

# Analysis of Chinese and Foreign Cultures in Junior High School English Textbooks under the New Curriculum Standards

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**Abstract:** *Under the perspective of the new curriculum standards' goal of cultivating cultural awareness as a core competency, this study focuses on the People's Education Press junior high school English textbook for the eighth grade, first volume. It conducts a multidimensional analysis and discussion of the Chinese and foreign cultural elements within this textbook. The research specifically explores the frequency of appearance, degree of presentation, cultural distribution range, and cultural fields of both Chinese and foreign cultures across Units 1 to 10. A variety of research methods are employed in the study to investigate the cultural elements in the English textbook. The study posits that the inclusion of Chinese and foreign cultural elements in English textbooks has a significant impact on achieving the goal of cultural awareness, making the study of these elements necessary and valuable. However, it also notes that there are still some issues with the representation of Chinese and foreign cultures in current English textbooks, such as imbalances that warrant further discussion. Therefore, at the level of cultural awareness cultivation under the new curriculum standards, this research provides evaluations and data references for English curriculum teaching and textbook compilation. It suggests that future textbook writing and research should strengthen the comparison and integration of various aspects of Chinese and foreign cultural elements to enhance the value orientation, quality, and practicality of the textbooks.*

**Keywords:** *English Textbooks; Junior High School English Teaching; Chinese and Foreign Cultures; Frequency and Degree; Cultural Awareness*

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, as globalization accelerates, fostering students' correct cultural awareness and concepts has become one of the important focal points in the educational community. English textbooks, as vital tools for teaching and learning, are not only required to impart language knowledge but also need to pay attention to the inheritance of culture and cross-cultural communication. The "Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)" underscore the significance of "cultural awareness" as one of the core competencies in English teaching. This standard defines "cultural awareness" as an in-depth understanding of Chinese and foreign cultures, along with the ability to appreciate excellent cultures, reflecting students' intercultural cognition, attitudes, and behavioral choices in the new era.<sup>[1]</sup> By cultivating cultural awareness, students can strengthen their patriotic sentiments and identification with the concept of a shared human destiny, while also contributing to the shaping of their character, the improvement of their civilization literacy, and the enhancement of their social responsibility. It is essential to deeply evaluate the cultural content included in the English textbooks currently in use so as to timely identify the strengths and weaknesses in the cultural selection and compilation of these materials. This not only helps teachers to handle the cultural elements in the textbooks more appropriately when teaching the content but also provides valuable references for further improving the textbooks, especially the cultural content within them.<sup>[2]</sup> Therefore, conducting research and discussions on the Chinese and foreign cultural elements in English textbooks from multiple dimensions is of great significance.

This study aims to explore the Chinese and foreign cultural elements in the People's Education Press junior high school English textbook for the eighth grade, first volume, under the perspective of the new curriculum standards. The research employs various methods such as comparative analysis, textual analysis, data statistics, and literature review to conduct a detailed investigation into the

frequency and degree of cultural elements presented in the textbook. Moreover, the study examines the distribution range and cultural fields of Chinese and foreign cultures across Units 1 to 10. Comparative analysis and textual analysis are carried out through reading, analyzing, recording, summarizing, and comparing the content of the entire English textbook; data statistics involve manually counting the instances of Chinese and foreign cultural elements and converting them into visual data, resulting in a data table that displays the "frequency and degree" of cultural elements in the textbook. The literature review method used in this research not only draws on existing research experiences but also identifies gaps and deficiencies, exploring new perspectives and approaches for innovative research on textbook culture.

The results indicate that the People's Education Press junior high school English textbook for the eighth grade, first semester, contains a rich array of Chinese and foreign cultural elements, covering multiple aspects. Through the analysis of the frequency of Chinese and foreign cultural elements, it is found that the content related to foreign cultures appears more frequently compared to Chinese culture in this textbook. The analysis of the cultural domain sectors in the textbook reveals that the Chinese and foreign cultures mainly involve six cultural domain sectors (tourism and geography culture, program culture, traditional culture, classic literature culture, festival culture, and food culture), with classic literature and festival culture domains not presenting Chinese culture. In terms of the distribution range of Chinese and foreign cultures across different units in the textbook, from a horizontal cultural perspective, the distribution of culture within each unit is uneven, with some units lacking any cultural elements. From a vertical cultural dimension, within each unit range, the distribution of Chinese and foreign cultures is imbalanced, with some units presenting only the latter. Regarding the extent of presentation of Chinese and foreign cultures in the textbook, there are more foreign cultural elements presented at a simple "mention" level, whereas Chinese cultural elements are more often presented at a deeper "in-depth study" level.

Subsequently, this paper presents the findings and evaluations in the section on Results and Analysis, and offers suggestions related to English textbook culture in the section on Discussion and Implications. This research is dedicated to analyzing the Chinese and foreign cultural elements in the People's Education Press eighth-grade first volume textbook and provides valuable references and guidance for the selection and compilation of textbook culture and the cultivation of students' cultural awareness.

## **2. Literature Review**

After extensive literature collection and review, this study has conducted a detailed analysis and reflection on the research methods and findings related to the relevant topic, thereby providing a solid theoretical foundation for the conduct of this research. Research on textbook culture has a promotional effect on foreign language learning and the cultivation of cultural awareness. Wang Zhenya (2005) believes that foreign language teaching includes two interrelated main elements: language and culture, and studies have shown that the abilities in language and culture should develop synchronously.<sup>[3]</sup> Meng Yaling and Chen Di (2021) mainly explored the cultural awareness in the People's Education Press junior high school English textbooks and analyzed the five-level standards of cultural awareness. Sun Mengmeng (2020) primarily investigated the Chinese culture in junior high school English textbooks. Most previous literature on junior high school English textbooks had overly broad research scopes, lacked specificity in research subjects, and were rarely supported by data. Based on the previous literature research on textbook culture, this paper defines the scope of textbook culture research as the People's Education Press junior high school English textbook for the eighth grade, first volume, with the subject of study being the Chinese and foreign cultures within this textbook, utilizing visual data for comparative analysis. This research draws on existing excellent related literature while identifying and filling gaps, innovating in aspects such as research subjects and methods.

## **3. Research Design and Methodology**

### ***3.1 Comparative Analysis and Textual Analysis***

This study selected the cultural elements of the People's Education Press junior high school English textbook for the eighth grade, first volume, as the subject of research. The types of cultural elements specifically compared in the study are divided into two categories: Chinese culture and foreign cultures. Textual analysis involves an in-depth interpretation and analysis of the textbook content from the

surface to the core, revealing the deeper meanings implied, that is, inferring the accurate meaning from the representational significance of the text.<sup>[4]</sup> Firstly, the PDF file of the People's Education Press junior high school English textbook for the eighth grade, first semester, was downloaded from the internet. Then, through reading, analyzing, recording, summarizing, and comparing the entire English textbook content, the obtained information from the textbook was quantitatively categorized and counted in frequency. This resulted in data on the frequency of appearance (number of occurrences) of Chinese and foreign cultures in each unit from Unit 1 to Unit 10, the cultural domain fields (tourism and geography culture, program culture, traditional culture, classic literature culture, festival culture, food culture), distribution range (Unit 1-Unit 10), and degrees of presentation (briefly mentioned, in-depth) within the textbook.

### 3.2 Statistical Analysis

This paper employs statistical methods to specifically analyze the cultural elements in the People's Education Press junior high school English textbook for the eighth grade, first volume. Using manual counting, the textbook was carefully read from Unit 1 to Unit 10 to identify all the cultural elements included. A collective statistical analysis was conducted on the scattered Chinese and foreign cultural elements within the textbook, and the results were categorized and transformed into visualized statistical data.

	Unit1	Unit2	Unit3	Unit4	Unit5	Unit6	Unit7	Unit8	Unit9	Unit10	Unit1~10
Chinese Culture (Briefly Mentioned)	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	5
Foreign Culture (Briefly Mentioned)	2	0	0	2	0	1	3	0	1	0	9
Chinese Culture (In-Depth Study)	5	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	8
Foreign Culture (In-Depth Study)	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	7
Chinese Culture (Overall)	9	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	13
Foreign Culture (Overall)	5	0	0	2	1	1	3	3	1	0	16

(Note: The table is the result of the application of statistical methods in this study, focusing on the "frequency and degree" of appearance of Chinese and foreign cultural elements in the People's Education Press junior high school English textbook for the eighth grade, first semester. The "numbers" presented in the table represent the "frequency of appearance" of the corresponding cultural elements within the respective unit intervals of the textbook, with the unit being "times." Additionally, this table is referred to as the "Statistics Table of Chinese and Foreign Cultural Elements" in the "Results and Analysis" section of this paper.)

### 3.3 Literature Research Method

The literature research method was employed in this study, which investigated the Chinese and foreign cultural elements in the People's Education Press junior high school English textbook for the eighth grade, first volume, from the perspective of the new curriculum standards. Initially, the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) was accessed, followed by entering keywords such as "People's Education Press," "junior high school English," "eighth grade first semester textbooks," and "culture" to conduct searches. Relevant journal articles were downloaded for review. This research builds upon the achievements of previous studies, involving an in-depth reflection and discussion on theories and practices in related fields through consulting CNKI and reading multiple literature sources.

During the research process, the literature research method was applied to systematically analyze and reflect on the collected data, striving to provide valuable evaluative references and feasible insights for the selection and compilation of cultural elements in the English textbooks under the new curriculum standards.

#### **4. Research Results and Analysis**

##### ***4.1 Frequency Analysis of Chinese and Foreign Cultures in the English Textbook***

Based on the analysis from the "Statistics Table of Chinese and Foreign Cultural Elements" presented in the statistical methods section of this study, the People's Education Press junior high school English textbook for the eighth grade, first volume, from Unit 1 to Unit 10, contains a total of 13 instances of content related to Chinese culture, while foreign cultural content appeared more frequently at 16 instances. This indicates that the compilation of the textbook tends to place greater emphasis on the input of foreign cultures rather than presenting more of the native culture.

##### ***4.2 Analysis of Cultural Fields in the English Textbook***

Through categorized analysis, this study identified that the People's Education Press junior high school English textbook for the eighth grade, first volume, from Unit 1 to Unit 10, primarily involves content across six cultural fields (tourism and geography culture, program culture, traditional culture, classic literature culture, festival culture, food culture).

According to the data recorded during this study, the tourism and geography culture sector in the English textbook is presented through Chinese and foreign place names, particularly city names such as Guizhou, Sanya, Hong Kong, Nanjing, New York, Penang (Malaysia), as well as tourist attraction names like Huangguoshu Waterfall, Tian'anmen Square, the Place Museum, a Beijing hutong, Mount Tai. The program culture sector features famous Chinese and foreign variety shows, including America's Got Talent Show, American Idol, and China's Got Talent Show. The traditional culture part introduces long-standing Chinese and foreign characters and stories, for instance, *Mulan* (an old Chinese story), *Mickey Mouse* (American Cartoon Culture). The food culture is represented by Chinese and foreign cuisines, such as Yunnan Rice Noodles, Malaysian yellow noodles, Russian Soup, Sandwich.

However, it is particularly noteworthy that Chinese culture is not presented in the cultural fields of classics and festivals. The presentation of classic culture in this English textbook is only in the form of foreign classics, such as *The Old Man and the Sea*; The presentation of festival culture in this English textbook only includes foreign festivals, such as Thanksgiving, and does not present relevant Chinese cultural elements.

##### ***4.3 Analysis of the Distribution Range of Chinese and Foreign Cultures in the English Textbook***

Based on the analysis from the "Statistics Table of Chinese and Foreign Cultural Elements" presented in the statistical methods section of this study, the total range of cultural distribution examined is defined as Unit 1 through Unit 10 of the People's Education Press junior high school English textbook for the eighth grade, first semester, with sub-ranges being individual units such as Unit 1, Unit 2, and so on.

Through statistical data and comparative analysis, it can be observed that both Chinese and foreign cultures are primarily distributed in Unit 1 of the English textbook. Specifically, Chinese culture accounts for 9/13, while foreign culture makes up 5/16 of the cultural content. However, Units 2, 3, and 10 do not cover any elements of Chinese or foreign cultures at all. Furthermore, Units 6 and 9 of the textbook only address foreign cultures without including any Chinese cultural content.

This suggests that there is a certain degree of imbalance in the distribution of Chinese and foreign cultures across the units of the People's Education Press junior high school English textbook for the eighth grade, first volume. From a horizontal cultural perspective, the distribution of cultural elements in the various units of the textbook is uneven, with some units lacking any cultural content. From a vertical cultural perspective, within the different unit intervals, the distribution of Chinese and foreign cultures is unbalanced, with some units featuring only the latter.

#### ***4.4 Analysis of the Degree of Presentation of Chinese and Foreign Cultures in the English Textbook***

Based on the analysis from the "Statistics Table of Chinese and Foreign Cultural Elements" presented in the statistical methods section of this study, the presentation of Chinese and foreign cultures in the People's Education Press junior high school English textbook for the eighth grade, first volume, is categorized into two degrees: a simple "mention" level and a more "in-depth" learning level.

Through statistical data analysis, it is evident that the textbook contains a higher number of foreign cultural elements presented at a simple "mention" level, whereas Chinese cultural elements are more frequently found at a deeper "in-depth" learning level.

#### **5. Discussion: Suggestions for Selecting Cultural Elements in English Textbooks under the "Cultural Awareness" Objective of the New Curriculum Standards**

The new curriculum standards clearly propose the cultivation of students' cultural awareness, emphasizing the importance of imparting cultural connotations in English teaching. This study, through the analysis of Chinese and foreign cultural elements in the People's Education Press junior high school English textbook for the eighth grade, first volume, found that the total frequency of Chinese cultural content was 13, while that of foreign cultures was 16, reflecting the objective of cultivating "cultural awareness" to a certain extent. For instance, the texts include various tourist locations around China and abroad, historical stories, etc., allowing students to grasp and understand the characteristics of different cultures and their differences while learning English.

However, the "festival culture" in the English textbook only presented the foreign festival culture of "Thanksgiving," without showcasing elements of Chinese festival culture; issues such as the proportion of Chinese and foreign cultural elements that are simply mentioned versus those that are deeply explored in the textbook still need to be deliberated upon in the selection and compilation of English teaching materials and in the expansion of teachers' instruction. In the process of inheriting and promoting the excellent Chinese culture and civilization, it is reflected not only in subjects like Chinese and history but also plays a significant role in the English curriculum. Language is deeply rooted in a nation's culture, and by learning about their own culture, students can enhance their understanding and appreciation of foreign cultures. On the other hand, when comparing different cultures, they can comprehend the similarities and differences between the two more precisely and profoundly, which helps them develop cross-cultural communication awareness and skills.<sup>[5]</sup> Therefore, it is essential to appropriately incorporate Chinese and foreign cultural elements into English teaching materials. Learning about excellent Chinese culture and establishing cultural confidence are integral parts of cultivating cultural awareness and serve as crucial prerequisites. The selection and compilation of English teaching materials should strike a balance in the design of cultural content, enhance interpretations of Chinese culture, diversify multicultural aspects, and increase the breadth and depth of cultural content in English textbooks. Furthermore, teachers should fully utilize both Chinese and foreign cultural resources in the textbooks during the teaching process and actively supplement and develop additional teaching resources to guide students to pay attention to cultural differences. At the initial stages of English teaching, instructors need to guide students to gain a basic understanding of the differences and similarities between Chinese and foreign cultural elements. For example, teachers should delve deeper into the content related to the themes of each unit and knowledge of Chinese and foreign cultures that closely connect with the students' learning and daily lives.<sup>[6]</sup> The goal of English textbooks and classroom teaching is to learn and promote excellent Chinese culture while simultaneously stimulating students' enthusiasm for learning English, fostering their global perspective, and cross-cultural awareness.

#### **6. Conclusion**

This paper, based on the cultivation of cultural awareness in the new curriculum standards and taking the People's Education Press junior high school English textbook for the eighth grade, first volume as an example, conducts a multidimensional comparative study of Chinese and foreign cultural elements in junior high school English textbooks. During the research process, methods such as comparative analysis, textual analysis, data statistics, and literature review were employed, resulting in the generation of statistical data tables on the frequency and degree of appearance of Chinese and foreign cultural elements in the textbook. The study explored various aspects of Chinese and foreign cultures within the textbook, provided evaluations and discussions, and offered significant insights into

English teaching and textbook compilation. In summary, this research provides theoretical and data references for the selection and compilation of Chinese and foreign cultural elements in junior high school English textbooks, and future work will involve a more comprehensive exploration of culture and education in English textbooks.

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