TOWARD A PROGRAM OF ACQUIRING CULTURE THEMES BY BEGINNING
STUDENTS OF CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

THESIS

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Abstract

Culture themes are actions that convey social values. The acquisition of culture themes goes beyond being knowledgeable about the social values underlying communication in Chinese to include the ability to conduct actions that convey social values. Pedagogical materials are responsible for not merely informing learners about the facts of social values, but cultivating the actions required to convey the social values. The results in this study of conducting interviews among beginning level students show that receiving abundant experience and training on culture themes is important in acquiring culture themes at the beginning stages of learning the Chinese language. An exploration of gamification as a strategy for introducing and evaluating culture themes in Chinese language instruction is presented, enabling non-native Chinese learners to convey social values in Chinese culture in a way that Chinese people recognize and accept as part of a communication event.
Dedication

Dedicated to my father Changhua Chai and mother Gongdan Su

献给父亲柴昌华 母亲苏宫丹
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Chapter One: The culture theme within Chinese language pedagogy

1.1 What interferes with communicating in the target culture?

Many students of foreign language enter their studies with the goal of using their foreign language skills in the career world, to which successfully communicating in the target culture is key. Since the organizations that foreign language speakers work for are dominated by a culture that differs from their base culture, communication breakdowns and failures frequently emerge. These difficulties in communication suggest the following questions: What interferes with communication in the target culture between non-native and native speakers? What obstacles exist for non-native speakers in their career development in the target culture? For those of us who are responsible for teaching how to communicate in a foreign language, understanding how people learn to communicate in other cultures is our responsibility. By knowing the causes of interference in smooth communication, we can better identify the difficulties that current foreign language learners face and recognize how to improve teaching communication in the target culture. To better understand the issue of communication in the target culture, let us take a look at some non-native language speakers’ performances in the target culture in the business world.
1.1.1 Communicating in Chinese culture

Patrick McAloon conducted research on individual Americans who speak Chinese at work and obtained quantitative evaluations of their Chinese skills from themselves, their colleagues, and their native Chinese language instructors. Results showed that non-native Chinese speakers earned respect from the Chinese with whom they worked by solving problems, by solving problems through deep understandings of Chinese culture. By doing so they were able to sustain important relationships in the business world in the target culture. Despite their successes, however, there were still reported instances of communication that made Chinese people feel uncomfortable and reluctant to work with them. McAloon suggests that for non-native Chinese speakers in Chinese society, it is the comprehension of Chinese culture that marks success or failure in communication. Communication barriers arose because of the non-native speakers’ failure to infer or recognize implied meanings that Chinese natives clearly understand and react to automatically.

1.1.2 Communicating in American culture

For Chinese employees in American companies, a lack of understanding of American cultural values and corresponding behaviors can also interfere with their careers. Some Chinese in the United States climb the career ladder well enough, but often
hit a glass ceiling at a certain point ("Glass Ceiling"). Some of them attribute this phenomenon to racial issues, but they do not recognize that they inadvertently restrict their own promotional opportunities by misapplying Chinese cultural values in American contexts. The Chinese hierarchical system stresses pleasing superiors and subordinating inferiors. Chinese employees in American organizations do well when they are inferiors; however, when they reach a higher level, their perception of how to appropriately treat inferiors conflicts with the American value system, which promotes expressions of equality. Before Chinese step into careers in an American context, most of them do not receive special training in American cultural values. Instead, most Chinese simply pick up cultural values through limited interactions with Americans, which is a difficult task. Even Chinese students who have studied in American universities for many years admit that they do not feel they have a thorough understanding of American cultural values (Wang; Zhang; Zhou, personal interview).

1.1.3 Cultural values and behaviors

As we can see from the above examples, understanding cultural values of the target culture plays a key role in determining whether foreign language speakers succeed in their careers or encounter communication breakdowns. That is to say, insufficient knowledge of cultural values of the target culture interferes with career development in organizations that are dominated by another culture. Every culture carries a series of key
beliefs, notions and concepts, which are defined as the cultural values that people share in that culture (Zhu 7). The significance of cultural values in regards to people’s actions has been widely recognized. Hofstede argues the dominance of cultural values over behaviors. He claims that cultural values inform and sustain particular norms of interaction and interpretation, which are reflected in the communicative behaviors of individuals. Zhu agrees that cultural values occupy the core of any communication at different layers of society (7). Mooij also points out that cultural values have cognitive, affective, and behavioral components, in the sense that cultural values affect the way people think, feel and behave (24). Therefore, when people do things in society, they are conveying cultural values. Each inner cultural value has exterior actions to demonstrate it, and each behavior is interpreted by its connected cultural value.

For non-native speakers, understanding the target society requires a strong awareness of the cultural values of that society. The more they know about it, the more successful they will be in the target culture. The Chinese and American value systems are different from each other, and not many non-native speakers are adept at negotiating the values of the other culture. This lack of understanding of cultural values may be the reason they encounter failure in communicating in the target culture.

While a cultural value may be unique to one particular culture, most values are shared across a range of cultures (Zhu 9). Some values that exist in Chinese culture are not unique to it. For instance, in both Chinese contexts and American contexts modesty is valued. People in China display modesty by refusing to accept compliments or by
downplaying them. However, in American culture, people show modesty through an expression of appreciation, such as “thank you”, which implies “you are kind” or “you are nice to say so”. Even when cultural values resemble each other, the way in which they are displayed in each culture can be different. Therefore, when negotiating between cultures, simply understanding the general concept of a cultural value is inadequate. In order to truly comprehend the cultural values of the target culture, one should also be familiar with the behaviors that convey those cultural values in the target culture and be able and willing to perform them.

In short, as people communicate with each other or participate in a given society, their behaviors are determined by cultural values. While cultural behaviors can often be found in Chinese pedagogical materials, the explanation of the cultural value is lacking or not adequately stressed. This will be explored further in Chapter Two, when we will look more in depth at some examples of Chinese pedagogical materials. In order to train Chinese foreign language (CFL) learners to be capable of native-like interactions, they require a thorough understanding of cultural values to inform their performance of cultural behaviors, which makes it necessary to examine how to combine cultural values and their corresponding behaviors in Chinese language pedagogy. This study will attempt to address the issue of teaching cultural values to better inform cultural behaviors.
1.2 Culture and theme in Chinese language pedagogy

1.2.1 Culture

The “culture theme” is an important concept because it encompasses actions and behaviors that are associated with conveying cultural norms and values. To understand “culture theme” in language pedagogy, first the concept of “culture” as it is used in the field of language pedagogy needs to be clarified. Defining the concept of “culture” has been a daunting task for scholars because of its ambiguity among the various discourses of the social sciences. In language pedagogy, instruction of culture is frequently conceived of as an issue that is separate from language instruction. My own teaching experiences in both China and the United States and personal contacts with Chinese learning institutions located in Shanghai, China over the past few years reveal that many Chinese programs organize dumpling parties, Chinese calligraphy classes, and visits to historical attractions in China and consider these one-time activities as the cultural instruction of the course. However, culture is not limited to events or historical sites, but exists in and informs all social communication. As Walker argues, “A culture is the product of complex social interactions, and a performance of any fragment of it must involve a number of persons communicating in shared frameworks of agreements and expectations” (“Performed” 5). In short, culture emerges from any occurrence of people’s
social interactions. Culture is ubiquitous – it exists in a simple greeting, a term of address or even a complex negotiation.

The instruction of culture has various categories. Hammerly divides the instructional discourse of the target culture into three parts:

1. Achievement culture: the hallmarks of a civilization.
2. Informational culture: the kinds of information a society values.
3. Behavioral culture: the knowledge that enables a person to navigate daily life.

According to Hammerly’s categories, celebrating traditional festivals and imitating classic craftsmanship are aspects of “achievement culture.” For CFL learners whose goals are to utilize Chinese in their future careers in Chinese organizations or working with Chinese partners, discourse on achievement culture is necessary. However, this type of discourse cannot be done effectively before the CFL learner has the ability to recognize Chinese people’s cultural values and the behaviors that convey those values. For example, a two-way conversation relevant to Chinese history not only requires both parties to possess background knowledge about Chinese history, but also demonstrations of politeness, euphemism, and a mutual respect for skillfully manipulating the conversation. If one interlocutor does not perform the expected behaviors, the other interlocutor would have to compromise or end the conversation, no matter how brilliant or interesting the content of the other party’s idea.

Chinese people are not born with the knowledge of their culture; rather they become practitioners of Chinese culture through gradual acquisition. As they mature,
their comprehension of culture is acquired through concrete experiences and repeated practice. Even native Chinese may have differing degrees of command of their culture, which are shaped by various experiences. For instance, a sophisticated businessman who has participated in numerous banquets will have a greater knowledge of the culture of banqueting than a biology technician who mostly deals with laboratory experiments. CFL learners do not acquire Chinese culture as early and naturally as native Chinese do, but they can be trained through designed exercises. Just as native Chinese people are not perfect masters of their base culture, it is also impossible to train CFL learners in every aspect of Chinese culture. However, responsible pedagogues can enable CFL learners to become more expert at negotiating social environments in Chinese culture through training.

1.2.2 Theme

A “theme” is defined as “a specific and distinctive quality, characteristic, or concern” (“theme,” def. 1b). For example, a Caribbean-themed restaurant is a restaurant that has the distinctive characteristic of “Caribbean”. Such a restaurant might include a chef who specialized in Caribbean cuisine, an owner who uses Caribbean decorations, a wait staff that wears traditional Caribbean garments, and likely customers who enjoy a taste of Caribbean culture as represented in the restaurant. It is what the chef, owner, wait staff, and customers do that compose the theme of the themed restaurant. The theme of
“Caribbean” is presented through the actions of these people without which the theme of “Caribbean” could not exist. Similarly, the theme of a movie usually refers to the central meaning that the director wants to convey through the actors’ speech and performances. With this understanding in mind, it becomes easier for us to understand the concept of “theme” and its relationship with “action”—a theme carries a central value presented through actions.

In pedagogy, the “theme” is considered an indispensable component in the process of compiling the memories that will support participation in the target culture. The “theme” underlies a wide range of behaviors that convey cultural values (Noda 301).

1.2.3 Culture theme

1.2.3.1 Definition of culture theme

People of a certain culture have their own values, norms and beliefs, and these influence all of their behavior and communication. For the purpose of brevity, Nees names all the complex interactive behaviors and communication that are influenced by people’s own values, norms and beliefs as “cultural themes” (35). Based on Walker and Noda’s definition of “theme,” Zhu defines “cultural themes” as the behavioral norms shared among members of a society in their pursuit of certain cultural values (8). Zhu points out that there are two essential elements in a cultural theme: a behavioral pattern
shared in the society and the cultural value underlying that behavioral pattern (8). Zhu gives an example of a cultural theme in the demonstration of modesty by rejecting a compliment. She follows this with the explanation that modesty is valued in Chinese society and when receiving a compliment, a Chinese often denies his or her competence in order to be humble (8). Zeng concurs with the research above and emphasizes that a culture “theme” is a set of actions associated with conveying certain cultural values, such as modesty, harmony, and face (20).

Although various scholars may use different words to convey the concept of “culture theme”, they uniformly agree on the fact that the “culture theme” is comprised of actions
and behaviors that are associated with conveying cultural norms and values, or as Noda would argue, memories of cultural behaviors that convey cultural values (301).

1.2.3.2 Characteristics of culture theme

Culture themes are ubiquitous in Chinese culture. Let us take banqueting as an example. Inviting guests to take their seats before the host sits him/herself is an action that can be regarded as a culture theme. As Zhu explains, the action of inviting the guest to sit first conveys the host’s respect, and it makes face for that guest (8). The intentions of this action are very clear: conveying respect and making face. In a culture theme, people conduct actions for a reason and with intention.

One cultural value may have various actions to demonstrate it for different contextual settings. We can posit that there are as many culture themes as there are ways to perform cultural values. For example, humbleness in Chinese culture can be shown by refusing to accept another’s compliment about one’s own dress. In a different situation, humbleness may be shown by a team leader emphasizing the team members’ contribution while deemphasizing his/her own in a speech after a successful team project. The cultural value of “hierarchical relationships” can be displayed by people in business settings addressing their superiors with position titles at the offices, such as Zhang jingli ‘Manager Zhang’ and Zhang zhuren ‘Director Zhang,’ and superiors addressing inferiors by full names, given names, or “xiao + surname,” such as Xiao Zhang ‘little Zhang,’ if
the inferiors are younger. The cultural value of “filial piety” can be presented by regularly visiting senior parents, who are not living under the same roof, addressing them with the appropriate expressions, and proactively purchasing their daily healthcare products.

1.2.3.3 Culture theme in second-culture worldview construction

Culture theme is a basic pedagogical concept for categorizing stories and memories in CFL learning, and the compilation of culture themes facilitates CFL learners’ construction of a second-culture worldview. To understand this, it is necessary to first review the cycle of compilation that was first proposed by Walker and Noda as shown in Figure 1.

According to Walker and Noda, the cycle of C2 (second culture) compilation, which consists of seven elements, is the process of learners’ compiling memories that will support participation in the target culture and construct their second-culture worldview. *Persona*, being the starting point in the cycle, is the identity that a learner brings to the learning environment. When CFL learners interact in various C2 situations, their *persona* can change considerably. With gradual practice in the C2 environment, learners acquire information about culture and language to form memories of *culture knowledge* and *language knowledge*, which may be scattered at the time of acquisition. *Performances* and *games* are defined as the enactment of scripts or behaviors at a specific
time and place with specified roles and audiences. Learners experience a performance and form their own personal *story* from that experience. As learners collect more and more stories, their cultural memory is gradually compiled, and becomes increasingly complex. This compilation of stories can be categorized into *cases, sagas* and *themes*. Sagas are memories related to specific people or places; cases are memories related to tasks and functions; and themes are, as mentioned earlier, memories related to culture-specific values that underlie a wide range of behaviors (Walker and Noda 32-42; Noda 300-02).

Culture themes saliently display actions as the presentation of cultural values. Each story that CFL learners collect may not fit into a clear category for them, but if the stories that CFL learners collect are organized by culture themes, the compilation becomes clear: an action is conducted to convey a cultural value. When CFL learners communicate with people in C2, they find the appropriate action and act it out to express a certain intention. In this way, not only do CFL learners’ compilations of memories become clear, but their communication with people in the target culture also follows expected ways of demonstrating cultural values.

All of these memories contribute to the development of a world perspective, which in turn supports the next level of language/culture-knowledge development (Noda 301). CFL learners’ memories of culture themes facilitate their construction of a second-culture perspective. A student may begin compiling a culture theme for displaying humbleness with a simple story about refusing a friend’s compliment on his academic
performance. At this time, this action might be all that the student knows about the actions of displaying humbleness, and it would be an added component to the actions he knows display humbleness in American culture. But with more memories of the actions that the student compiles through various stories, the “show of humbleness by refusing compliments or downplaying them” becomes an independent culture theme distinct from American culture. The student will unconsciously change the way he approaches the next encounter with Chinese language and culture, as I discuss in section 1.3.2.

1.2.3.4 Viewing culture theme as cultural performance

This compilation of culture themes is shaped by CFL learners’ experience of cultural performances in contextual settings. Because what discourse one adopts in order to convey a cultural value heavily depends on the role, time, place, and audience that one is situated in, culture themes are cultural performances. For example, for the same culture theme of “showing hierarchical relationships through use of position titles,” one may need to change the term of address from Zhang jingli ‘Manager Zhang’ in office settings to Zhang jiaoshou ‘Professor Zhang’ in classroom settings. In summary, the memory of culture themes is constructed and compiled through performing culture themes.
1.2.3.5 CFL learners’ acquiring culture themes

When CFL learners interact in the C2 environment, culture themes are ubiquitous. A goal of CFL learners’ communication in a C2 environment should be to establish a relationship with the people they are speaking with. This development of a relationship can only occur when people in the C2 environment acknowledge and accept what CFL learners do to conform to their cultural values. If CFL learners’ actions contradict the target culture’s values, native speakers would feel uncomfortable or even be offended, consequently resulting in a failure to build or maintain relationships. For the purpose of establishing relationships and continuing relationships, the acquisition of culture themes is an indispensable part of CFL learning. CFL learners should not only acquire C2 cultural values, but also the appropriate performances that convey those cultural values.

CFL learners need to start the acquisition of culture themes from the beginning of their studies of Chinese language. No matter how simple or complex the discourse is, cultural values underlie the actions that people use to convey their intentions. Even a simple greeting such as nihao speaks to a cultural value that takes into account the roles of the speakers, the situation, and the audience. Greetings, often the absolute first topic that a Chinese class will cover, encapsulate well the Chinese cultural value of “in-group” versus “out-group,” which distinguishes people of different social circles. If a CFL learner greets his/her close Chinese friend with nihao, the Chinese friend might feel that the CFL learner is intentionally putting distance in the relationship because nihao is
usually used when meeting someone for the first time and is not used among well-acquainted people (Christensen). This misunderstanding of a greeting, influenced by the cultural value of “in-group” and “out-group,” would put the relationship at risk.

Therefore, it is essential that CFL learners begin to acquire culture themes from the start of their Chinese language studies. CFL learners may have little or even no story of the C2 theme when they first step into the language classroom. To ensure the learners’ successful performances when they step out of the classroom and into the community, the language instructors must help them form relevant stories and establish memories of culture themes.

Since the acquisition of culture themes is an indispensable part of CFL learning, even for beginning CFL learners as demonstrated by Christensen’s study of nihao, it would be useful to examine the treatment of culture themes by pedagogy professionals currently. We must consider how instructors integrate and approach culture themes in their design of pedagogical materials. In addition to considering language teachers, it is also necessary to ascertain CFL students’ awareness of culture themes and what facilitates their acquisition of culture themes. We will discuss in more detail research findings on these issues in the following chapters.
1.3 Culture and experience in learning Chinese culture themes

Chinese language teachers need to be aware of how CFL learners acquire Chinese culture themes. For example, do CFL learners acquire culture themes just by reading explanations in a book, or by watching Chinese people performing them, or by the learners themselves enacting culture themes? Students who perform the culture theme belong in the category of experiential learning. The following section is a discussion of experiential learning theories and how they function in learning Chinese culture themes.

1.3.1 Experiential learning theories and Kolb’s learning cycle

Kurt Lewin, John Dewey and Jean Piaget were pioneers of the experiential learning theory, and all emphasize the central role that experience plays in the learning process. Lewin conceives of learning as a four-stage cycle (see Figure 1.2), in which an immediate personal experience is the focal point for learning since it “provides a concrete, publicly shared reference point for testing the implications and validity of ideas created during the learning process” (Kolb 21). The feedback processes play a significant role since the information feedback “provides the basis for a continuous process of goal-directed action and evaluation of the consequences of that action” (Kolb 22). Dewey’s model (see Figure 3) of experiential learning is very similar to the Lewinian learning model, but includes the continuity of the learning process that integrates experience,
concepts, observations and action. It is through the integration of these related processes that “sophisticated, mature purpose develops from blind impulse” (Kolb 22). Piaget views the development of adult thought coming from the continua of experience and concepts, reflection, and action from infancy to adulthood (22-24). In more detail, these steps are: (1) Establish a concrete and active learning style through feeling, touching and handling; (2) Develop reflective orientation that internalizes actions and converts them to images; (3) Begin the intensive development of abstract symbolic powers; (4) Develop the possible implications of a hypothesis and proceed to experimentally test which of these are productive (Kolb 22-24).

Based on these developmental processes that shape the basic learning process of adults, Kolb proposed a learning cycle of four main steps that draws heavily on the work of John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract hypothesis and active testing. Kolb contributed greatly to expanding the philosophy of experiential education. Zull combined the learning cycle with the biological structure of the human brain and justified it with scientific evidence that Kolb’s learning cycle naturally comes from the structure of the brain (13-30).
Fig. 2. Lewinian Experiential Learning Model (Kolb 21)

Fig. 3. Dewey’s Model of Experiential Learning (Kolb 23)
1.3.2 Learning Chinese culture themes in a cycle

Just as concrete experience plays a key role in the learning process in a general sense, concrete experience is also very crucial for CFL learners to learn Chinese culture themes. In other words, learners can receive a direct input of target cultural actions. Spanish or German learners in America mostly receive such input from living with family members who are native or near-native or mingling with the target communities available in America. Unlike Spanish or German learners, CFL learners in America are
less likely to be surrounded by a Chinese environment and they may have few opportunities to see native or near-native Chinese doing things in Chinese culture, outside of limited visits to Chinese restaurants and markets. Therefore, the responsibility falls more heavily on the shoulders of Chinese instructors to maximize the potential of pedagogical materials and classes in order to provide learners with concrete experiences of Chinese culture themes. CFL learners need abundant audio and video recordings of dialogues in which they can observe what Chinese say, what they do, and even what their facial expressions are so that they have direct input of actions. In addition, the materials should clearly elaborate on the cultural values behind people’s actions.

However, just watching others performing culture themes is not enough without reflective thinking; CFL learners need to process the behaviors and underlying cultural values. If learners are left only to test themselves without feedback, the whole experience will still remain exterior knowledge; in other words, the experience will give the students procedural knowledge, but it will not transform into automatic performance. Learners have to go through a series of steps including scaffolding activities, contextual exercises, and application activities designed to enforce an understanding of targeted culture themes. This will allow students to form hypotheses, which can then be tested with feedback and correction. Subsequently, the culturally appropriate performance of the learner will become automatic. It is the work of pedagogical material designers and classroom instructors to lead, guide, and help foreign language learners go through every
step and form a complete learning cycle and cultivate a life-long habit of learning Chinese culture themes.

1.4 Culture and wenhua

Translating the term “culture theme” into Chinese presents an interesting problem. It is the convention that the Chinese word wenhua is an equivalent of “culture” in English, so “culture theme” could be represented as wenhua zhuti. Bonner believes that “culture” is a property achieved by all living organisms, including humans, other animals, and even bacteria (10-11), while wenhua does not embody this meaning. Bonner’s statement about “culture” implies that “culture theme” and wenhua zhuti might not be in the same range of meaning. This further illustrates that “culture” and wenhua are not in the same range of meaning.
Chapter Two: Pedagogical material developers’ awareness of culture themes

Chapter One discussed how the acquisition of culture themes is an indispensable part of CFL learning, and how culture themes are important for beginning level students. But how conscious of culture themes are the current developers of beginning level pedagogical materials? By paying attention to this vital question, we can identify whether there is a gap between the expectations and actual performances of the pedagogical materials. Consequently, we can identify what measures should be taken to bridge this gap. I will answer these two questions by reviewing two recently published sets of pedagogical materials: *Fundamental Spoken Chinese* and *Basic Spoken Chinese*. These materials will be examined with two primary questions in mind: (1) Are cultural values and their relevant actions presented? If so, how? (2) What exercises are provided to coach and consolidate learners’ acquisition of culture themes? Both materials have separate books for written instruction, but these are not within the scope of this chapter.

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1 Due to time limitations, only two published sets material are reviewed as representative
2.1 *Fundamental Spoken Chinese*

2.1.1 Brief introduction

*Fundamental Spoken Chinese* is a recently published material by a renowned publisher in America—it is published by The University of Hawai‘i Press in 2009. The two authors of this material, Robert Sanders and Nora Yao, have twenty years of experience in teaching Chinese and are currently instructors of Chinese at the University of Auckland. *Fundamental Spoken Chinese* primarily emphasizes providing a systematic presentation of the grammar and vocabulary of spoken Mandarin Chinese, a traditional approach that appears to be the strongest feature of the material. As Song writes, the explanations of Chinese grammar points are clear and straightforward (341). Unlike other recently published materials that are supported by multimedia documents, *Fundamental Spoken Chinese* contains no audio or video files.

The material contains twenty chapters. The first chapter is “Pronunciation and Romanization”. Among the remaining nineteen chapters, each chapter has: (a) key grammar points; (b) new vocabulary items; (c) four or five short dialogues; (d) explanations of new grammatical patterns; (e) vocabulary notes (and culture notes in some chapters); and (f) drills and exercises. The dialogues are all written in *pinyin* Romanization. The appendix includes dialogues in English and in simplified Chinese.
characters, grammar points listed by chapter, and a Pinyin-English vocabulary index listed in alphabetical order.

2.1.2 Culture themes

2.1.2.1 Presentation

2.1.2.1.1 Cultural behaviors and reflected cultural values

An examination of *Fundamental Spoken Chinese* reveals that this material does not engage explicitly with the notion of “culture theme”, but it does deal with culture themes indirectly through the introduction of cultural values and relevant actions. The elaborations on cultural values and demonstrations of actions are presented through two different modes, namely, the “fact” mode and the “act” mode. The “fact” mode informs the facts of cultural values, and the “act” mode displays actions in Chinese.

Cultural issues appear in some of the chapters of this material, and are mainly located in the dialogues and Culture Notes. When dialogues involve some cultural issue, the Culture Notes may offer some explanation. Out of the book’s nineteen chapters, nine chapters have a Culture Notes section, and altogether there are fourteen total entries. Among these fourteen entries, nine entries reflect cultural values. Table 1 shows the titles and the main contents of each entry in the Culture Notes that reflect cultural values.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title of entry</th>
<th>Main content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Casual greeting</td>
<td>Whom to greet, rationale and additional common expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“You”</td>
<td>The method of addressing teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Politeness</td>
<td>The degree of using politeness and suggestions for CFL learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What name do I use?</td>
<td>Ways of calling people’s names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>How to address older people</td>
<td>Methods of addressing people of an older generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Compliments</td>
<td>The general rule of thumb of responding to compliments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The roles of hosts and guests</td>
<td>Hosts’ common practices and appropriate behaviors for being a guest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Drop in when you’re free!”</td>
<td>Implied meaning of “(Ni) you kong lai wanr! ‘Drop in when you’re free!’ ”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Guanxi</td>
<td>Importance of establishing relationship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Collection of the entries in Culture Notes of *Fundamental Spoken Chinese* that reflect cultural values

As we can see from these entries, they reflect cultural values such as *limao* ‘courtesy,’ *qianxu* ‘modesty,’ *zunlao* ‘veneration for the old,’ and *reqing haoke* ‘hospitality.’ The Culture Notes use English explanations in the “fact” mode to address learners’ doubts when encountering cultural phenomena and to help them cultivate an early awareness of culture themes at the beginning level. The Cultural Notes broadly elaborate on issues such as the phenomenon of cultural interaction, the rationales of speakers, any additional expressions, and possible suggestions for learners. Meanwhile, the dialogues deliver more detailed information about cultural values through the “act” mode, which provides concrete experiences through which students may practice navigating cultural interactions. Here is an example of both the “act” mode and the “fact”
mode collaborating to elaborate the cultural value “politeness”. The expressions of *qingwen* and *xiexie* appeared in the second and the fifth dialogues of Chapter 3 respectively (Sanders and Yao 36-37):

Xiao Gao is in a stationary store and asks the sales clerk a question.  
Xiao Gao: *Qingwen*, nimen you meiyou maobi?  
Lao Qian: You, yao bu yao mai?  
…

(Two Chinese friends are visiting America and have just recently arrived.  
…
Xiaomei: Hao. Ni meiyou qian mai a?  
Maomao: Wo meiyou Meiguo qian.  
Xiaomei: Wo you, wo gei ni.  
Maomao: Xiexie.

(Two Chinese friends are visiting America and have arrived just recently.  
…
Xiaomei: Ok. You don’t have money to buy it?  
Maomao: I don’t have U.S. dollars.  
Xiaomei: I do. Here you are.  
Maomao: Thank you.)

And there is an informative explanation upon “politeness” in the Culture Notes section (Sanders and Yao 44):

**Politeness**

Being polite in any society can be a challenge. The Chinese term for politeness, *keqi*, literally “the airs of being a guest”, provides a useful clue into the relative nature of politeness in Chinese society. In other words, in China many of the niceties of speech that we value in English – e.g., “please”, “thank you”, and “you’re welcome” – are more appropriately used with people you don’t know
well than with your family and close friends. In fact, to “overuse” these expressions that signals to the other person that you consider him or her to be an outsider rather than an insider. For this reason the expression *Bie keqi*, “Don’t be polite”, is frequently used to reassure people that they should relax and stop being so formal.

This is not to say that expressions like “please” and “thank you” are never used among people who are close. Rather, when they are used, they are reserved for feats of kindness or generosity that go beyond the ordinary or the expected.

There is certain other behavior that is freely offered to both strangers and friends alike in the English-speaking world that in the Chinese-speaking world is normally not accorded to strangers. Examples include the exchange of greetings, opening a door for someone, letting someone go first, or picking up a person’s dropped object.

As a foreigner, especially if you are not ethnically Chinese, you can expect to start off all your relationships in China as a guest. Under such conditions “polite” behavior is appropriate.

In the above example, the dialogues in Chinese offer learners concrete experiences of how politeness is displayed through simple expressions such as *xiexie* and *bukeqi*, and also serve as a model of oral performance that learners can learn and imitate. At the same time, the informative English explanations in the sections of Culture Notes explain to the learners the “facts” about the rationale of Chinese “being polite” and the appropriate behaviors of “being polite” in the target culture. Walker states that maintaining the distinction between the act mode and the fact mode is important in the early spoken application courses, because act is dominant and the fact mode occurring in English answers questions about the language that cannot be explained at the students’ current levels of Chinese (69). Pedagogical materials that emphasize oral instruction are also crucial in maintaining the distinction between the act mode and the fact mode, since the material provides the resources for spoken application courses. In this sense,
*Fundamental Spoken Chinese* does a good job in introducing cultural values and presenting cultural behaviors.

In Cultural Notes, the actions that convey certain cultural values are also mentioned. For example, the seventh entry in Table 1 is on “the roles of hosts and guests,” and this note briefly describes: (1) common practices of a host displaying hospitality, such as treating the guests to lavish meals, spending much more time and effort taking care of guests than in eating or drinking himself, walking guests to the entrance of the building and inviting to visit again sometime in the future when the meal is over; and (2) appropriate behaviors responding to these practices as a guest, such as remarking on the size and quantity of the dishes, giving a small gift on the first visit, and helping with clean up. In other Cultural Notes many actions are also introduced, but they are distinct from the actions in the dialogues. The actions in the dialogues enable learners to imitate and perform directly from them, but the actions in Cultural Notes only serve as a reference or examples.

However, not every general behavior mentioned in the fact mode is demonstrated in the dialogues due to a gap of linguistic level between what general behaviors in the “fact” mode require and what learners could actually acquire at the beginning level. In the chapter that introduces “the roles of hosts and guests”, the dialogue about visiting a friend’s place only includes an expression for welcoming guests *Qing jin, qing jin* ‘Come in, come in,’ and some farewell remarks, such as *Kuai sidian le, wo dei hui qu le* ‘It’s almost four o’clock. I have to get back,’ *Xiexie ni lai kan wo* ‘Thank you for coming to
see me’ and *Bie song le. Zaijian* ‘You don’t have to bother seeing me off. See you later.’

It is reasonable that the dialogues do not display every behavior introduced in the “fact” mode, considering learners’ limited linguistic level and the limited space for compiling dialogues. On the other hand, it is also unnecessary to not include the behaviors being introduced in the fact mode, because even though the learners are at the initial stage of learning a foreign language and possess the linguistic skills, they can still cultivate a strong awareness of particular cultural values through comprehensive elaborations in their native language.

2.1.2.1.2 Scripts of cultural behaviors

Overall the scripts of cultural behaviors in *Fundamental Spoken Chinese* are sometimes problematic in authenticity and contextual information, and thus inhibiting the providing of a concrete experience of communication to learners. The first problem is that dialogues contain insufficient contextual information including roles, time, places, and audience. As we can see from Table 2, most dialogues do provide background information about roles, but the roles are excessive and random without any indication of relationship to each other. Some scripts provide the relationship between interlocutors, or places of conversations, but many other scripts lack time, the relationship between interlocutors, places of conversations, and any audience that may be present in conversations in detail, which does not help learners compile a series of stories about a
specific set of people or a specific location. The ability to participate in a culture is dependent on the memory of that culture, and that memory consists of stories. Learners of *Fundamental Spoken Chinese* are able to cultivate an awareness of cultural values and general behaviors through the “fact” mode, but they will find it hard to accumulate stories from experience in order to later recollect them from memory.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Roles</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>Xiaoqi and Xiaogui</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tongxuem and laoshi</td>
<td>Classmates and teacher</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>Tom and Dazhong</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Xiaogao and Laoqian</td>
<td>Customer and sales clerk</td>
<td>Stationary store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Xiaohuan and Zhongben</td>
<td>/ (Zhongben is Japanese)</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daming and Youyou</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maomao and Xiaomei</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>Meiwen and Xiaoxie</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mingming and Dazhong</td>
<td>Residents</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daxi and Xiaomei</td>
<td>Chinese friends</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Xiben and Tom</td>
<td>/ (Xiben is Japanese)</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tongxuem and laoshi</td>
<td>Classmates and teacher</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>Yingying and Xiaowen</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Huanhuan and Lanlan</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laogao and Qian taitai</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hanzhen and Xuewen</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>Maomao and Hansheng</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Niuniu and Dagui</td>
<td>/ (Niuniu is a child)</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Huanhuan and Yizhong</td>
<td>/ (Huanhuan is a foreign student in China)</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laoqian and laoban</td>
<td>Sales clerk and customer</td>
<td>Convenience store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laoban and Ms. Zhang</td>
<td>Owner and customer</td>
<td>Grocery store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>Laoqian and Xiaoxie</td>
<td>Chinese colleague in office and a local-born Chinese married to a local</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Collection of roles, relationship and places of the dialogues in specific chapters

The second problem is in regards to the content of the dialogues. Some dialogues cannot be considered good models of oral performance for learners to learn, imitate, and use because the actions displayed in the dialogues conflict with the cultural values...
elaborated in Culture Notes. For example, in Chapter 3, which demonstrates “politeness,”
one dialogue does not follow the politeness strategy (Sanders and Yao 37): Daming asks
Youyou (no relationship indicated) to have a look at Youyou’s book, but Youyou directly
refuses him without politely stating any reason.

Daming sees a book lying around.
Daming: Youyou, zhe shi shei de shu?
Youyou: Shi wo de.
Daming: Haokan ma?
Youyou: Hen haokan.
Daming: Wo kankan, hao ma?
Youyou: Bu xing, bie kan.

(Daming sees a book lying around.
Daming: Youyou, whose book is this?
Youyou: It’s mine.
Daming: Is it a good read?
Youyou: Very good.
Daming: Let me take a look, ok?
Youyou: No. Don’t look.)

Such a model exchange should indicate a description of Daming’s likely reactions to an
abrupt refusal.

2.1.2.2 Coaching

There are many exercises in each chapter including substitution exercises,
grammar/vocabulary exercises, dialogue exercises, activities and translations, but there
are no drilling exercises specifically designed to coach learners’ fluency on cultural
behaviors, or communicative activities where learners can utilize the cultural behaviors
they observe from the dialogues and convert them to practice in other contextual settings. In short, coaching on culture themes is not conducted in this material.

2.2 Basic Spoken Chinese

2.2.1 Brief introduction

*Basic Spoken Chinese* is the recently published Chinese pedagogical material in the North American market. The designer Cornelius C. Kubler, Stanfield Professor at Williams College, is a well-known Chinese pedagogue who has extensive experience in instructing American diplomats and college students, developing Chinese language tests and pedagogical materials, and directing intensive Chinese language training programs both domestically and abroad. Kubler has authored or coauthored nine books and over 50 articles on Chinese language pedagogy and linguistics.

*Basic Spoken Chinese* is designed as an introductory Chinese curriculum to enhance the learner’s listening and speaking skills. The target users of these materials vary from college and university students to business people and government personnel. With some instructional adjustments and guidance, high school students and individual learners are believed to be able to use these materials as well. *Basic Spoken Chinese* includes a comprehensive orientation for different types of users, an introduction to pronunciation and Romanization of Chinese, and ten units of instruction that address the topics of
“Greetings and Useful Phrases,” “Introduction,” “Numbers, Dates, Time, and Money,” “Locating Person, Places and Things,” “Biographical Information,” “Getting Around Beijing,” and “Weather.” Every unit is divided into four spoken lessons, each of which consists of Context, Basic Conversation, Supplementary Vocabulary, Additional Vocabulary, Grammatical and Cultural Notes, and Review and Study Guide. The workbook, *Basic Spoken Chinese Practice Essentials*, which is correspondingly organized around the same topics, focuses on providing extensive drills and exercises for learners to practice both inside and outside of class (Jia 1). *Basic Spoken Chinese Instructor’s Guide* offers syllabi, lesson plans and in-class activities for teachers of this material to use as references.

2.2.2 Culture themes

2.2.2.1 Presentation

2.2.2.1.1 Cultural behaviors and reflected cultural values

The concept of “culture theme” is not indicated in *Basic Spoken Chinese*. However, cultural behaviors are embedded in the basic conversations of this material, and there are explanations implying the cultural values they convey. “Culture” has been considered a very important issue in the process of developing this material. When asked
about the consideration of “culture” in developing *Basic Spoken Chinese*, Kubler responded to the author of the thesis by stating:

Cultural content was one of my most important considerations when I designed the textbook. I tried to include Chinese behavioral culture in the basic conversations that learners memorize and perform. I also have long notes about culture in the grammatical and cultural notes section (“Re: Interview”).

Cultural behaviors appear in most of the forty basic conversations in the ten units, which include greeting acquaintances and non-acquaintances and conducting small talk, taking leave, giving thanks, addressing people of a different gender, age and social positions, humbly describing how one is busy, polite ways to start asking a question, first-meetings and exchanging business cards, making an apology and responding to an apology, inquiring about age, referring to one’s parents, giving gifts when visiting, responding to compliments, asking a request, and so on. Some cultural behaviors reoccur in the later conversations with or without further explanation. Table 3 is a summary of the cultural behaviors that appear in the basic conversations, the wording of which is summarized from the explanations in the Grammatical and Cultural Notes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Cultural behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1: Greetings and useful phrases</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Greet well-acquainted and frequently-seen friends by <em>ni hao</em> ‘how are you? hi’ and <em>ni dao nar qu a</em> ‘where are you going’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Greet someone who has not been seen for a period of time by <em>hao jiu bu jianle</em> ‘long time no see’ and <em>zenmeyang</em> ‘how, in what way’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Thank someone for his concern by <em>xiexie</em> ‘thank you’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Say <em>xian zoule</em> ‘I’ll be leaving now (first, before you)’ when one person has to leave first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Say <em>zaijian</em> ‘goodbye’ for leave taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Address well-acquainted people in informal and colloquial conversations by using <em>lao</em> ‘be old (of people)’ and <em>xiao</em> ‘be small, little, young’ before monosyllabic surnames</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Greet someone who has not been seen for a period of time by <em>zuijin zenmeyang a</em> ‘how have you been lately’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Indirectly respond to the inquiry of one’s busyness by <em>bu tai mang</em> ‘not too busy’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Address someone who is married as <em>taitai</em> ‘Mrs.; wife; married woman, lady’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Greet not well-acquainted guests by <em>huanying</em> ‘welcome’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Address not well-acquainted people as <em>nin</em> ‘you (singular, polite)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Use <em>man zou</em> ‘take care’ by the host when guests depart the host’s home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 2: Introductions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Use <em>qing wen</em> ‘excuse me, may I ask’ as a polite interjection for introducing question to the unacquainted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Refer to one’s classmate as <em>tongxue</em> ‘classmate, schoolmate, fellow student’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Respectfully ask for an unacquainted person’s surname in formal situation by <em>nin guixing?</em> ‘what is your honorable surname?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Make an apology by <em>duibuqi</em> ‘excuse me, sorry’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Give business cards to an unacquainted person in a business situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Use <em>qing duo zhijiao</em> ‘please give me more advice’ as a humble greeting to a newly acquainted person when giving business cards in a business situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 3 &amp; 4: Numbers,</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Politely enquire about the amount of people by <em>jiwei</em> ‘how may (people)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dates, time and money</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ask about one’s age by <em>ni duo da nianji le</em> ‘how old are you’ to one who is neither an old person or a child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Use <em>fuqin</em> ‘father’ as a formal term to refer to someone else’s father</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Politely respond to one’s thanks by <em>nali</em> ‘not at all’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 5: Locating persons, places and things</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Express regret by <em>baoqian</em> ‘sorry’ for one’s unscheduled visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Apologize for making one wait for a long time for an appointment by <em>rang ni jiu dengle</em> ‘made you wait a long time’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Politely respond to an apology of making one wait for a long time by <em>mei shir</em> ‘it’s nothing’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Comment to a friend that has not been seen in a long time to have “gotten thinner” to indicate care and concern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Offer tea to guests without asking, and invite guests to drink tea</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 6 &amp; 7: Biographical information</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>A child addresses an adult guest in his 20’s by calling out the kinship term <em>shushu</em> ‘father’s younger brother, uncle’ and sticks to this term instead of <em>ni</em> ‘you’ or <em>nin</em> ‘you (singular, polite)’ to be more courteous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bring a gift for the child of the family when visit the family for the first time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ask young people about marriage status in a casual first-meet conversation to show care and concern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Address a distantly related cousin as <em>biaojie</em> ‘older female cousin’ to show acknowledgement of important kinship relationships in Chinese society</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Deny or don’t accept compliments by <em>nali, nail</em> ‘where are those words of praise of yours coming from, they are not at all deserved’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 8 &amp; 9: Getting around Beijing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Disturb someone to ask a question by <em>laojia</em> ‘excuse me’ in Beijing and environs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Begin requests by the polite introductory phrase <em>mafan nin</em> ‘(I) trouble you (to…’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A bus conductor calls out passengers on bus as <em>tongzhi</em> ‘comrade’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 Cultural behaviors in *Basic Spoken Chinese: An Introduction to Speaking and Listening for Beginners*

It can be seen from Table 3 that these cultural behaviors reveal cultural values such as courtesy, modesty, hierarchical relationships, hospitality, kinship relationships and so on. However, these cultural values are neither explicitly stated nor verbosely
elaborated in detail. Instead, cultural values are briefly suggested. For example, a young Chinese-American uses a kinship term to address his distantly related cousin at their first meet, and this is marked as “the evidence of the importance of kinship relationships in Chinese society” (Kubler 256); the expression of mafan nin ‘(I) trouble you (to…)’ is put forward as a “polite introductory phrase” (Kubler 297); mei shir ‘it’s nothing’ is interpreted as a very common expression that “can serve as a polite response to an apology or to thanks” (Kubler 211); qing wen ‘please may I ask (the following question)’ is described as “commonly used in polite conversation to introduce questions” (Kubler 104). None of these Notes illuminate the cultural value rooted in “courtesy,” but concisely suggest those actions are very courteous.²

Basic Spoken Chinese also takes regional differences into consideration and presents different cultural behaviors of one’s intention that are used in Mainland China and Taiwan. This helps CFL learners to become aware of various cultural behaviors that convey the same value in different Chinese speech communities. For example, after the exclusively northern expression mei shir ‘it’s nothing’ appears in the basic conversation, mei guanxi ‘it’s nothing’ is introduced in the Grammatical and Cultural Notes to fill the gap of usage in Taiwan and south China. And when the Taiwanese-and-southern expression nali ‘you’re welcome’ is displayed in the basic conversation, the northern

² The citations in this paragraph all refer to the textbook Basic Spoken Chinese: An Introduction to Speaking and Listening for Beginners.
expression *bu keqi* ‘you’re welcome’ is introduced in the Grammatical and Cultural Notes.

2.2.2.1.2 Scripts of cultural behaviors

*Basic Spoken Chinese* excels at displaying natural scripts of utterances and actions in well-designed contexts. These scripts are very good models for learners to imitate in order to acquire culture themes. The conversations occur in the contexts of different major Chinese speech communities: Mainland China and Taiwan. Each conversation is conducted between a native Chinese and a young non-Chinese (mostly American) whose relationship is clearly stated, such as distantly related cousins, friends known for months, and manager and staff. The native Chinese are varied in gender, age, nationality and social position, and the Americans live in the Chinese speech communities for different reasons. Moreover, the way that the Chinese and Americans get along with each other is gentle, friendly and culturally appropriate. This authenticity, as Kubler reveals, is achieved through many of his colleagues’ and students’ contribution in recalling their communication encounters in Chinese speech communities and in improvising these situations, as well as improving and revising the scripts thereafter (“Re: Interview”). All of these designs are beneficial in immersing CFL learners into actual communication in the target culture, and exposing them to a myriad of ways to make contact with people who come from diverse social backgrounds.
Both audio and video programs of the basic conversations are provided in two separate discs for learners to listen to or watch and imitate. The DVD-ROM of the videos is an outstanding piece of multi-media material among the available materials of the same kind on the market. From the videos, learners not only see the roles performed from the script, but also receive visual input from the contextual settings and the social environments. Moreover, they intuitively access more cultural behaviors that imply cultural values. The time length of each video is different, which varies from approximately thirty seconds to two and a half minutes. These videos are not just a crude reproduction of the scripts as they appear in the textbook, since every single utterance taken together from the scripts could not possibly take up as long as one or two minutes; however, the videos honestly portray the social environments and contextual settings in which the conversations occur, and they show additional actions of interlocutors that are not subtly recorded in the scripts of the textbook.

The first fifteen to thirty seconds usually explain the social environments and contextual settings, accompanied by soft Chinese traditional music. In the video of Unit Two Part One, which is about a conversation between a Taiwanese student and an American student outside of the registration office of the Mandarin Training Center at National Taiwan Normal University, the first thirty seconds of the video contain three scenes in sequence. They are: (1) a distant view over a building of National Taiwan Normal University in Taipei as some students pass the front; (2) a close shot of the metal plate “Mandarin Training Center,” and (3) a close shot of a temporary sign “Registration
for New Students is on the 6th floor.” Both the plate and the sign are in English and Chinese. Not until after thirty seconds does the camera lens finally turn to the hallway outside of the registration office, where a Taiwanese girl walks over to a line of three foreign students and talks to a young American man standing at the beginning of the line. Other similar examples include a thirty seconds of alternating shots between two roommates studying seriously in a campus dormitory before one roommate’s friend comes (Unit Two Part Two), a forty-second shot in which a visitor finds and confirms the address, and informs the host of her arrival (not voiced) through an answering machine at the building entrance where the host lives (Unit One Part Four), and so on. The comprehensively demonstrated scenes create an authentic environment and extensively expose learners to culture themes.

Interlocutors’ non-verbal behaviors that exist between the segments of a single conversation script are also restored through the videos. For instance, compared with the written script of an American lady visiting a Taiwanese lady’s home (Unit One Part Four), which only records the utterances of greeting and taking leave, the video unrolls additional actions that convey the value of “hospitality.” These actions include: the host treating the guest with tea, opening the door for the guest, walking the guest to the elevator, pressing the button for the guest, saying goodbye by nodding, smiling and making small talk (not voiced), and staying until the door of the lift completely closes. In short, the video shapes an even richer picture of showing hospitality and reacting politely during a visit than just the script itself.
Although the street views, room furnishings and clothing are noticeably outdated from the current fashion and trend (since most videos were seemingly taken ten to twenty years ago), the photography and plotlines are still pleasant, which can motivate and sustain learners’ interest in watching them. Every role is dubbed by a native Chinese speaker, probably for the sake of eliminating the negative influence of non-native speakers’ pronunciation on learners. Of the videos I surveyed, there was only one shortcoming: the interlocutors’ overacted the greeting behaviors in the video of Unit One Part Two. During the very brief greeting, these two well-acquainted friends shook hands three times: when first meeting, giving thanks for concern, and saying farewell. The enthusiasm of the handshaking looks overdone. But it demonstrates both the positive and negative impact of video on conveying the actor associated with a culture theme.

2.2.2.1.3 Advice for learners

Kubler in Basic Spoken Chinese shows his concern for learners’ potential misunderstandings from cross-cultural communication and confusion about the degree of acting in accordance with Chinese conventions, and for that reason offers learners advice on cross-cultural communication. As Kubler illustrates in one Grammatical and Cultural Notes, in terms of Chinese handling compliments, it may be difficult for proud, non-Chinese parents to make a negative comment about their own child the way Chinese people do by saying nali, ta tiaopi daodan ‘not at all, he’s a naughty boy.’ Especially
when the parent really wants to say, “Thanks, I’m proud of him, too.” The Notes comment on the fact that understanding Chinese society and acting in accordance with Chinese society are two different skills. According to the Notes, a CFL learner should concentrate on becoming a successful foreigner in Chinese society, rather than pretending to be Chinese (273).

2.2.2.2 Coaching

While authentic cultural behaviors are showcased considerably in the book *Basic Spoken Chinese*, the workbook *Basic Spoken Chinese Practice Essentials* does not pay much attention to coaching CFL learners’ abilities in performing culture themes. The workbook *Basic Spoken Chinese Practice Essentials* is designed to offer CFL learners many options for practicing and polishing their language skills (Kubler and Wang 6). The exercises it provides fall into six categories: substitution drills, transformation and response drills, listening comprehension exercises, dictation exercises, role play exercises and translation exercises. The first four exercises are supported by audio files. The approach adopted for the set of materials *Basic Spoken Chinese* is eclectic in that the material claims to have borrowed freely from the audio-lingual, communicative, functional-notional, and grammar-translation approaches, yet the exercises in *Basic Spoken Chinese Practice Essentials* are mostly audio-lingual and grammar-translation oriented and do not demand two-way interaction. Extensive attention is paid to
mechanically drilling learners in a way that is devoid of contextual information instead of coaching their communicative abilities in the target culture. The only two-way interaction “role play exercises” ask two learners to read scripts in English and conduct utterances in Chinese, without contextual information.

Well-designed pedagogical materials should help CFL learners go through every essential step in the learning process, form a complete learning cycle, and additionally cultivate a life-long learning habit. Unfortunately, the workbook exercises appear out of touch with the abundant cultural behaviors that are showcased in the textbook; as Professor Li Yu, an associate professor at Williams College who teaches this textbook, explains, *Basic Spoken Chinese Practice Essential* is for learners to practice on their own in the language lab or at home (personal contact). In addition, *Basic Spoken Chinese Instructor’s Guide* directs instructors in how to conduct communicative activities among learners. The textbook does exceptionally well at providing learners with culturally appropriate experiences in Chinese speech communities, yet the workbook does not make persistent efforts in encouraging learners to reflect and gradually form hypotheses about culture themes, nor does the workbook allow students to actively test out these themes.

3 Parts of the manuscript of *Basic Spoken Chinese Instructor’s Guide* was accessed from Kubler through Email, but not the entire published version, and therefore the part of “communicative activities” cannot be reviewed.
2.3 Conclusion

An examination of the pedagogical materials *Fundamental Spoken Chinese* and *Basic Spoken Chinese* reveal that the pedagogy professionals who designed these materials are aware of the importance of presenting cultural values and of displaying some of the actions that could convey these cultural values. However, the quantity and degree of dealing with them differ. There is a large gap between the authenticities of culture behaviors in the different pedagogical materials. Learners must practice authentic exchanges in order to learn and imitate. The weakness lies in that some of the actions presented conflict with the cultural values presented without reasonable explanation, which may confuse learners’ understanding of cultural values. Meanwhile the designers of pedagogical materials are not emphasizing the importance of the reflective thinking process in acquiring cultural values, and therefore not many relevant exercises of culture themes are provided.
Chapter Three: Learners’ awareness of culture themes—procedures

Considering some of the lack of awareness of culture themes by designers of pedagogical materials for the beginner level, it is also worthwhile to investigate the level of awareness that L2 learners have about Chinese culture themes and the factors that could facilitate their acquisition of culture themes. In order to address these research questions, an investigation was conducted with students at the beginner level. Before the investigation was conducted, two major assumptions were made: (1) CFL learners of beginner level are at a preliminary stage of acquiring culture themes. They are aware of some culture themes, but not many. (2) What they are aware of depends on the experience and training they receive from the Chinese language program as well as the community. Chapter Three will specifically elaborate on the investigation in terms of the procedures that were conducted.

3.1 Experimental design

This investigation was conducted in February 2012 at the Ohio State University. The methodology for this research is to conduct one-on-one interviews for twenty minutes with beginning level students trained in the Chinese Language Program. The interview consisted of two parts. In the first part, each subject was asked about their basic demographic information, such as school year, major, age, and family background. In the
second part, each subject was given background information in English orally from the investigator as follows,

Imagine you are a new employee in a Chinese company in Shanghai. Your manager, colleagues and everyone else in the company are Chinese. The people in the surrounding environment are Chinese too. Every day you are involved in lots of events happening around you. You want to behave appropriately and leave others with a good impression of you. Think about how you would respond to the following contexts.

After the context information is given, the subject was also offered a reminder:

If you know how to respond in Chinese, say the following in Chinese; if you don’t know how to say it, describe it to me (the investigator) in English how you would respond in Chinese. If you don’t think you need to say anything, tell me (the investigator) that you would not say anything in this context.

One thing to point out here might be the validity of using English to respond to Chinese people in a Chinese context. The rationale of offering this permission lies in these two thoughts: (1) the subjects have limited language abilities since they are at the beginning level and (2) in reality, if an American’s Chinese language skills are not very strong, an interpreter would probably be assigned to help. But an interpreter’s job is literally conveying the meaning, and the intention that is conveyed still depends on the American.

The subjects responded to nine interview questions that embody nine cultural themes. The nine cultural themes were selected based on a discussion of cultural values
and culture themes in the summer 2011 SPEAC program\textsuperscript{4}. The interview questions are read to the subject clearly by the investigator consecutively. The investigator read one interview question, then the subject answered. When the investigator understood what the subject means, the investigator continued to read the next interview question. After each interview question, the subject was required to give an answer to open-ended questions, such as “what would you do?” or “what’s your reaction?” The reason for eliciting open-ended answers rather than employing the common “multiple choice” model is mainly because presupposed alternatives in numerical formats might: (1) less resemble the real-life situation, in which no one would offer options to choose from; or (2) limit students’ thoughts about their own answers (Bai 45). Please see the nine cultural themes and nine interview questions in Table 4:

\textsuperscript{4} The SPEAC (Summer Programs East Asian Concentration) program of The Ohio State University is offered by the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures (DEALL), in collaboration with the OSU National East Asian Language Resource Center (NEALRC) and OSU East Asian Studies Center (EASC) (“Announcement”). The investigator enrolled in the courses of teacher training (Chinese) of the SPEAC program in Qingdao, China in summer 2011, and participated in the discussion with Professor Galal Walker and fellow classmate on the topic of cultural values and culture themes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview question</th>
<th>Culture theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 On your way walking to work in the early morning, you pass one or two people on</td>
<td>Maintain the “in-group/out-group” expectation by not greeting people who are unknown and greeting people who are known.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the street that look friendly. What would you do?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 How would you address your manager, Zhang Weili (English name is William), on a</td>
<td>Recognize explicit hierarchy by addressing people in position titles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daily basis?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 If you do not agree with the opinions of your manager who is your senior, will</td>
<td>Maintain harmony by avoiding friction and being tolerant of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you express your differing opinions in front of your colleagues?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 You and an old friend are having a meal in a restaurant after work. When it is</td>
<td>Gain mianzi by dialoging about paying the bill in restaurants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>about time to pay, and your friend says, ‘let me take care of it’, what would you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 One day you go into the office, and your colleague says, “you look great in that</td>
<td>Show humbleness by refusing to accept the compliment or downplaying with it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dress”, what would you do?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 When you go to a career fair and need to give a potential business partner your</td>
<td>Show courtesy by offering business card in both hands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>business card, how would you present your card?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 After work on Friday, your colleagues are suggesting to go get a meal together and</td>
<td>Maintain mianzi for others by euphemistically refusing invitations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sing karaoke. You are very tired and want to go back and sleep immediately. What</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>would you do?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 You go home with your girlfriend/boyfriend to celebrate the Chinese New Year. As</td>
<td>Show concern by referring to obviously healthy conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soon as you enter the house, your girlfriend's/boyfriend's mother says that you've</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gained weight since she last saw you. What is your reaction?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 You notice a pimple on your colleague's face. What would you do?</td>
<td>Show concern by referring to obviously unhealthy conditions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Collection of nine interview questions and the nine culture themes
1. Sanders and Yao have explanations on casual greetings in their *Fundamental Spoken Chinese*, which can be summarized as follows: as in English, greetings serve as a polite signal of friendliness between people to reaffirm the relationship; however, where Chinese casual greetings and English casual greetings differ is in the type of person with whom it is appropriate to exchange pleasantries. Some parts of the English-speaking world, it is considered proper to greet a stranger on the street. The failure to say hello, especially after eye contact has been made, might be considered cold or rude behavior. In contrast, casual greetings in most of the Chinese-speaking world are only reserved for people whom you know, especially those whom you know well. People casually greet friends, familiar neighbors and colleagues that they know and consider as “in-group” members, but they do not initiate greetings with strangers and other people with whom they do not have a relationship. Therefore, in China, when people are walking on the street and strangers pass by, they do not usually acknowledge each other by nodding, smiling or greeting. People usually just walk straight past each other without any interaction.

2. Titles are a required maxim in Chinese culture, where hierarchy is explicitly recognized and Chinese feel comfortable with the practice of indicating their relative positions when addressing people. People who are at managerial levels are considered to have higher hierarchical status. In business contexts, people at managerial levels are higher on the hierarchical scale than clerks, therefore, clerks should address these superiors with the appropriate terms to demonstrate their respect. The rule for addressing
superiors is that surnames come first, followed by position titles. For example, a manager whose surname is Zhang should be addressed as Zhang jingli ‘Manager Zhang,’ and a director whose surname is Li should be addressed as Li zhuren ‘Director Li.’ In this context, addressing the manager Zhang Weili as Zhang jingli ‘Manager Zhang’ is the appropriate term of address, because the subject is supposed to be an intern whose position is inferior to the managerial position. People of a higher status address people lower in the hierarchy by their full name, given name or ‘xiao ‘little’ + surname’ (i.e. Xiao Zhang ‘little Zhang’).

3. A core value for Chinese people is ‘harmony.” Many researchers have found that in spite of differences in age and location, most Chinese are inclined to avoid conflict and disputes in order to maintain a harmonious relationship and enhance harmony (Li, Cheung, and Kau; Bond; Tang and Kirkbride; Leung). When clerks do not agree on the decisions made by the manager, they will usually be tolerant of them and will not openly express a differing opinion, regardless of whether or not the manager or colleagues are present.

4. The etiquette of paying the bill for dining depends on the different contexts of the dining itself, but generally people offer to pay the bill in order to demonstrate politeness and gain mianzi ‘face.’ Mianzi ‘face’ is the sense of superficial pride and contentment of self-esteem (Ren 97). People feel a sense of self-esteem by succeeding in

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5 The original text is in Chinese: 面子就是一种表面上的荣耀感，一种自尊心的满足.
paying for bills. For those who are considered on the same hierarchical level, such as relatives, friends and colleagues, contending to pay the bill happens frequently, and it is considered rude to not to offer to pay the bill. In the case of having a meal with an old friend, when one party shows the intention to pay the bill, the other side should also try to pay for the bill. The two parties may contend for the bill back and forth for two, three or more rounds, and whoever prevails gets the bill. This situation is seen more frequently in the older generation than in younger people. Sometimes middle-aged friends or family members will push the cash into each other’s hands back and forth for several rounds, As they become red in the face, the situation may appear to be quarreling to a bystander. The younger generation would not make the situation seem so serious. Offering to pay the bill for one another is also frequently seen, unless they have reached a prior agreement on splitting the bill or one person is assuming the role of the host.

5. In Chinese culture, people tend to avoid appearing arrogant by refusing to accept a counterpart’s compliment or by downplaying with it. They usually refuse a compliment, using many tactics which depend on specific contexts.

6. The presenting of business cards usually occurs at the first meeting of two people, such as business partners or academic professionals. For learners who hope to interact well in a C2, showing courtesy is an important issue when two people first meet, because they want to leave an impression of “being educated” and “being polite” to the other party, laying a strong foundation for a good relationship. If one side senses the other party’s rudeness at their first meeting, they might think the other party is not sincere
about the relationship, a feeling that may impact future efforts in building their relationship. An appropriate way to present one’s business card is to use two hands to present the business card, with the card’s contents facing up, and give a short introduction relevant to one’s name, occupation and affiliation. Often, business cards have two sides—one side in Chinese and one side in English or another foreign language. When presenting the card to a Chinese, the Chinese side faces up. If one hands the business card to a foreigner, the foreign-language side faces up. You should, for example, avoid letting the English side be face up when handing it over to a person who does not know English.

7. In Chinese culture, “collectivism” is emphasized. Colleagues do not just go to the same office everyday, sit down, finish the work, and head home. Instead, they also form a “unit” and promote camaraderie through communicative activities such as eating meals together and attending parties. If one colleague directly refuses an invitation, the one who offered the invitation would lose self-esteem, in other words, mianzi ‘face.’ Therefore, colleagues usually attend activities, and if they cannot, then would refuse in a euphemistic fashion, for example, Zhen buhao yisi, jintian you anpai le, xiaci yiding canjia ‘Sorry I have made other arrangements today. I’ll definitely participate next time.’

8. In Chinese culture, when people refer to another person’s health-related issues, it is considered a genuine show of concern. Older generations, with good intentions, frequently remark on a person’s weight gain. Gaining weight is viewed as a good thing because it means a person has a good appetite, has been fed well, or has good fortune. The hearer usually takes it as a compliment and feels happy about it. Young people,
however, regard being thin as beautiful and, even though they have been taught by the older generation about the good intentions of comments on fat, they tend to consider them a sign that one needs to be more physically fit.

9. Having pimples is a negative and unhealthy condition, implying that one has been under stress or lacks a healthy diet. But commenting on the existence of pimples is not viewed as negative intention, nor is it viewed as teasing about one’s ugliness. Instead, it is mentioned with good intention because it shows one’s concern about whether one is under stress recently or lacks a healthy diet. This comment may initiate a discussion of recent work habits or lifestyle. It also facilitates a step forward in establishing or maintaining the interpersonal relationship. Chinese neither feel insulted nor take offense when receiving comments about pimples, but instead may feel touched at this demonstration of concern.

3.2 Subjects

Twenty-nine students—enrolled in a first-level Chinese language course in the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures (DEALL) at The Ohio State University—participated in the study.\(^6\) One-on-one interviews were conducted with each

\(^6\) IRB Protocol Number: 2011B0532
subject and were recorded on the investigator’s personal computer. The data collection lasted for approximately two weeks.

3.2.1 Subjects’ instructional background

The first-level Chinese language course in DEALL emphasizes culturally coherent performances. The pedagogical material that the program uses for beginning level students is *Chinese: Communicating in the Culture*. Before the investigation was conducted, most students had seventy-five hours of classroom instruction and an expected 150 to 225 hours of self-study instruction.

3.2.2 Subjects’ demographic information

The demographic information of the subjects can be seen on Table 5 showing the wide range of students they represent. Among the pool of subjects, no student had any visual, perceptual, or auditory disabilities. Of the students who participated in the interviews, none had a severe learning difficulty.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Birth and family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Born and raised in U.S. Non East Asian heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Chinese family background (Hong Kong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Born and raised in U.S. Non East Asian heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Born and raised in U.S. Non East Asian heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Born and raised in U.S. Non East Asian heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Computer science and engineering</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Born and raised in U.S. Non East Asian heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Born and raised in U.S. Non East Asian heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Religious studies</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Born and raised in U.S. Non East Asian heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>International studies and pre-med</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Chinese family background (Mainland China)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Born and raised in U.S. Non East Asian heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Born and raised in U.S.; attended middle school for a period in Shanghai, China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Born and raised in U.S. Non East Asian heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Landscape architecture</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Born and raised in U.S. Non East Asian heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Medical science and international studies</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Born and raised in U.S. Non East Asian heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>International relationships</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Japanese family background; came to U.S. at ten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Strategic communications</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Born and raised in Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Chinese family background (Taiwan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Major/Background</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-----</td>
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<td>------------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Linguistics</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Korean family background; came to U.S. at fourteen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Philosophy and Chinese</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Born and raised in U.S. Non East Asian heritage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chinese family background; born and raised in Vietnam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>International studies</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Born and raised in U.S. Non East Asian heritage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>History focusing on China and Chinese</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Born and raised in U.S. Non East Asian heritage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>International studies</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Born and raised in U.S. Non East Asian heritage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Born and raised in U.S. Non East Asian heritage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Born and raised in U.S. Non East Asian heritage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Born and raised in U.S. Non East Asian heritage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>French, International business and marketing</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Born and raised in U.S. Non East Asian heritage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Strategic communication</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Born and raised in U.S. Non East Asian heritage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>International studies</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Born and raised in U.S. Non East Asian heritage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Demographic information on the twenty-nine subjects

Of the twenty-nine subjects, sixteen were male and thirteen were female. Twenty-seven were college undergraduates whose ages fall between eighteen and twenty-one years old. One subject was a 25-year-old lecturer of Spanish and one subject was a 38-year-old entrepreneur. The subjects’ majors are varied, with only four majoring or minoring in Chinese.
Among the twenty-nine subjects, seven of them have East Asian heritage. Four subjects have a Chinese family background, two have a Korean family background, and one has a Japanese family background. For the four subjects who have Chinese family backgrounds, the everyday language that family members use is usually English, followed by Cantonese.
Chapter Four: Learners’ awareness on culture themes—findings

Chapter four is devoted to the findings of learners’ awareness of culture themes. It will be displayed in two sections. The first section displays the data collected from the investigation, and the second section analyzes these data and synthesizes the conclusions.

4.1 Data

The data from interview questions are displayed in order of the nine interview questions. Refer to Table 4 for the interview questions and relevant culture themes.

4.1.1 Maintain the “in-group/out-group” expectation by not greeting people who are unknown and greeting people who are known

When the subjects were asked this question, fifteen of them said that they would respond by nihao with one or two adding “wave” and “smiley face.” Twelve subjects said that they would not say anything, but four of them pointed out that they might at least “nod or smile to acknowledge them.” One subject kept thinking about the possibilities and then doubted himself. The final answer is murky because he was uncertain of which one was “more acceptable.” Another subject said that he would just smile and wave.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Number of subjects</th>
<th>Who they are</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nihao</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>No.1, No.2, No.3, No.4, No.6, No.8, No.9, No.10, No.12, No.13, No.14, No.16, No.17, No.18, No.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Say or do nothing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>No.5, No.11, No.15, No.19, No.20, No.21, No.22, No.24, No.25, No.26, No.28, No.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No.7, No.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 Subjects’ responses to Question One

The eight subjects who say or do nothing without a “wave” or “smiley face” are the ones who answered the question appropriately.

4.1.2 Recognize explicit hierarchy by addressing people in position titles

Among the twenty-nine subjects, twenty of them chose to address the manager as Zhang jingli ‘Manager Zhang’ on a daily basis. Two subjects said that they would address the manager as Li jingli ‘Manager Li,’ three subjects as William jingli ‘manager,’ one subject as Zhang Weili, two subjects as Weili jingli ‘Manager Weili’ and one subject as Zhang Weili jingli ‘Manager Zhang Weili.’

From the results, we can see that, except the subject who would address the manager by the manager’s full name, almost all the subjects were fully aware of the fact that when addressing people from a higher hierarchical level, the position title needs to be indicated, but only the twenty subjects with the response of Zhang jingli ‘Manager Zhang’
applied the “surname + title” rule correctly. The two subjects who addressed *Li jingli* ‘Manager Li’ probably also applied the “surname + title” rule, but misunderstood one syllable in the given name, Li, as the surname.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Number of subjects</th>
<th>Who they are</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Zhang jingli</em> ‘Manager Zhang’</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>No.1, No.2, No.5, No.7, No.8, No.10, No.11, No.12, No.14, No.15, No.16, No.17, No.20, No.21, No.22, No.23, No.25, No.26, No.27, No.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Li jingli</em> ‘Manager Li’</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No.3, No.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>William jingli</em> ‘Manager’</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No.4, No.13, No.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Zhang Weili</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Weili jingli</em> ‘Manager Weili’</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No.19, No.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Zhang Weili jingli</em> ‘Manager Zhang Weili’</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 Subjects’ responses to the Question Two

The twenty subjects who address the manager as *Zhang jingli* ‘Manager Zhang’ are the ones who answered this question appropriately.

4.1.3 Maintain harmony by avoiding frictions and being tolerant of others

Three subjects said that they would express their different opinions instantly in front of their colleagues. One subject commented, “it’s valuable for everyone to express. I think it’s the best.” On the other hand, eighteen subjects would not object to the manager’s opinion right away in front their colleagues, but they would still express it politely “in a private meeting with the manager”, or “address with the manager alone.”
Four subjects would not say anything either in front of their colleagues or with the manager alone. Another four subjects offered other responses, such as: to be more likely to express their disagreement in front of their colleagues if the subject has known the manager for long time, “think about his opinions and try to understand,” ask co-workers about the situation, and keep silent on the issue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Number of subjects</th>
<th>Who they are</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Express different opinions instantly</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No.2, No.4, No.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Express different opinions privately</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>No.1, No.6, No.7, No.8, No.9, No.10, No.11, No.12, No.14, No.16, No.20, No.22, No.24, No.25, No.26, No.27, No.28, No.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Say or do nothing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No.5, No.13, No.21, No.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No.3, No.15, No.17, No.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 Subjects’ responses to Questions Three

The four subjects who do not express different opinions to their seniors are the ones who answered this question appropriately.

4.1.4 Gain *mianzi* by dialoging about paying the bill in restaurants

When the twenty-nine subjects were asked this question, they offered various responses. Here a rough categorization is conducted according to the subjects’ responses.

Almost all the subjects said that they would not directly accept the friend’s offer, except for the five subjects that said they would accept the offer directly by saying *hao* or *xiexie*. Among the majority who would not directly accept the offer, their methods of
refusal also vary. Generally speaking, there are four ways to respond according to the subjects:

(1) First offer to pay the bill. If the friend refuses it and still offers to pay, they would offer to pay for their own bill. If the offer is still refused, they would give up offering and accept the friend’s offer. One subject chose to respond in this way.

(2) First offer to pay the bill. If the friend refuses and still offers to pay, they would accept the offer. There are twelve subjects in this category. Among them, two subjects expressed the intention of paying the bill next time to “return the favor”.

(3) Offer to pay the whole bill for two to four times, or even for more times, until either party gets the better of the “fight.” Ten subjects chose to respond in this way. One subject described his potential action in great detail: “I would fight them for the check. I would say, ‘oh. Let me handle it.’ They probably ask back and forth, and I would try to get it again. If they really want to pay, I would let them after that.” Another subject pointed out straightforwardly that “it would be a battle of insisting.” Among these ten subjects who would “fight for the bill,” some respondents mentioned that if the friend really insisted and were close to winning the “fight” over the bill, they would still offer a compromise “to split the bill,” or “to pay one’s own part,” before eventually accepting the offer.
(4) It depends on who asks whom out for that meal. One subject said that the person who initiates the invitation for eating out is person who should pay. But this subject said that if it was the friend who initiated the invitation, she would still try to pay “to be polite.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Number of subjects</th>
<th>Who they are</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Directly accept the offer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>No.3, No.4, No.24, No.28, No.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First offer to pay the bill (if refused) then offer to pay one’s own (if refused again) accept the offer finally</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First offer to pay the bill (if refused) then accept the offer</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>No.1, *No.2, *No.6, No.10, No.11, No.12, No.13, No.15, No.19, No.21, No.25, No.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer to pay the whole bill for a couple of times</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>No.5, No.7, No.8, No.9, No.17, No.18, No.20, No.22, No.23, No.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It depends</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 Subjects’ responses to Question Four

(Note: The subjects who are marked * means that they mentioned to pay for the bill next time to “return the favor.”)

The ten subjects who offer to pay a couple of times, the two subjects who do not offer a couple of times but would pay next time to “return the favor,” and one subject who says “it depends” are all appropriate answers for this question.
4.1.5 Show humbleness by refusing to accept the compliment or downplaying with it

According to the subjects’ responses, there are two categories: (1) accept the compliment; and (2) do not accept the compliment. Sixteen subjects chose to accept the compliment by saying “thank you” or xiexie. In this group, five subjects would say something more than a simple “thank you.” They would either make a small talk with the colleague about where the clothes were purchased or compliment back on the colleague’s clothing. There is one individual outside of this 16-subject pool who responded with bukeqi ‘you are welcome.’

On the other hand, eleven subjects said that they would not accept the compliment. Seven of them would directly “deny” or “object” to the compliment. Four subjects declared that they “would not say ‘thank you’,” but then they were not sure what was appropriate to say. Their responses sounded very uncertain, such as: “probably say nothing,” “it’s just like what I wear normally,” “ask them if they’ve eaten,” and “make a comment about how they look.” One subject said that he would not accept the compliment, but would still say “thank you.” His explanation was “I know we’re not supposed to take compliments. Won’t say ‘oh, thank you, I love it,’ but would say thank you in a humble way.” Probably for him, “thank you” is used as a polite response to another person for being concerned, or he does not understand that xiexie indicates acceptance.
Responses | Number of subjects | Who they are
--- | --- | ---
Accept the compliment by saying “thank you” | 11 | No.2, No.4, No.12, No.14, No.15, No.16, No.17, No.18, No.19, No.20, No.25
Accept the compliment by saying “thank you” and more | 5 | No.8, No.10, No.11, No.21, No.27
Not accept the compliment by denying it | 7 | No.7, No.9, No.13, No.22, No.24, No.26, No.29
Not accept the compliment, but uncertain what to say | 4 | No.1, No.3, No.5, No.6
Not accept the compliment, but still say “thank you” | 1 | No.28
Say bukeqi ‘you are welcome’ | 1 | No.23

Table 10 Subjects’ responses to Question Five

The seven subjects who do not accept the compliment by denying it are the ones who answered the question appropriately.

4.1.6 Show courtesy by offering business cards with both hands

Among all the responses that the subjects offered for the nine situations, the ones they offered in this situation are the most consistent. The subjects described in detail how the behavior would be, such as: “with both hands, keeping eye contact with the other person, Chinese side, facing them, so that they can read it when they receive it,” and “two hands, Chinese side content facing them.” No matter what description they give, they all mentioned three points: (1) present it with two hands; (2) the Chinese side upward; (3) content faces the business prospect, so that the business prospect can read it. Only one
subject has some different opinion upon which side to put upward, “It would depend if he understands English. If he understands or can read English, I’d show him English; if he doesn’t know English, I’d give him Chinese.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Number of subjects</th>
<th>Who they are</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present it with two hands; the Chinese side upward; content faces the business prospect</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>No.1, No.3, No.4, No.5, No.6, No.7, No.8, No.9, No.10, No.11, No.12, No.13, No.14, No.15, No.16, No.17, No.18, No.19, No.20, No.21, No.22, No.23, No.24, No.25, No.26, No.27, No.28, No.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present it with two hands; the Chinese/English side upward; content faces the business prospect</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11 Subjects’ responses to Question Six

The twenty-eight subjects of the first category are the ones who answered the question appropriately.

4.1.7 Maintain mianzi for others by euphemistically refusing invitations

Six subjects said that they would attend the activities with other co-workers even though they feel very tired; however, their intention of attending the activities were different. One subject considered participating because “it’s important to keep establishing that relationship,” but another subject would participate “not because I feel
pressure, but I think it’ll be fun.” The remaining four subjects did not explain reasons and just said “go with them.”

Five subjects would attend the activities but may leave early. Some of them would notify the co-workers about leaving early beforehand, but some would decide sometime during the activities and then leave. The majority of the subjects said that they would not go with the co-workers. Thirteen subjects would explain straightforwardly that the reason is that they are “very tired and need to sleep,” and one subject would not offer any excuse. Four subjects expressed a certain level of uncertainty by wavering between two possible methods. One subject wavered between “not going and explaining the tiredness” and “going but leave early.” Two subjects would go only when they are given a lot of convincing from the co-workers. One subject would go if he is a newcomer in the department, but would not go if he knew the co-workers very well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Number of subjects</th>
<th>Who they are</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attend the activities</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>No.9, No.16, No.24, No.25, No.27, No.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend the activities but leave early</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>No.1, No.2, No.17, No.20, No.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not attend the activities</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>No.3, No.4, No.5, No.6, No.10, No.11, No.12, No.13, No.15, No.18, No.19, No.23, No.26, No.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No.7, No.8, No.14, No.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'Table 12 Subjects’ responses to Question Seven

The six subjects who still participate in the activities are the ones who answered the question appropriately. Those who participate and leave early with an excuse are also appropriate.
4.1.8 Show concern by referring to obviously healthy conditions

When the subjects were asked this question, none of the subjects responded negatively. Instead, most of them agreed on the judgment, even though some individuals said they might feel “awkward” inwardly. There are seven subjects who would agree with the girlfriend’s mother and say “okay.” Five subjects would agree and would give excuses to explain the situation, such as “ate too much recently”, “have been really hungry lately,” and “have been trying to build muscle.” Six subjects would express “thank you.” Three subjects said that they would express willingness to lose weight by “trying to work out.” Six subjects would just smile, or laugh, or not do anything. One subject commented that since he knows he is big it would not bother him.

It was discovered that a lot of subjects displayed a feeling of hesitation when imagining about a possible response and a lot of them talked to themselves and said “I don’t know” or “I am not sure” before they gave a response. But even in this case, they still believed that “it is not offensive,” and therefore they “would not be mad,” “would not confront her,” and “won’t argue or say anything disrespectful to her.” There are three subjects who indeterminately wondered if “this is a compliment” because “it is a sign of wealth,” or “that means you can eat more.” One of them thought this is what he heard about it. None of the subjects show any sign of being offended, so even though the answers vary, they are not inappropriate.
(Note: The subjects with the mark * means that they mentioned or wondered if this is a compliment.)

4.1.9 Show concern by referring to obviously unhealthy conditions

Compared to the other situations in which the subjects’ responses very greatly, their responses in this situation are essentially in agreement. A vast majority of subjects said that they would not say or do anything to this colleague. Among them, nine subjects added that if the relationship between the subject and the colleague is very close, the subject would secretly tell the colleague about a pimple on his face. Otherwise, they would keep quiet. Apart from this group, there are only two subjects said that they would point out the situation to the colleague. They would not do it publicly though. Instead,
they would “steal a conversation” so that “there is no other people around.” Generally speaking, all the subjects regarded “having pimple on one’s face” as something that is not supposed to be revealed, When it really needs to be disclosed, it should still be done in a quiet fashion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Number of subjects</th>
<th>Who they are</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tell the colleague quietly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No.3, No.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do nothing</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>No.1, No.2, No.4, No.6, No.7, No.8, No.10, No.12, No.13, No.14, No.17, No.20, No.23, No.25, No.26, No.27, No.28, No.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do nothing (but would tell the colleague if the relationship is very close)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>No.5, No.9, No.11, No.15, No.16, No.18, No.19, No.21, No.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14 Subjects’ responses to Question Nine

Not mentioning the pimplies does not negatively affect the relationship between the subject and the colleague, but mentioning the pimple in a nice way would definitely make the colleague appreciate the friendly concern. It is a step forward toward establishing and maintaining the relationship. In this sense, the two subjects who tell quietly and the ones among the nine subjects who would tell the colleague if the relationship is very close answered more appropriately.

4.2 Analysis

The data presented above reveal different results to the three assumptions. The first assumption of “CFL learners at the beginner level are at a preliminary stage of
acquiring culture themes. They are aware of some culture themes, but not many” is tested to be valid. The second assumption of “what learners are aware of depends on the experience and training they receive from the Chinese language program” turns out to be inaccurate, because the data reveals that factors other than the language program also facilitate learners’ acquisition of culture themes. The details of the findings are elaborated below.

4.2.1 Learners’ level of awareness on culture themes

An analysis of the data collected from the nine interview questions reveals that the subjects are at a preliminary stage of being aware of culture themes in Chinese culture, which means that they are aware of some culture themes at different levels, but not many. There are two culture themes that almost all the subjects answer appropriately, which are “show explicit hierarchy by addressing people in position titles” (with twenty out of twenty-nine subjects answered appropriately) and “show courtesy by offering business card in both hands” (with twenty-eight out of twenty-nine subjects answered appropriately). For some other culture themes, the responses that subjects provided are fairly widespread with three, four or even five types of reactions, and the number of appropriate answers for each culture theme varies. This indicates that some subjects are aware of certain specific culture themes, while other subjects are aware of other culture themes. The subjects answer one or two appropriately and the rest inappropriately, or
answer most questions appropriately with one or two answered inappropriately. Overall, the subjects have some understanding of these selected culture themes, but they are not fully aware of the culture themes.

4.2.2 Facilitating learners’ acquisition on culture themes

From the subjects’ answers and their explanations, it is discovered that both abundant experience and training from the OSU Chinese language program as well as from the community facilitate CFL learners’ acquisition on culture themes. There is a slight difference between the two factors. The language program, designed with coherent cultural performances, ensures the complete cycle of acquisition on culture themes. The community exposes learners to concrete experience, but it does not ensure the reflective process that help learners absorb the experience.

4.2.2.1 Training from the language program

As it is revealed from above, almost all the subjects answered appropriately on the culture themes “show explicit hierarchy by addressing people in position titles” and “show courtesy by offering business card in both hands,” while they answered variably on the other culture themes, which triggers an assumption that the former two consistent answers are influenced by the instruction the learners receive from the current language
program in which they are enrolled. A discussion with the subjects on this issue shows that this is correct. Subjects have received abundant training on these culture themes from the language program, and the training does facilitate the acquisition of the culture themes.

The pedagogical material that the program uses for beginner learners is *Chinese: Communicating in the culture*, which includes one textbook, an audio program, and one multimedia disc. In the material, the core dialogues are located in office settings where the terms of address display hierarchical relationship. Here is the core dialogue of Unit One, Stage Seven (Walker and Long 94):

Keren: Qingwen, Hua Xiaohui fu jingli shi nei wei?
Mishu: Hua fu jingli ma? Ta ya … jiushi neige you shou you ai de nanren.
Keren: Ta xianzai you kong ma?
Mishu: Wo bu-qingchu.

(Visitor: Excuse me, who is the vice manager Hua Xiaohui?
Secretary: Vice manager Hua? He, well, … is just the slim and short guy over there.
Visitor: Is he available now?
Secretary: I am not sure.)

By watching the video and listening to the audios, students receive input of concrete experiences which shows how superiors in office settings are referred to and addressed. Then students interact with the multimedia disc for the drilling exercises, which provides information in English about the specific usages and elicit students’ responses and initiations of conversations on the term of address such as manager, vice manager and director. Through this reflective process, students gradually form a
hypothesis that in Chinese office settings people address their superiors by their surname and the position titles to display their recognition and observation of the hierarchical relationship. When students attend to the classroom instructions, they are required to complete tasks with assigned roles in office settings, such as “the secretary inquiring about new arrangement from the manager.” What the “secretary” needs to do is to address the “manager” with the surname of Zhang as Zhang jingli ‘Manager Zhang’ and then initiate an inquiry. This is an active testing process in which learners examine their established hypotheses in a designed target culture. The instructor serves as an evaluator who assesses students’ performances, offering approval for correct hypotheses and correction for incorrect hypotheses.

By being presented with concrete experience and being trained in a series of steps of reflective thinking, hypothesis forming and active testing, students acquire the culture theme of “show explicit hierarchy by addressing people in position titles.” And since students have been repeatedly trained on this culture theme, their answers to the interview question were quick and natural. By the same token, the subjects’ answers on “show courtesy by offering business card in both hands” also reflects the abundant experience and training they receive from the intensive language program. However, the other culture themes are not specifically trained in the program, which explains the reason why the subjects’ responses on these culture themes are not as consistent as the above two.
4.2.2.2 Experience from the community

Since the subjects have not received specific training on the other culture themes, how were the appropriate answers on these culture themes learned? Some subjects’ explanations reveal that, apart from the intensive training they earn from the current language program, they also obtain extensive experience from the community, which also facilitated their acquisition on culture themes.

The subjects from Chinese family background observe more of their family’s behavior and tend to conduct the same actions under similar contexts. Subject No.9 is one of the examples. This subject had observed, from a very young age, the senior members of his family contending for paying the bills in restaurants, and therefore has been influenced by this behavior. When he dines out with Chinese friends in restaurants, he also offers to pay the bill, although sometimes the Chinese friends insist on splitting since they are still students and it is expensive for one person to pay for all. Subject No.17 also offered to pay bills in the fourth question, by explaining that he had also observed his parents offering to pay bills for their Chinese friends in restaurants, and giving friends gifts if they receive one to return the favor.

The subjects from non-Chinese family background observe or are informed of culture themes through communication with Chinese friends, friends’ family and lectures given by pedagogy professionals. Subject No.29 commented that what he experienced with his Chinese girlfriend and her family just a few weeks ago in China contributed a lot
to his answers. Before going to China, his girlfriend informed the subject a lot of
etiquette, such as how to respond to compliments, how to expressing concern, how to
compliment and so on as recognition of Chinese cultural values. When he met her family,
he observed the rules faithfully, and thus received positive feedback from them. The strict
parents even pointed out some defects, hoping the subject could improve in their future
meetings. Subject No.29’s responses are very appropriate: “show humbleness by refusing
to accept the compliment or downplaying them,” “show concern by referring to explicit
healthy conditions,” “maintain mianzi for others by euphemistically refusing invitations,”
and “maintain the ‘in-group/out-group’ expectation by not greeting people whom are
unknown and greeting people whom are known.”

Subject No.23 claimed that she had been given lectures on Chinese culture in a
short-term summer program placed in Beijing, China. Through the lectures the subject
heard about the customs, such as that people do not acknowledge those who sneeze and
say “bless you,” being told you’re fat is good because it means you’re wealthy, using two
hands to accept things is “very respectful,” and offering to pay bills is “very polite.”
However, the subject just has the experience of hearing about them, without the process
of reflective thinking and active testing which could form a complete learning cycle.
4.3 Conclusion

From the above analysis, it is discovered that CFL learners at beginner level are at an initial stage of acquiring culture themes. They are aware of some culture themes, but not many. Different people’s levels of awareness differ. The factors that facilitate the acquisition of culture themes of CFL learners at beginner level are two: training from the OSU Chinese language program and experience from the community. The slight difference between the two factors is that the language program designed with coherent cultural performances ensures the complete cycle of acquisition of culture themes, while the community exposes learners to concrete experience but does not ensure the reflective process that help learners absorb the experience.

The following section briefly discusses the inadequacy and the directions for future research, either by the investigator oneself or other researchers.

(1) The investigation in Chapter Three and Four did not mention what native speakers would do in each of the nine scenarios, and thus it is unclear whether there is greater agreements among native speakers as to their course of action. An exploration of native speakers’ actions on the listed culture themes could be conducted in the future investigation.

(2) The context that the nine interview questions describe lack specific information such as time, place, roles and audience, and therefore the answers that
respondents provide might be various. So if the experiment could be redone, the
interview questions would be designed to specify information with more details.
Chapter Five: A gaming strategy for introducing culture themes in Chinese language instruction

Based on the findings from the previous chapters, it is necessary to propose a 21st century approach for pedagogy professionals to introduce culture themes and for CFL learners to acquire culture themes with better effects. The approach is to design a Chinese language program that uses gaming as strategy to enable CFL learners to perform culture themes appropriately. To understand using gaming as strategy, Chapter Five discusses what is meant by gamification, how gamification includes the features of the compilation of culture themes, and what principles could shape a Chinese language program that uses gaming as strategy to introduce culture themes.

5.1 What is gamification

5.1.1 Gamification in all walks of life

Gamification, defined as the use of game mechanics, dynamics, and frameworks to promote desired behaviors, has found its way into domains like marketing, politics, health and fitness. Analysts are predicting that it will become a multi-billion dollar industry by 2015 (MacMillan). Lee and Hammer point out that gamification has most frequently been used as a clever way to promote commodities and positive lifestyles,
such as players earning badges, discounts, and other rewards for visiting real-world shops (1). The website *Google Powermeter* encourages household reductions in energy consumption through the use of progress bars and collectible badges (Lee and Hammer 1).

5.1.2 *Gamification* in education

*Gamification* is also applied to the field of education for the purpose of engaging students in school activities and encouraging positive learning behaviors. Lee and Hammer observe that existing *gamification* projects are applied at vastly different scales (2). At the *micro-scale*, individual teachers gamify their own class structure. For example, Lee Sheldon, a professor at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, discarded traditional grading in favor of earning “experience points” and converted homework assignments into quests (Laster). The other end of the scale is *Quest to Learn*, a new charter school in New York City, which is using game design as its organizing framework for teaching and learning. Game designers work together with teachers to develop playful curricula and incorporate game elements into the entire school day (Corbett).

However, *gamification* projects should not be scratched on the scale of singles classes, nor should they be scratched on the scale of a whole school because few people will ever get this opportunity (Lee and Hammer 2). What Lee and Hammer have taken is
a third path in creating a “game layer.” The “game layer” incorporates many different
school-based activities, and instructors can use this modular toolkit to fit their own
instructional needs. The creation of the “game layer” is based on the several features of
games that Lee and Hammer summarized (3-4), which lays the theoretical foundation for
this chapter.

5.2 Shared features between compiling culture themes and *gamification*

5.2.1 Performance with scoring system

Compiling culture themes is a process of amassing cultural performances, because
the actions that convey cultural values have the similar five elements that a performance
has: time, roles, place, script and audience. Walker considers learning a foreign language
to be engaging in a game. In games, players have the rules to abide by. They succeed by
doing the right thing, lose by doing the wrong thing, and score with every success. The
rules of culture themes that learners discover are by observing whether the learners’
actions are accepted by members of the target culture. They succeed by performing
accepted actions and fail by disapproved actions, and gain points with successful
behaving appropriately.
5.2.2 Active experimentation

The findings in Chapter Four reveal that CFL learners’ compilation of culture themes is facilitated by extensive experience and intensive training on culture themes. More specifically, the learners’ engagement in concrete experience, reflective thinking, forming hypothesis and experimental testing on the culture themes are part of the vital learning process, which requires consistent experimentation and exploration.

Games provide complex systems of rules for players to explore through active experimentation and discovery (Lee and Hammer 3). For example, the apparently simple mobile game *Angry Birds* asks players to knock down towers by launching birds out of a slingshot. Players must experiment with the game to figure out the physical properties of different tower materials, the ballistics of the slingshot, and the structural weaknesses of each tower (Lee and Hammer 3). In games, players conduct moves, observe the results, reflect on the defects, plan the new moves and test the effectiveness. This consistent experimentation resembles the intricate process of compiling culture themes.

5.2.3 Concrete challenges

The gradual compilation of culture themes is of increasing complexity, because it posits concrete challenges for CFL learners all the time. A performance of culture themes can be as simple as two strangers passing each other without any interaction, or as
complex as business people using persuasive strategies to negotiate an extensive cooperation. As performances become more complex, enacting culture themes turns out to be more challenging.

Games guide players through the mastery process and keep them engaged with potentially difficult tasks (Koster). Every “level up” in games is always followed by an upgraded difficulty level—clearing obstacles, killing monsters or obtaining gifts—that makes the game become more complex and challenging. But the challenges are moderately tailored to players’ skill levels and are gradually built up as players’ skills expand. An example would be the gradually speeding up of the falling block in Tetris as players advance in the game. From the point of positing concrete challenges, compiling culture themes and games are alike.

5.2.4 Turning failure into success

Encountering failure is indispensible for learners when they compile culture themes. As indicated earlier, when CFL learners experiment and test on the rules of culture themes, they do not succeed just with one try. They try, fail, try again, fail again, try another time, and fail on a higher level. The means of conducting new hypothesis and experimenting with them is to make consistent efforts to turn failure into success.

A game is a win-or-lose situation, and failure is a necessary part in it. A game invokes powerful emotions such as frustration and joy (Lazzaro 6). Players involve in
repeated experimentation and repeated failure (Lee and Hammer 3), and thus undergo long time of frustration. But at the time of success, players’ emotions are transformed from frustration to joy. Gamification creates an environment in which the effort of turning failure into success is rewarded (Lee and Hammer 3-4).

5.3 Principles that shape Chinese language program

Based on the shared features between compiling culture themes and gamification, four principles are formulated that could shape a Chinese language program that uses gaming as strategy for introducing culture themes.

(1) Evaluate CFL learners’ performances of culture themes with a defined scoring system, in which learners gain points by the performances that are accepted by members of the target culture.

(2) Reinforce the intensive training of culture themes through implementing the instructional cycle, which ensures the active experimentation and exploration on acquiring culture themes.

(3) Deliver concrete challenges that are tailored to learners’ skill levels (beginning level), and increase the difficulty as the learners’ skills expand. The challenges are moderately difficult, and the goals are immediate.

(4) Create opportunities for learners to fail and fail at a higher level, and reward the efforts that learners make.
5.4 Conclusion

All in all, gaming is a practical strategy to adopt in introducing culture themes in Chinese language instruction because it shares features with the compilation of culture themes. A Chinese language program that introduce and instructs culture themes would be productive if it observes the principles formulated in this chapter.


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Appendix: Interview Guide

1. Interview questions about the subjects’ demographic information: school year, major, age, birth and family.

2. Interview questions about the subjects’ reactions to culture themes

The introduction read to the subjects: Imagine you are a new employee in a Chinese company in Shanghai. Your manager, colleagues and everyone in the company is Chinese. The people in the surrounding environment are Chinese too. Every day you are involved in lots of events happening around you. You want to behave appropriately and leave others with a good impression of you. Think about how you would respond to the following contexts. If you know how to respond in Chinese say the following in Chinese; if you don’t know how to say it, describe it to me (the investigator) in English how you would respond in Chinese. If you don’t think you need to say anything, tell me (the investigator) that you would not say anything in this context.

1) On your way walking to your work in an early morning, you pass one or two people on the street that look friendly. What would you do?

2) How would you address your manager, Zhang Weili (English name is William), on a daily basis?

3) If you do not agree with the opinions of your manager who is your senior, will you express your different opinions in front of your colleagues?
4) You and an old friend are having a meal in a restaurant after work. When it is about time to pay, and your friend says, “let me take care of it,” what would you do?

5) One day you go into the office, and your colleague says, “you look great in that dress.” What would you do?

6) When you go for a career fair and need to give a potential business partner your business card, how would you present your card? (Act it out)

7) After work on Friday, your colleagues are suggesting to go get a meal together and then sing karaoke. You are very tired and want to go back and sleep immediately. What would you do?

8) You go home with your girlfriend/boyfriend to celebrate the Chinese New Year. As soon as you enter the house, your girlfriend's/boyfriend's mother says that you've gained weight since she last saw you. What is your reaction?

9) You notice a pimple on your colleague’s face. What would you do?