese Canadian. Song Hua calls him a “foreigner,” though concedes that his Chinese heritage gives him some credibility. Libo comments on his and Lin Na's relationship with Chinese culture (Lin Na is British):

力波: 因为我妈妈是中国人, 所以我早就有点儿中国化了。林娜爱穿旗袍, 爱吃中国菜, 还喜欢看越剧, 听中国民乐, 好像也有点儿中国化了。

Libo: My mum is Chinese, so since I was young I've already been sinicized. Lin Na, on the other hand, loves to wear a Qipao (traditional Chinese dress, sometimes called a cheongsam), loves to eat Chinese food, and likes to go to Shaoxing Opera, listen to Chinese folk music, so it seems like she is pretty sinicized, too. (Part II, p. 270, own translation)

“Sinicization” and “becoming a China hand” are synonymous. Lin Na responds to this description by stating “我是到北京以后才开始中国化的。I was not Sinicized until I arrived In Beijing” (Vol. II, pp. 269-270, book translation). The concepts of a ‘China hand’ and being ‘Sinicized’ set a clear boundary between native Chinese speakers and non-natives. What's more, ethnicity is a measure of how much one understands ‘China’. Libo has a Chinese mother and a Canadian father, consequently he is a ‘sinicized’ by default but Lin Na,

who is British, could only become ‘sinicized’ once she took up interest in specific, visible aspects of traditional culture.

NPCR creates a distance between learners and their native Chinese counterparts. McDonald (2011) noticed this distance in other CFL textbook series, too, arguing that textbooks make the process of gaining communicative competence “as difficult as possible... [for they] prevent the ‘outsider’ from ever becoming ‘insider’” (p. 54). This exclusivity is not a prerequisite for learning Chinese and gaining cultural competence. Rather, it says more about Chinese society and how it wants to be seen by others. Learners gain no tangible insight into what they must do in order to learn Chinese; they simply learn what Chinese institutions want them to be interested in (Mufwene, 2001). Failure to share similar (traditional, mainstream, sanctioned) interests is equated with being an outcast from a clearly defined group. Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) describe such purist views as “ideological red herrings” (p. 61). The idea that studying Chinese culture, eating Chinese food, and wearing traditional Chinese clothes is the key to acculturation is born out of native-speaker bias and very traditional (4-F), superficial notions of performed culture. Moreover, these notions of performed culture in no way define the actions of modern-day Chinese speakers, both inside and outside of Greater China. Savignon (2017) writes:

Related both to the understanding of language as culture in motion and to the multilingual reality in which most of the world population finds itself is the futility of any definition of a “native speaker,” a term that came to prominence in descriptive structural linguistics and was adopted by teaching methodologists to define an ideal for learners. (p. 5)

Expecting language learners to become native speakers—and possibly more native than the natives themselves, in the case of Lin Na, who has so thoroughly embraced traditional expressions of Chinese culture—sets them up for failure. Essentializing culture

tricks students into believing that obtaining and reproducing (big ‘C’) cultural knowledge will provide them with native-speaker proficiency and legitimacy (as “Sinicized” or as “China hands”). This monolithic ideology goes hand-in-hand with soft power techniques discussed in Chapter 1 (section 1.6). Native-speaker proficiency becomes an unobtainable goal. Students chase this ideal by studying ‘culture’, however insufficient attention is given to means of developing advanced communicative competence. This is not to say that a highly fluent native-speaker level cannot be reached, rather, it cannot be achieved through essentialized idealist cultural representations, stereotypes, and clichés of what being Sinicized entails. More broadly speaking, although China is still depicted as essentially monocultural (Han) and monolingual (Mandarin) in the textbooks, the notion of a native speaker norm for L2 learning no longer applies to a large multilingual population of the globe, and particularly outside of China. (Even within China, as noted in earlier chapters, there is considerable ethnic and linguistic diversity that is simply glossed over.)

### **5.1.2 Learner ideology**

A strong focus on national ideology and its ties to monolingual/monocultural native-speaker norms also come to light in both textbooks through depictions of learning styles. Though the ideology of textbook authors is influenced by their first language, this need not cloud students’ learning experiences. As Li (2016) writes:

Traditional Chinese textbooks’ contents often reflect the authors’ perspective of the study aim of the Chinese learners instead of focusing on the needs of the language learners and their backgrounds. Usually the authors’ perspectives are highly related to their mother tongue ideology. (p.2)

Ideas about what linguistic or cultural knowledge is relevant for a language learner are very different from assumptions that authors have regarding linguistic practices that are representative of their first language. The traditional values that drive certain antiquated

learning styles reflect this. FL textbooks are often the first site of interaction that learners gain deeper insight into their target culture. They must reflect the learner's realities (Tajeddin and Teimournezhad, 2014) yet also inform and instruct learners about the – often new – target culture.

The narrative in both textbook series takes place at the college level. Both cover aspects of student life in the respective countries (China, USA). Frequently, the content of student interactions center around life as a student. Conversations about studying every day, the importance of going to class, practicing writing characters, and social events with teachers all play significant roles in student dialogues in NPCR. The social lives of characters in IC are less studious, with more focus on hobbies, everyday activities, and relationships. Student life in IC is filled with extra-curricular activities, sports, and social interactions. This section compares the differences in learner ideology in both textbooks. I have divided my discussion into two sections that best reflect the examples of learner ideology in the textbooks.

### *Learning style*

A prominent topic in character conversations in NPCR is studying Mandarin. The setting for the character narratives is on campus, where all the students live. They eat in the cafeteria together, invite their teachers to spend time with them outside of the classroom, and discuss their learning habits. The learning styles of the characters slowly emerge against this backdrop. Communication exercises in NPCR reinforce the types of learning expected from students: practicing every day, writing characters, never missing class at any cost, doing listening exercises, translating sentences, and making friends with the teacher outside the classroom. The repetition of these types of learning functions to “mold” students into the traditional learning style and learning culture. In light of the “China hand” examples quoted in

section 5.2.1, the question is whether these methods do indeed help students become ‘China hands’? Tajeddin and Teimournezhad (2014) emphasized that textbook materials must include aspects of learners’ realities, yet in NPCR the learning methods reflect a way of life that will be mostly unknown to its readers outside of Chinese universities.

Although in NPCR, the learning themes tend much more towards the traditional, student characters in IC undertake a variety of activities; only occasionally do they talk about going to class or studying. Both textbooks do display positive attitudes towards learning Mandarin, however. Students in these textbooks never complain about their work load, even when they are busy, nor do they say anything to reinforce the common perception that learning Chinese is especially difficult for Westerners.

The studious environment setting for student characters in NPCR mirrors some aspects of a traditional Confucian style of learning. Clark and Gieve (2006) describes Confucian learning as “rote memorization,” a “surface learning” that lacks “critical thinking” (p. 55). Chan (1999) points out that memorization and respect for those in positions of higher authority, such as teachers, also coincide with Confucian ideals (p. 298). The positive, driven attitudes of students in NPCR and the meritocratic judgment they place upon themselves in exams are based on Confucian ideals, too: “The link between belief and behaviour is clear. For example, the pressures to preserve harmony, to conform, to avoid loss of face and shame mean that certain styles of teaching and learning are preferred by the Chinese” (Chan, 1999, p. 298). Even though the characters in NPCR are international students and don’t share the same traditions or ideals, they are expected to acculturate to the traditional learning styles as part of their Chinese learning trajectory.

Another area where this issue culminates in both NPCR and IC is how students ask teachers to spend time with them outside the classroom. When they do spend time together, students refer to their teacher with the honorific *nín 您*, which signifies respect for authority figures as well as the Confucian ideal of morality, with the classroom serving as a type of hierarchical family (House et al., 2004, p. 189; Kennedy, 2002). Although both textbooks, especially NPCR, emphasize traditions and Confucian approaches to learning, in reality, many scholars have questioned whether Confucian beliefs about education are still at work in Chinese education (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006; Jin, 2006; Kennedy, 2002). If China is changing and Chinese education and learning are becoming modernized, it follows that CFL textbooks should update their materials to better reflect contemporary practice as well (McDonald, 2011) What's more, they should expand the range of identities available to students.

#### *Writing Chinese Characters*

Another area in which both textbooks adopt outdated learning styles is character writing. NPCR sets apart three to four pages of written character explanation per lesson. The writing exercises break down vocabulary items and assist learners in how to write them stroke by stroke. The consistency of this practice impresses on learners the notion that learning to write Chinese characters is key to mastering the language. This view conforms to traditional methods of teaching and learning Chinese. Learning to handwrite characters is an essential part of learning the language. That being said, it is no longer as central to learning Chinese as it used to be. Nowadays, students still learn how to write, yet technology – computers, smart phones, electronic dictionaries, etc. – has completely altered the focus of character writing (Chen et al., 2013).

Character writing has a different emphasis in IC. Overall, the textbook assigns less importance to character writing exercises; after introducing strokes, IC leaves it up to the learners to practice. However, some example sentences do comment on the speed and appearance of a student's written characters. Students understand that precision is important when writing characters, and speed is a factor only when there is time pressure such as in an exam. Technology has changed the way in which people communicate in Chinese and has greatly reduced the burden for students' character memorization (Chen et al., 2013) either textbook takes this into consideration, and neither provides introductions to technology such as social media and messaging apps. In a cultural note, IC gives information about internet use in China, but it does not help students incorporate this into their language learning. What's more, there is no mention of electronic dictionaries – in NPCR there is a culture note on how to use paper dictionaries –even after smart-phone electronic dictionaries were popular among Mandarin learners. CFL materials cannot ignore this shift in communication and must start to include these developments in its learning materials.

The technology change has even influenced Chinese exam policy at a Canadian University. In November 2016, the Department of Asian Studies at the University of British Columbia introduced the option that students in 300 and 400 levels courses may use a computer in their exams (levels 100 and 200 already had this option). The head of the department, provides a justification for the decision:

The recent curriculum change in the Chinese language program has been to decrease the weight of hand-writing ability and penmanship in assessed work like unit tests, mid-terms and final exams. It is the Department's view that an inordinate emphasis on handwriting in the earlier stages of learning takes valuable learning time away from actual practice in other skills in the language, and that a disproportionate weighting of handwriting can both unfairly disadvantage certain kinds of learners and discourage otherwise talented learners from continuing to higher levels in the program. We also believe that adding more opportunities for computerized output represents a more up-

to-date approach to writing Chinese in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. (Email memo, Nov. 16, 2016, Dr. Ross King)

Notably, the decision views handwriting in the earlier stages of learning Chinese as taking time from other forms of learning. The Department still supports the development of handwriting skills but, unlike NPCR, acknowledges the reality of the new technologies.

This section has discussed two ideologically heavy approaches to teaching CFL. Both national ideology and traditional models of learning coupled with cultural misrepresentations influence learners' experiences with each textbook series. In the following section, I look at the implications of my findings.

## **5.2 Implications for learners, teachers, and textbook authors**

### *Implications for learners*

Students must be aware of the inadequate and inauthentic nature of existing CFL materials and go beyond textbooks if they are to find real-life representations of language. Examples in exercises must be viewed with a critical eye, with the textbooks serving as both a guide and a resource without predetermining a student's learning style. Students should work together with their teachers to set their own goals for learning the language and decide how the target language will fit into their lives. The achievement of communicative competence will come easier to students if they can see their own reality in the language learning process (Tajeddin and Teimournezhad, 2014). If a student's goal is to reach fluency in daily communication for specific life or career purposes, then becoming a native-speaker should not be their goal. The native speaker standard only creates an artificial opposition between learners and native speakers in which learners are inevitably placed in a position of inferiority.

### *Implications for teachers*

Teachers must not only view FL materials with a critical eye; they must help their students view reductive and limiting material critically. If FL material doesn't suit their needs, then it can be turned into a source of discussion. This will help students find their own reality in their language learning trajectories. Kramsch (1993a) provides one method to do this, namely, by aiming for a "third space" in which the classroom becomes a site of discussion and investigation that encourages students to formulate their own views of the target language. Giving learners more agency and shifting the focus of the classroom from a typical teacher-centered structure to a more interactive and dynamic one gives students the opportunity to take more responsibility for their own progress. Any conflict with traditional, reductive forms of big 'C' culture can be turned into content for discussion. Similarly, any strong instances of ideology in the materials can be addressed in discussion or questioned through counter-examples and arguments. Moreover, introducing electronic resources, videos, films, TV-shows, music, and other forms of pop-culture will help facilitate students' understanding of the current development of the target language and culture in order to learn how to apply their target language in real everyday lives.

#### *Implications for textbook authors*

Textbooks authors and publishers are aware of the power of their materials. This is all the more reason, I submit, for them to focus on what learners want from a language course instead of reproducing nationalist or traditional views of languages, cultures, and language education itself. Accordingly, they must keep up with current trends in education, technology, and culture to provide students with a more authentic and up to date representation of the target culture. For example, IC's "Relate and Get Ready" section is a very effective language practice, guided by the "Five C" standards of ACTFL (Communication, Culture, Connection,

Comparison, and Community), which gives students the chance to connect to, and compare with, their own cultures, habits, customs, beliefs, likes and dislikes before beginning to learn new language skills for communication.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

This research has shown that textbooks are an artifact to convey and construct cultural values. My study of those values has shed light on the ideologies of their authors and publishers. Deeper analysis of language ideologies uncover beliefs about the way in which language should be taught and who FL materials should serve. Not only are textbooks a reflection of what authors consider worthy for language learners to learn; they are a reflection of what nations and universities deem significant for learners to embrace.

Through frequent revisions, textbooks must better reflect students' realities and needs when it comes to achieving communicative competence and intercultural understanding. This can be done by way of reflecting relevant cultural understanding. For example, learners can be exposed to Chinese pop-culture and given opportunities to identify with (appealing) fluent speakers of the language in pseudo-immersive contexts, such as watching Chinese language TV and films. Or they can be given opportunities to critique such role models and the values they represent. Against this backdrop teachers can encourage students to interact with the language for their own means, for instance posting messages on videos, fan sites and blogs, in ways that capture their own interests and sensibilities (Fang, 2015).

In addition, teachers must facilitate learning in contexts where students can make their own meanings. That requires a large upheaval in the implementation of technology and explanation of it for the purpose of L2 social interaction. Videos, apps, social media, in-class wiki-pages, e-dictionaries and massive open online courses (MOOCs) are just some of the

means that educators can promote more contemporary and relevant means of SLA. For instance, Simon and Fell (2012) found that 60% of the foreign-language students in their survey use smartphones for language-learning purposes. CFL scholarship is beginning to see a rise in studies into the use of WeChat and other social media apps as part of a language learning journey (Hu, 2014; Wang et al., 2016; Luo & Yang, 2016). Hu (2014) measured 15 students' reading comprehension while using WeChat to comment on and share reading materials with one another as an integral part of her classroom and found that students' reading comprehension significantly improved. Luo and Yang (2016) introduced WeChat as a language learning tool into first and second year university CFL classrooms. Participants were expected to use WeChat to: ask and answer questions, complete mini writing tasks and oral projects, socialize and share information and take part in non-graded extracurricular activities. Students reported that using WeChat extended their language learning practice well beyond the classroom; it also increased their exposure and one of the main highlights for the majority of students was the 'cultural learning'. Through intensified exposure to videos, news, Chinese articles and discussions, the students reported to have gained greater cultural knowledge. Their suggestions for further uses of WeChat as part of an L2 trajectory were: more Youtube videos, more relevant Chinese news on the topics covered in their textbooks, journal writing and to use WeChat as a platform to review lesson content. From this study it is evident that many students have easy access to insightful Chinese cultural knowledge. In addition, their suggestions for even more relevant materials shows the importance of authentic materials in manifesting students' interests and improving their cultural competence (Luo & Yang, 2016).

One example of relevant content and interactive learning is the textbook *The Routledge Advanced Chinese Multimedia Course: Crossing Cultural Boundaries Popular*

*Culture, Social Change, Cultural Traditions, History and Politics*, (Lee, K.C. et al, 2014)

which integrates a wide range of interviews with Chinese speakers from a variety of different regions to explain topics in the textbook. Not only does this employ a mode that students are familiar with, namely online videos, it also gives students authentic listening opportunities and brief insight into the wide range of Chinese accents. Moreover, it also covers contemporary topics such as “A start for democracy” “Popular culture” “Changing views of marriage”.

Through more authentic and appealing representations of their target culture, students connect their learning to their lives by increasing their exposure to more relevant cultural aspects instead of instead of focusing on reaching native-speaker proficiency. Authenticity is key; students need to choose their own content and find out for themselves what is representative for their own learning needs. According to Wong et al. (2016), “Research has shown that language learning should be situated in authentic and social contexts (i.e., informal learning settings) to make learning meaningful and therefore facilitate the development the linguistic skills for authentic communicative needs” (p. 403). By allowing learners to find their own modes of social interaction e.g. social media, smartphones, apps, and blogs, they can more easily create their own meanings.

Future research based on this thesis should continue to evaluate more Chinese language teaching materials and focus on how they are used and received in classroom practice, ways in which teachers and students may resist or reconstruct the meanings created by the authors and publishers, and alternatives to such traditional instructional materials and messages.

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## Appendix A: Table of Themes

Theme	NPCR I	NPCR II	IC I	IC II
Nationalities / origin	✓	✓	✓	✓
Greetings	✓	✓	✓	✓
Forms of address	✓	✓	✓	✓
Positive / negative emotions	✓	✓	✓	✓
Traditional culture	✓	✓	✓	✓
Putonghua	✓	X	✓	X
Beijing	✓	✓	X	✓
Food & Drink	✓	✓	✓	✓
States of being	✓	X	✓	X
Occupations	✓	✓	✓	✓
Treatment of age / seniors / authority	✓	✓	✓	✓
Family	✓	✓	✓	✓
Countries	✓	X	✓	✓
Making friends / arrangements	✓	✓	✓	✓
University life	✓	✓	X	✓
Activities / Hobbies	✓	✓	✓	✓
Names	✓	X	✓	X
Technology	✓	✓	X	✓
Money	✓	✓	✓	✓
Relationships	✓	X	X	✓
Western culture / Relation to own culture	X	X	✓	✓
Classroom	✓	✓	✓	X
Chinese characters	✓	✓	✓	✓
Chinese learning	✓	✓	✓	✓

<b>Theme</b>	<b>NPCR I</b>	<b>NPCR II</b>	<b>IC I</b>	<b>IC II</b>
Pinyin	✓	✗	✓	✗
Chinese dictionaries	✓	✗	✓	✗
Daily life	✓	✓	✓	✓
Manners	✓	✓	✓	✓
Numbers / Maths	✓	✗	✗	✗
Birthdays / celebrations and age	✓	✓	✓	✗
Places	✓	✓	✓	✓
Abilities	✗	✓	✗	✗
Health and the Doctors	✓	✗	✗	✓
Communication	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dating	✓	✗	✗	✓
Comparisons	✓	✓	✓	✓
Getting to know someone	✓	✗	✓	✓
Colloquialisms	✗	✗	✓	✓
Native vs non-native	✗	✗	✓	✓
Holidays	✓	✗	✓	✓
Expressing opinions	✓	✗	✓	✓
Popular culture	✗	✓	✓	✓
Language Learning	✓	✗	✓	✓
Shopping	✓	✗	✓	✓
Transport	✓	✓	✓	✓
Home	✓	✓	✓	✓
Travel	✓	✓	✓	✓
A country's development	✗	✓	✗	✗
Dates and Times	✓	✗	✓	✗
Expectations	✗	✗	✓	✓
Possibilities	✗	✗	✓	✗

<b>Theme</b>	<b>NPCR I</b>	<b>NPCR II</b>	<b>IC I</b>	<b>IC II</b>
Likes and Dislikes	X	X	✓	X
Appearance	X	X	✓	✓
Weather	X	✓	X	✓