International Journal of Modern Education (IJMOE)
eISSN: 2637-0905

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MODERN EDUCATION (IJMOE)
www.ijmoe.com

GAE
GLOBAL ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

CHINESE CULTURE TEACHING IN MANDARIN LANGUAGE COURSE AT UiTM

Loh Siaw San[1], Jenny Yap Tze Kie[2*], Wee Sheau Ping[3]

[1] The Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), Malaysia
   Email: siawsan@uitm.edu.my
[2] The Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), Malaysia
   Email: tzekie@uitm.edu.my
[3] The Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), Malaysia
   Email: weesheauping@uitm.edu.my
[*] Corresponding Author

Article Info:	Abstract:
  To cite this document: Loh, S. S., Yap, T. K. J., Wee, S. P. (2021). Chinese Culture Teaching In Mandarin Language Course At UiTM. *International Journal of Modern Education, 3*(11), 43-57. **DOI:** 10.35631/IJMOE.311003 	Language is closely associated with culture as the carrier and also the main presentation of the culture. People use language to create culture, while culture enriches the expression of language. Thus, language is inseparable from culture, at the same time the spreading of culture depends on the language. In this quantitative research, 70 students and 5 lecturers from the UiTM Sarawak campus were chosen to participate in a questionnaire survey based on the Daily Conversation Mandarin Language 1 serving as the research text. The objective of this study is to investigate the current situation of Mandarin teaching and learning in UiTM, and to provide suggestions for the teaching of Chinese culture in the curriculum, thus enhancing the quality and efficiency of teaching Mandarin as a foreign language. **Keywords:**

Introduction

People in the world are increasingly keen to learn Mandarin language as China is speedily rising become an economic giant in the last few decades. In Malaysia, non-Chinese students can choose Mandarin language as a third language course at most of the public universities. At

Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), where all students are non-Chinese, Mandarin language courses are offered in both diploma and degree levels. Interestingly, every year non-Chinese students enrolling in Mandarin language classes as third language are always in greater numbers than other languages (Ting, et.al, 2020).

The main purpose of Mandarin language course at UiTM is to improve the understanding and proficiency of Mandarin language for the non-Chinese learners. Although Mandarin language course is basically a language education, it is in fact closely associated with cultural education in relation to the language. Culture awareness has risen to prominence in modern language instruction, reflecting a growing recognition of the inextricability of language and culture, as well as the necessity to prepare students for cross-cultural dialogue (Shemshadsara, 2012). When non-Chinese learners have achieved certain level of cultural background knowledge, it can certainly enhance their language proficiency as well. Therefore, teaching Mandarin as a foreign language should be cultural orientated to some extent.

Foundation Mandarin Level 1 is a basic Mandarin course offered by UiTM Sarawak to the students of Diploma in Tourism Management, Diploma in Office Management and Technology, Diploma in Business Studies and Diploma in Banking. The main material of Mandarin Level 1 Course is Daily Conversation Mandarin Language 1 (Chan, et.al, 2020). Its content has been continually refined and the course structure has been soundly developed. As the new textbook is written by a group of experienced Mandarin lecturers who are Malaysian Chinese, it shows a great deal of distinctive local features of Chinese culture in Malaysia.

Statement Of Problem

The fundamental elements for teaching Mandarin as foreign language always does not sufficiently include culture into the language components. The ultimate purpose of teaching Mandarin as foreign language is to improve the learner's intercultural communication ability. The previous teaching practices were prioritized on students' ability of listening, speaking, reading and writing, hoping they would acquire the same proficiency as native speakers. It is understandable from the language perspective the importance of instilling skills such as phonetics, semantics and syntax. However, weaknesses have been revealed in the traditional teaching methods together with the promotion of Communicative Language Teaching. In view of that, the "teaching language for the sake of language" kind of teaching model used for teaching Mandarin as foreign language needs to be reviewed.

Sometimes it is difficult to learn a foreign language without knowing certain cultural connotations of that language, therefore introducing some "culture" components in teaching Mandarin should be given due attention. Furthermore, in Malaysia, lack of awareness about cultural differences among ethnic groups may lead to misunderstanding and conflicts.

Learning a foreign language is inseparable from listening, speaking, reading and writing. According to the content analysis of the Mandarin course curriculum in UiTM, the basic stage emphasizes on Pinyin pronunciation and basic daily conversation. Listening and speaking skills can be improved through immersion or real-life in the aspects of pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar, and in addition to improve reading texts and expression ability.

The students are expected to build up their ability in sentence construction and communication skills by using the textbook Daily Conversation Mandarin Language 1, which has structured a sound curriculum characterised by clear integration of basic language knowledge, while cultural portion composed only about 10% of the book's contents.

Objective

The objective of the research is to study the importance of Chinese culture in the Mandarin course as a third language at UiTM, from the perspective of both students and lecturers, hopefully by incorporating Chinese culture into the curriculum will improve the quality and effectiveness of Mandarin teaching and learning.

Research Question of The Study

To address the above issues, this research questions seek to answer:
1. What are the current Chinese culture teaching effects on students' learning of Mandarin?
2. How to optimize teaching effectiveness and students' learning outcomes of Mandarin language course?
3. How to promote Chinese culture teaching in Mandarin course, and to build a more mature and comprehensive teaching model?

Limitation of The Study

1. Only students enrolled in a Mandarin course at UiTM participated in the study. This means that the results do not attempt to generalise to all students enrolled in Mandarin courses at other higher education institutions.
2. Due to the content of the syllabus, participants in the study were limited to Mandarin course students enrolled in Diploma courses in UiTM. As a result, the study does not attempt to generalize about all Mandarin course students, such as students pursuing a bachelor's or master's degree in UiTM.
3. Only students who have taken TMC101 with the most recent textbook are eligible to participate in the study. Students who took TMC101 with a previous textbook series are not included in the study.
4. The newly published Daily Conversation Mandarin Language 2 in 2021 (Hoe, et al., 2021) has added 3 subsections on Chinese culture and is not within the scope of this article.

Literature Review

As for the content of cultural teaching, Zhang (1990) thought that Teaching Mandarin as Foreign Language should have classified the culture into two categories, namely "knowledge culture" and "communicative culture", and use them as the main teaching content. Knowledge culture includes basic national conditions of China, literature, history, philosophy, geography, religion, etc. Communicative culture includes knowledge of social life, customs, values, etc.

Jia and Zhang (1995) suggested that encouraging students to understand the Chinese culture, history and custom through physical objects, or utilize multimedia to give them intuitive feeling, would enable the students to know about the actual use of Mandarin. Simple textbooks that reflect Chinese culture are recommended for students to read so that they could better understand the Chinese culture. To deepen student's understanding of the actual use of knowledge related to Chinese culture, it is recommended to create a diverse language environment.

Ren (1995) thought that different stages of cultural teaching should have different focuses. The content of cultural teaching in primary stage should introduce background cultural knowledge, meanwhile in intermediate stage should focus on introduction of background cultural knowledge and custom cultural knowledge. The capacity for advanced stage should then increase and extend from language-related knowledge culture to various fields of culture such as philosophy, history, literature, etc.

Sun (1997) explored the ways to introduce culture in Teaching Mandarin as Foreign Language based on a basic Mandarin textbook, they are: sequence display method, systematic induction method, Chinese and foreign comparison method, the now and then comparison method, and teaching according to aptitude method.

According to Li (2003), individualised teaching for foreign students must meet the student communication needs. It must be highly targeted and flexible. However, the teaching of the language knowledge will then be insufficient. The teaching philosophy should be in line with the concept of students' needs, taking into account the real requirements of students in a given teaching progression. Culture connotation should be introduced into teaching in stages, from basic to comprehensive. Instructors should not confuse the importance of language and the culture contained in the language teaching, not even to replace one by another completely.

In the opinion of Ye (2007), language and non-language culture should be introduced into cultural teaching, focusing on accuracy and decentness of daily life language and basic written language. Yu (2008) gave her opinion on teaching method according to the statement regarding "Cultural teaching by osmosis": first, enhance the students' understanding of cultural psychology of Han nationality; second, emphasize communication; third, emphasize comparison; fourth, pay attention to the scale of cultural penetration; fifth, to combine the principle of gradual progress with "breaking one-by-one principle"; sixth, the use of modern teaching.

Qiao (2009) claimed that the types and ways of culture being introduced will have an impact on the effectiveness of teaching Mandarin as foreign language. He mentioned that the Chinese language has a rich culture and plays an important role in people's communication. Then, because the teaching of Mandarin as a foreign language is based on communication needs, only when the culture introduced is properly integrated into the teaching, can it effectively assists in the teaching objectives to achieve the goal of smooth communication.

Cai (2010) suggested that cultural education needs to emphasize these five perspectives: 1) The unique culture in daily life; 2) The unique culture and traditional custom of Chinese folks; 3) The quintessence of Chinese culture; 4) The structural and political culture; 5) Conceptual culture.

Regarding the current situation on Teaching Mandarin as foreign language, Xin and Huang (2015) believed that cultural teaching has always been a weaker and lacking part, as most of the teaching materials and activities are based on language knowledge, while understanding the importance of culture in communicative ability is insufficient.

The explicit explanation of cultural elements embedded in linguistic units is an effective way to enhance adult learners' awareness of cultural differences, motivate them to continue their studies, and strengthen their mastery of lexicon and pragmatic components, according to surveys with Chinese teachers and their students in Australian schools and universities done by Gao Xiao Ping (2017). School students like social activities and interactions that reflect cultural features. International Chinese language teachers should incorporate culturally embedded projects into their instruction, according to the mentioned research.

According to Duan (2019) the quality of Chinese education that does not include culture teaching is poor. Even if students have a strong grasp of grammar and vocabulary, they will still be facing variety of challenges during the communication process. Learners can only fully comprehend the specific meaning of vocabulary and grammar if they begin with understanding the cultural background and its value orientation.

Other than that, Cheng and Li (2019) thought that there are three elements in the composition of course content: subject knowledge, social life experiences and learning activities. Thus, the structure of cultural content in Teaching Mandarin as Foreign Language can be formed with reference to such an idea.

Zhang (2020) and Lyu and Qi (2020) reported that there are many advantages of utilizing digital tools for teaching Mandarin language online. His study reported six advantages: (a) improves teaching effectiveness, (b) improves teaching quality; (c) increases learners' learning encouragement and passion; (d) introduces digital teaching tools (such as Google Docs, audio/video, social media, etc.) into online teaching; (e) supplies for a variety of learning modes and requirements; and (f) establishes new chances for language evaluation. (cited in Noor, et al., 2021)

In summary, all the studies above focus on the cultural components of Teaching Mandarin as Foreign Language were done in China, meanwhile research on cultural teaching of Mandarin language courses in Malaysia is lacking. As a highly practical study, the aim of this paper is to directly address the problem. Therefore, it is important to do an in-depth research relevant to the teaching subjects based on targeted questions, in order to obtain some real and reliable information, and for getting targeted solutions and ways.

Methodology

Research Method
The aim of this study is to investigate the current situation of Chinese culture teaching in Mandarin courses at UiTM and examine how the teaching approach affects students' learning. The researcher applied a quantitative research method to this study through a questionnaire.

Participant
The subjects of the research consisted of 70 non-Chinese Mandarin learners, who were taking Mandarin course in UiTM. The participants were chosen based on certain criteria, in which students must have taken a Mandarin course, either TMC101 (Foundation Mandarin Level 1) or TMC151 (Foundation Mandarin Level 2) and be enrolled in a Diploma course at UiTM.

Furthermore, a total of 5 Mandarin lecturers are included in the research in order to gather information from the teaching side.

Research Instruments

Due to the covid-19 pandemic, which prevented the interview session from taking place, the researcher used a questionnaire to conduct the study. A structured questionnaire, including Dichotomous Questions (Yes or No), Multiple-Choice Questions and Rating Scale Questions was used in the study; questions were organised in order based on what participants answered, allowing researcher to delve deeper into what they think and reflect on what may apply to their answer.

Two questionnaires were prepared for this report, one for instructors and the other for learners. The questions asked in both questionnaires include: the perception of the adequacy of cultural content in the existing curriculum; whether cultural content enhances interest in learning Mandarin; the impact of students' cultural differences on classroom teaching and learning; the most effective way of teaching and learning about culture; and the ranking of learners' cultural preferences compared to what the instructors think learners should learn.

The questionnaire for the instructors includes whether the instructors need to actively teach cultural aspects. On the other hand, in order to gain a better understanding of the learners' perceptions, the questionnaire for the leaners additionally investigates how the cultural content in the textbooks helped the learners in their lives and how the learners mastered the cultural content in their lives.

The questionnaire was distributed to respondents via a Google questionnaire and responses were obtained within a week. After summarizing and summing up, recommendations are given on cultural teaching.

Results and Discussion

Students can only attend classes online from home due to the national impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the data in this research report must be interpreted in light of the current state of online courses. According to the current curriculum structure, Daily Conversation Mandarin Language 1 focuses on daily communication materials, with Chinese culture serving as an auxiliary.

The questionnaire survey shows that 80% of instructors and 58.6% of learners believe that the content of Chinese culture in Daily Conversation Mandarin Language 1 is adequate, as clearly showed in Figure 1. Although the term language teaching refers to the teaching of a language, all instructors agree that it is essential to take initiative to teach cultural content.
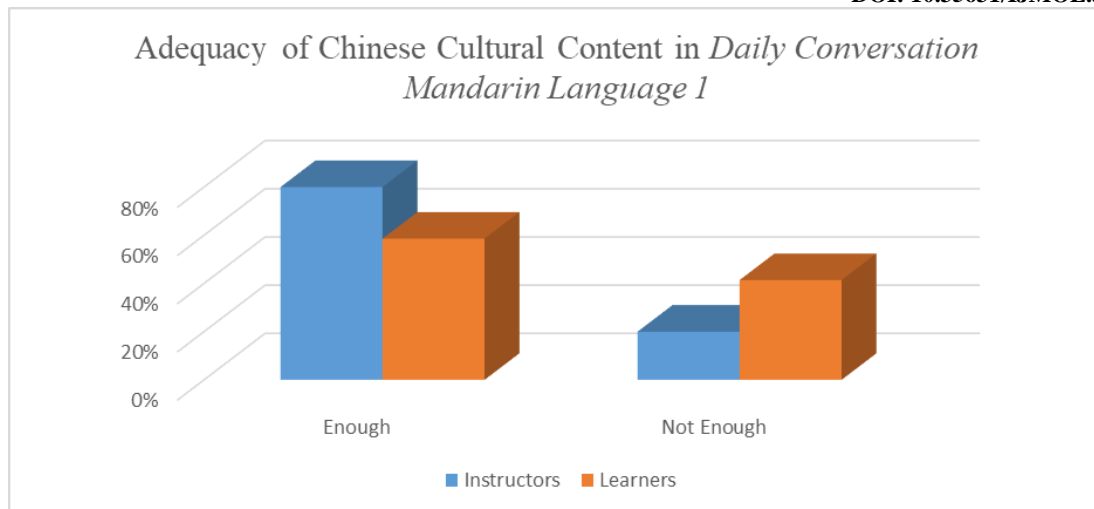
Figure 1: Adequacy of Chinese Cultural in Daily Conversation Mandarin Language 1

Pascal Melbourne (1988) believed that foreign language teaching is not just a language acquisition, but it includes profound cultural connotations, the language faithfully reflects the whole history and culture of a nation, and fully stores the whole information of the culture, which carries the concept of human beings and conveys specific cultural connotations. Therefore, language and culture are inextricably linked.

In the current UiTM curriculum and textbook layout, the cultural content is only imparted as an auxiliary component as can be found in the textbook Daily Conversation Mandarin Language 1 which is used for the research text in this article. (The Daily Conversation Mandarin Language 2 (Hoe, et.al, 2021), which has also added with cultural content is newly published after this research has been carried out. The rest of other Mandarin textbooks do not include relevant cultural contents).
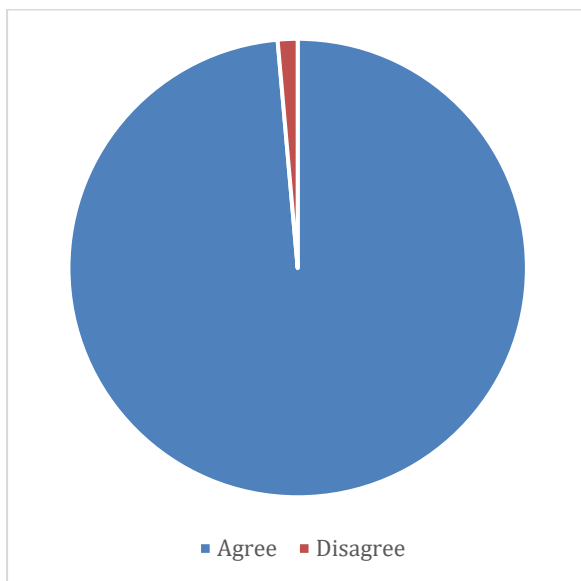

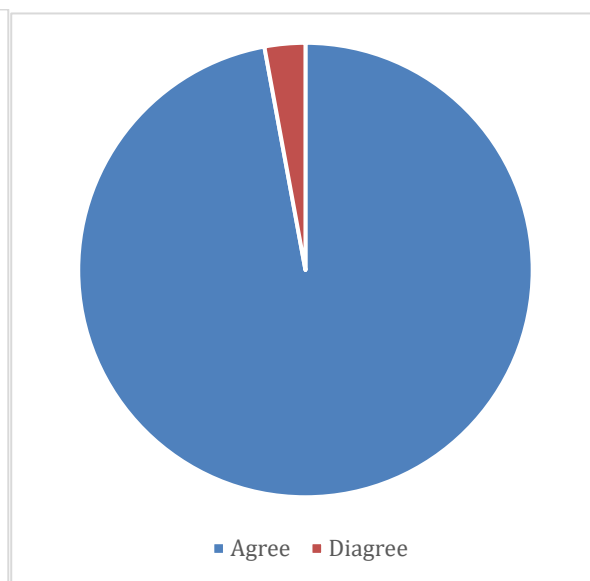**Figure 2: Bringing the Benefits of Life**   **Figure 3: Boosting Interest in Learning**

The survey results show 98.6% students agree that cultural content learned from Daily Conversation Mandarin Language 1 can pique their interest in learning Mandarin, and 97.1% of students believe that learning relevant Chinese cultural content in the textbook has benefited them in their daily lives communication in Mandarin.

A diverse of Chinese culture is expected to play a profound role in learning Mandarin, however, the types of culture depend on the stages of students' levels. As illustrated in Figure 4, all instructors believe that students' Mandarin learning at beginner's level should begin with cultural contents related to social life, customs and habits, because these are the Chinese culture components that they will or likely to encounter in daily lives. This is in line with the purpose of focusing on daily communication as a starting point in the course. The fields of art & literature and philosophy & history are harder to command, so that should be introduced at a higher level of Mandarin courses.
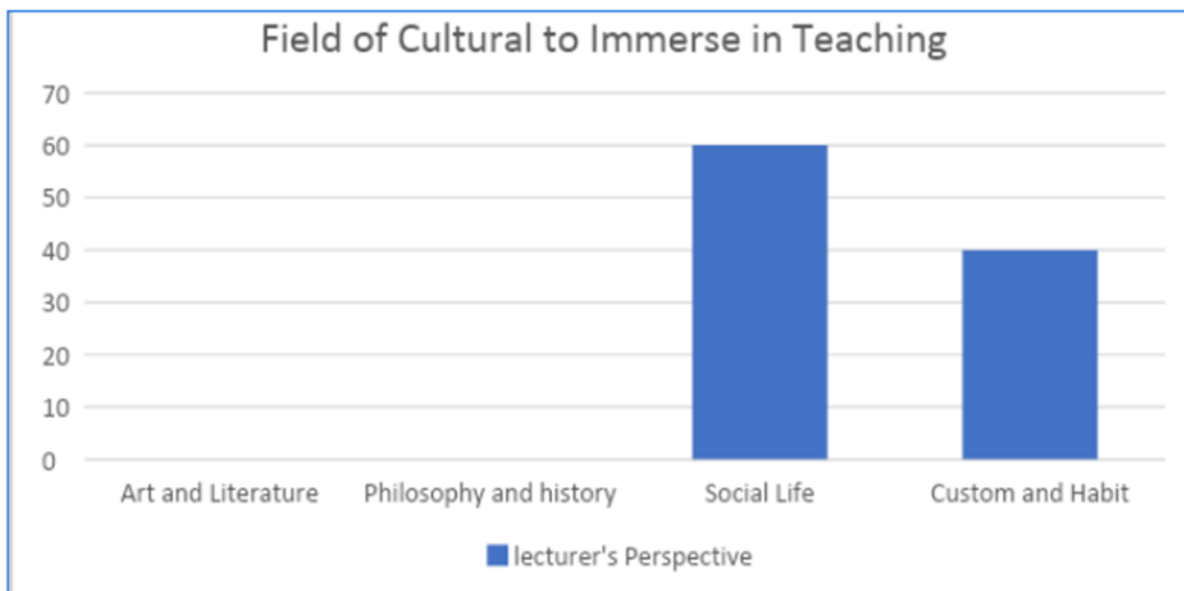

Figure 4: Field of Cultural to Immerse in Teaching

Figure 5 shows that most of the learners are more interested in cultural common sense about social life topics which consist of Chinese chess, paper cutting, zodiac hours, hundred family surnames, Chinese zodiac and family tree as can be found in the textbook *Daily Conversation Mandarin Language 1*, and this is in line with the instructor's suggestion as shown in Figure 4. The "Family Tree" section introduced in the course is the cultural topic that attracted most of the students' interest, whereas it is rather difficult to pique their interest in learning "Chinese Chess", which could be due to the fact of lacking in understanding of the game and it has not much practical benefits in their actual social life.
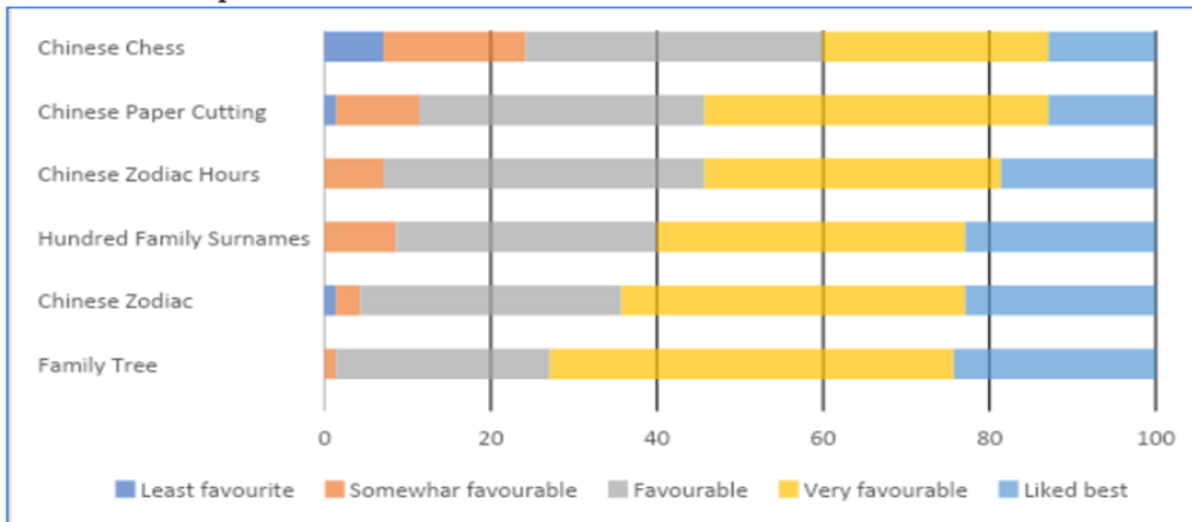
Figure 5: Student's Preference of Various Types of Cultural Topics

Thus, instructors believe that students generally have difficulty to grasp the content of art and literature and philosophy and history, because this cultural knowledge has no effect on students' daily life. From the standpoint of students, they are willing to learn all the knowledge about Chinese culture, but only those with actual operation provides a good sense of accomplishment to the learner. Using "Chinese paper-cutting" as an example, the instructor can advise students to prepare materials ahead of time so that they can actually operate and experience the inheritance and beauty of paper-cutting during the class.

Language learning is known to be influenced by the learner's culture; anyone will encounter some extent of difficulties at the beginning stage of learning a language that is not their native language. According to the results of the questionnaire, 80% of instructors believe that classroom teaching will be affected by students' native culture, but only 34.3% of the learners think so.
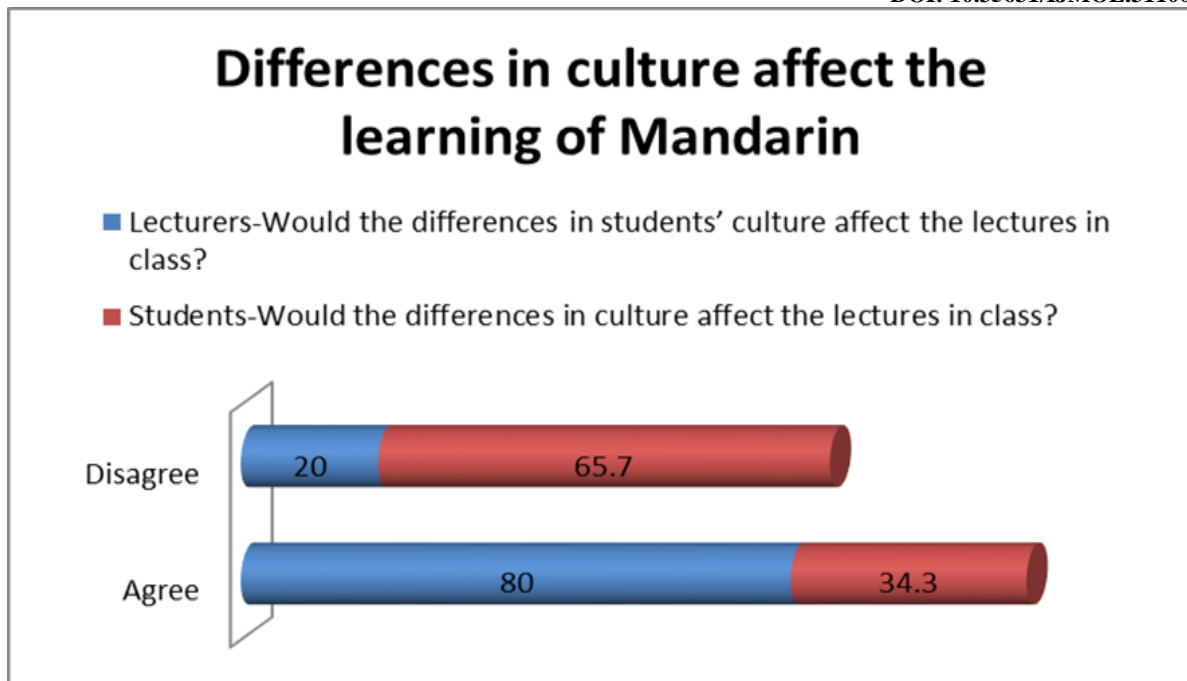
Figure 6: Differences in Culture Affect the Learning of Mandarin

Most instructors agreed that different cultures affected the learning of Mandarin because they believed Chinese culture was too vast and profound to be explained in just a few words. As a result of limitations owing to the curriculum design, the existing teaching materials cannot clearly explain the unique language features of Chinese culture. These limitations include the length of the textbook content, and the space constraints imposed by online classes. This causes instructors to spend more time searching for information and explaining to students. For example, "Chinese Zodiac" has deep cultural connotations, but students thought it is just merely arranging the 12 animals in a specific order. It reflects that teachers and learners have different perspectives of cultural understanding that need to be resolved in the teaching and learning.

The textbook does not clearly explain the Chinese culture's uniqueness of language and culture, such as the cultural connotation of the word *fàn* (饭, rice) in *chīfàn* (吃饭, dining) and the meaning of the word *dǎ* (打, beat) in sports such as "playing", the textbook does not explain these common words in detail and neither their usage. Furthermore, the course adheres to standard sentences such as *Nǐ hǎo* (你好, hello) and *hěn gāoxìng rènshí nǐ* (很高兴认识你, I am glad to meet you) in Western communication habits, while omitting daily communication phrases in Chinese society such as *chīle ma* (吃了吗, have you eaten), *zǒu ba* (走吧, Let's go) and *lái a* (来啊, Come on). This is not only disconnected from reality, but also makes it difficult for students to understand Chinese culture correctly.

Fortunately, Malaysia is a country of diverse ethnicities, and the cultures of all ethnic groups have long been integrated. As a result, 65.7% of the learners do not feel that cultural differences affect the learning of Mandarin. In addition, some students are of Chinese ancestry, or have Chinese friends, these factors to some extent help them to understand the Chinese culture easier. Therefore, they do not think that cultural differences in will affect their learning.

Figure 7 shows the results of a variety of ways that learners acquire the knowledge of Chinese culture in everyday life. The order of preference is most prevalent by lectures and teachers, followed by the internet, family and friends, and finally community culture. This demonstrates that Mandarin learning guided by lectures and teachers continue to be the most important learning approach for the Mandarin language learners.
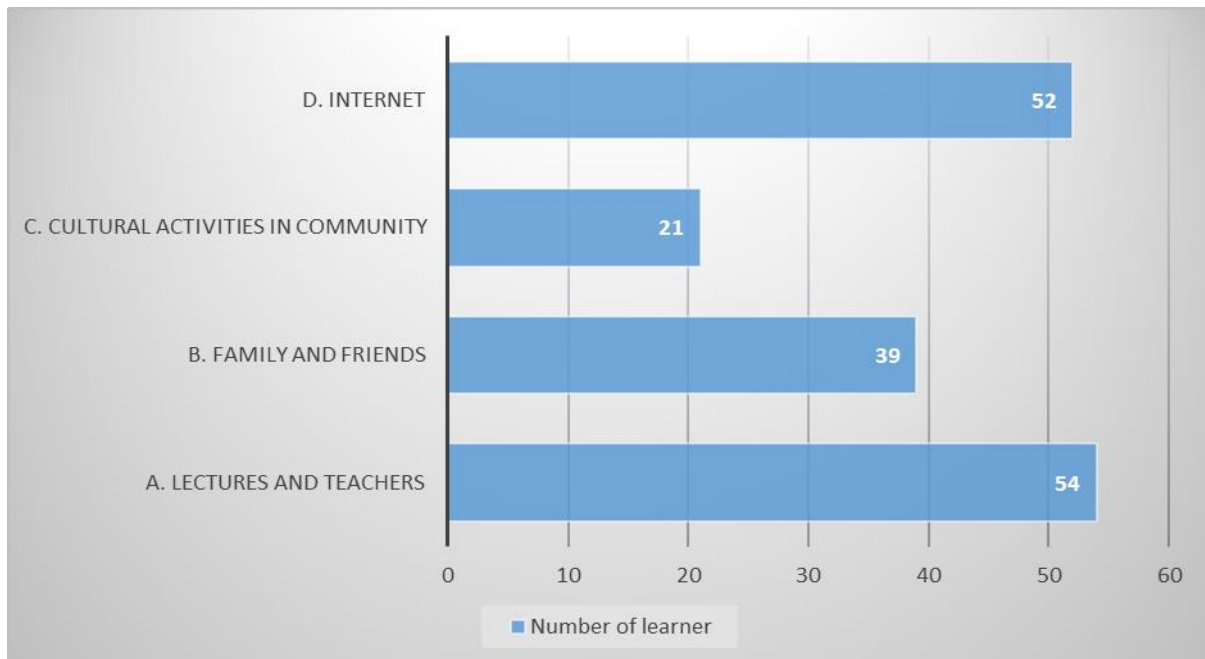

Figure 7: Ways to Learn General Knowledge of Chinese Culture

In addition, due to the current COVID-19 pandemic situation, the Internet has become another most convenient way for learners to master the general knowledge of Chinese culture. Conversely, community cultural activities that require physical contact with people has been temporarily disregarded.

The explanation by knowledgeable instructor is an important guarantee for students' high-efficiency absorption. The isolation of the real world and pure classroom teaching, on the other hand, greatly reduces students' absorption of cultural knowledge. Once the students have learned some "written culture" in the classroom, it needs a way to connect them with Chinese culture in the real world. Therefore, in order to meet the unique requirements of cultural courses, the principle of cultural topics selection must be based on the learner's study period and language level.

The cultural teaching in Mandarin language course is closely associated with language teaching. The particularity of subject, content and purpose of teaching will determine the teaching method which is different from other cultural teaching. Figure 7 shows that when teaching about Chinese culture, the instructor prefers the multimedia presentation method and the oral teaching method, which are 60% and 40% respectively according to the survey results. Learners, on the other hand, prefer the scenario simulation practise method in the classroom,

with as many as 37.1% preferring it. The oral teaching method came in second, accounting for 30% of the total. Participating in practical activities, according to 20% of students, can help them in learning the Chinese culture more effectively.

From Figures 1 to 7, we found that the existing teaching of Chinese culture has had a positive impact on students' learning. The results of the survey show that majority of students believe that the cultural content has enhanced their interest in learning the Chinese language. Through the understanding of students' interest in various cultural contents in the textbooks, it will definitely contribute to future textbook content development and presentation.

To further optimise the effectiveness of teaching, this study also investigated students' feedback on the lecture method. At the same time, questionnaires were used to find out how students learn Chinese cultural content in their daily lives. Thus, from the above discussion, we can answer the first and second research questions of this study, which are the impact of teaching Chinese culture on students and how to optimise the effectiveness of teaching in order to arouse students' interest in learning.

Figure 8 shows that only 12.9% of learners agree with the multimedia presentation method, indicating students do not use multimedia displays by themselves as their primary method of learning Chinese culture. This is in contrast to the instructor's strength in cultural teaching using multimedia presentation, and thus a good cultural communication effect should be reviewed for better achievement.
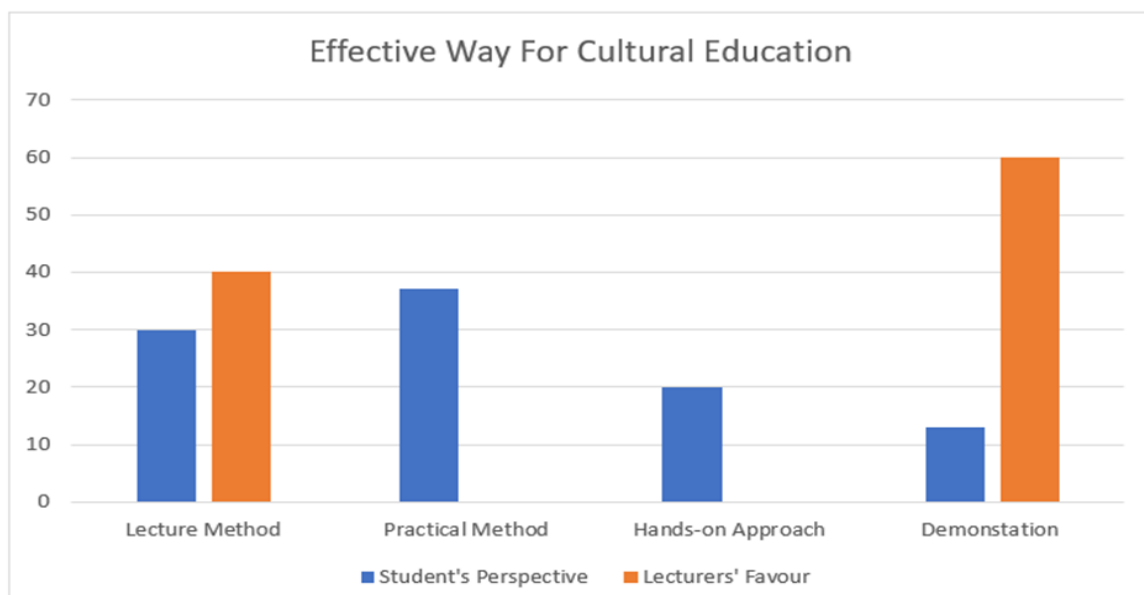

Figure 8: Effective Way for Culture Education

In this regard, this article suggests that the following four main teaching methods must be re-examined.

Lecture Method: Oral Explanation
Language teachers are regarded as the skilled workers or skilled technicians (Borg, 2006). The main teaching method for Teaching Mandarin as Foreign Language is lecturers explain the

Chinese cultural knowledge to students through oral explanation. At the primary stage, the focus of lecture content is basic knowledge regarding phonetics, vocabulary and grammar, at the same time incorporating relevant cultural knowledge into it will enhance students' level of understanding Mandarin. For example, "Have you eaten rice?" (你吃饭了吗?) is equivalent to "Have you eaten?" (你吃了吗?). This is because the Chinese are predominantly rice eaters and this awareness is naturally reflected in the language. At the advanced stage of learning Mandarin, as students have already acquired a certain amount of Mandarin vocabulary and cultural knowledge, we can gradually guide them to learn deeper connotation of Chinese culture or teach them through cultural-specific topics and lectures.

Practical Method: Simulation in The Lecture

Lecturers could organize activities in the lecture to provide more opportunities for students to communicate using Mandarin, thus increasing students' learning motivation. For example, for the chapter "Buy Stuff" in the textbook, lecturer can simulate the scene for students to experience some real language environments. In the shopping process, students could learn how to ask for the price, "How much is it?" (多少钱?), the way to negotiate "cheaper price, okay?" (便宜点儿, 好吗?). Other than that, lecturers could use class discussion to involve all students during teaching.

Hands-on Approach: Participation in Practical Activities

Lecturers shall emphasize some hands-on activities in the teaching, leading students to understand the Chinese culture better through communication. If possible, lecturers could arrange students to organize Chinese culture festival events such as rice dumpling wrapping for Dragon Boat Festival, lantern making and moon cake eating for Mid-Autumn Festival, so that students could have the real-feeling experience of the traditional culture in a practical way. During Chinese New Year, lecturers should encourage students to greet Chinese friends around them. This is an opportunity for students from different ethnics to compare the similarities and differences between their own festivals and Chinese New Year, deepen the understanding of cultural knowledge. This will not only increase students' understanding of Chinese culture and their interest in learning, but also to improve their observation in culture, providing chance to integrate culture and language teaching.

Demonstration: Demonstration Through Multimedia

With the rapid development of modern information technology, multimedia technology is widely used in teaching. Lecturers' proficiency in using audio, images and videos and so on as teaching method not only making the learning atmosphere lively and attract students' attention, at the same time increase students' learning interest and improve teaching efficiency and effectiveness. Although the multimedia presentation method is not a preference among students, it is undeniable that it is the favourite method of learners during the online-teaching period. Compared to pure language teaching, cultural teaching in Mandarin language course is easier to demonstrate to the learners through multimedia technology. If lecturers utilize multimedia technology more extensively in teaching, students can understand better regarding the knowledge as they turn abstract words into images. For example, the use of multimedia is a convenient and efficient teaching method when introducing Chinese traditional cultural knowledge such as traditional opera music, folk crafts and folk customs, all these can be shown to students visually and graphically through images, making it easy for students to understand.

In addition to the suggestions in the discussion mentioned above for promoting the teaching of Chinese culture and improving existing teaching models, lecturers could also utilize the resources and technology available to them for incorporating cultural knowledge in teaching Mandarin, so that students can implicitly feel the cultural knowledge that is embedded in the language. With more support of lectures guided by lecturers, students would be able to better understand the connotations and meanings of Chinese culture.

Suggestion for Future Study

This research on the cultural teaching situation in Mandarin language course is focused on a relatively small group of Mandarin language learners and is limited to the participants whose native languages are not Mandarin. Moreover, it is limited to the students enrolled in Diploma programme at UiTM Sarawak branch.

Future research has yet to be performed on Mandarin language learners enrolled in a degree or master's degree programme at UiTM. Further research could also focus on Mandarin learners from other universities. This is to determine the viability of topic selection for each Mandarin language learner.

Due to the pandemic situation in which students have to study with ODL mode, researchers can only collect data using a survey form. However, qualitative research that includes interviews, rather than a data analysis description over a large sample of population, may aid to gain a deeper understanding of the Mandarin language education. Therefore, a hybrid mode of qualitative and quantitative research is suggested for future research.

Conclusion

Early foreign language instruction was focused on teaching linguistic skills while ignoring the cultural component. Until cultural problems have arisen, researchers and instructors then only began to re-examine new ways about the relationship between culture and language, and to explore how to connect language teaching and culture in teaching a foreign language. As a result, cultural understanding has become the fifth ability besides listening, speaking, reading and writing. Indeed, more scholars now believe that culture is not only a skill, but it should be integrated into all types of abilities and skills while learning a language. Based on this perception, the UiTM curriculum teams had initiated to incorporate cultural elements into its new curriculum of language courses. The authors believe that teaching Mandarin as a third language and introducing different Chinese cultural knowledge is the best way to move forward in the future.

The inextricable relationship between Mandarin language and culture is substantiated by this quantitative survey, the results showed that, UiTM's current Chinese culture instruction has a practically positive influence on students' Mandarin speaking. In language education, importing cultural information, incorporating social humanities, folk customs, and other relevant cultural aspects not only can enrich the teaching content, increase classroom engagement, and help students to learn more effectively, it also helps students to comprehend and appreciate Chinese culture by speeding up the penetration of language and culture subconsciously. Furthermore, it aids students in discovering and comprehending the diverse cultural phenomena that arise in cross-cultural communication, as well as improving their cross-cultural communication skills.

Although language teaching should not be separated from culture, but language teaching should take precedence, therefore cultural content should be appropriately selected, and not to replace the basic function of language teaching. The instructor must have an adequate comprehensive understanding of Chinese culture and be familiar with the students' mother tongue culture. If the instructor can start from the learner's cultural background, make appropriate choices and give priority to the cultural content closely related to language communication, it will be able to promote Chinese culture teaching and establish the same mature and perfect teaching model as other professional disciplines.

Students can only attend online classes due to the impact of the recent coronavirus outbreak. Loeb (2020) felt that in the online environment, some learners may face obstacles that can hinder their learning. This has influenced lecturers' teaching as well as the data in this study. Anyway, if the instructor can make good use of all kinds of teaching methods, teach students in accordance with their aptitude, they will be able to optimize the teaching effect and students' interest in learning will be piqued. Therefore, this study explores Chinese culture in the context of teaching Mandarin as a third language, which is of positive significance to the language and culture education in Malaysia. Under the trend of globalization, this study can help countries and individuals of different languages and cultures in reducing cultural conflicts and language communication barriers through cross-cultural communication.

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