Impact of Textbook on Chinese Heritage Language Learners’ Identity

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Voice from the field: Chinese-American or half-half?

Liangliang: No, why should I go (to Chinese school) while my friends are having fun?
Zhang: Simply because you are Chinese so you have to go.
Liangliang: I am an American, not Chinese.
Zhang: No, you are not American because you do not have American blood, you are pure Chinese.
Liangliang: ‘I was born in America and I speak English, so I am American.
Zhang: No, you are not because your parents are Chinese. You have pure Chinese blood flowing in your body.
Liangliang: Then I am half-half. Although I have Chinese blood, still I am American citizen.
Zhang: You are Chinese as our whole family is Chinese.
Liangliang: Well, then I am half-half with more Chineseness in me.
Zhang: All right, then you still have to learn Chinese.
Issues in Chinese community language school in Columbia, SC

- Learners’ resistance and lack of interest and motivation in learning Chinese as a HL;
- Identity confusion—Colin Baker (1996) maintains that children of immigrants, especially Asian Americans may find themselves “confused” caught in between two cultures and two languages.
Research Methodology

• CDA—is an analytical technique used to study the textual practice and language use in social and cultural practices (Fairclough, 1992).

• A series of textbooks (1-12) Zhongwen (Mandarin Chinese Language 中文), which have been widely used by K-12 heritage language teachers in the U.S..
Theoretical framework

Theoretical origin of critical discourse analysis

• Post-structuralism—texts play constructive role in forming and shaping individuals’ identities and actions.
Cultural capital—symbolic forms of knowledge and possessions. The textual content and interactions with texts. Bourdieu identifies three variants of cultural capital:

1. embodied form--incorporated in mind and body;
2. Institutionalized form—such as educational qualifications;
3. objectified form--simply existing as cultural goods such as books, artifacts, dictionaries, and paintings (Bourdieu, 1986).
Theoretical framework

• Social capital—resources embedded in the social networks, including information resources, norms and ideology, rights and privilege, further networks;

• Neo-Marxist cultural theory—certain discourses are produced and utilized within certain political economic systems, and that they thus function to articulate certain ideological interests and contribute to individual identity formation (Hall, 1996).
10. 课文：屈原 ................................................................. 90
    Text: Qu Yuan
    阅读：惠特曼 ............................................................... 97
    Reading: Walt Whitman

11. 课文：白衣天使 .......................................................... 99
    Text: An Angel in White
    阅读：寻找光明的人 .................................................. 106
    Reading: A Girl Who Sought Brightness

12. 课文：聂耳 ............................................................... 108
    Text: Nie Er
    阅读：达·芬奇画鸡蛋 ................................................ 114
    Reading: Leonardo da Vinci Drew the Eggs

综合练习（四） .................................................................. 116
Reading: The World in the Microscope

9. 课文：古诗二首 ............................................................. 79
    Text: Two Ancient Poems
    阅读：铁棒磨成针 ....................................................... 83
    Reading: The Story about Li Bai

http://www.hwjiyw.com/textbook.shtml
Data Analysis:

Texts and the accompanied pictures are rich source of cultural capital:

• Chinese Poems;
• Chinese festivals;
• Chinese idioms/proverbs;
• Chinese fables/fairy tales;
• Famous people in China;
• Places of interest in China;
• Historical events in China.
guò xīn nián

过新年

Celebrate the Spring Festival

xīn nián dào xīn nián dào

新年到，新年到

jiā jiā guò nián zhēn rè nao

家家过年真热闹

tiē duì lián hè xīn nián

贴对联，贺新年

bāo jiǎo zi qìng tuán yuán

包饺子，庆团圆

wǒ gěi dà jiā bài ge nián

我给大家拜个年

xīn nián kuài lè yǒu píng ān

新年快乐又平安。
Data Analysis

Text content help build **social capital** in Chinese community school and China:

* e.g. 中文学校真是好 (What a Great Chinese School)
  中文学校真是好， (what a great Chinese school,)
  小朋友们可不少。 (I have a lot of *friends* here.)
  一起跑来一起跳， (We play and dance *together,*)
  一起唱来一起笑。 (we sing and laugh *together.*)
  又学写字又画画儿， (we learn to write Chinese and we learn to draw pictures,)
  长大以后本领高。 (we will become multi-talented when we grow up.)
Chinese school is my home; I love my teacher and my teacher loves me; This is my home as well as yours; Our teacher is like our mom (dad).

家: home.
Identity as Chinese.
“亲爱的爷爷，

今天，我收到了您的来信。我很喜欢信封上的长城邮票。我知道中国的首都是北京……亲爱的爷爷，我的中文水平是不是有了很大提高？今后我还要好好学习，争取更大的进步。这样的话，我明年夏天就可以回国去看您了。

“Dear grandpa,

I received your letter today. I love the Great Wall stamp on the envelope. I know Great Wall is in Beijing, the capital city of China…My Chinese has improved a lot, right? I will work harder on my Chinese language to make more progress so that I can go back to China to see you and also go to the Great Wall, Summer Palace and Tian’anmen Square next summer….”
Discussion

1. Cultural capital & social capital embedded in the textbooks:
   - Textbooks and the accompanied learning materials are valuable assets for CHL and culture maintenance and identity formation;
   - Text contents function to facilitate the formation and maintenance of social capital.
2. These capitals are valuable assets for CHL learners’ in their personal, academic, social and career success; textbooks facilitate establishment of social networks in the heritage language school.
3. Cultural gap exists between CHL learners’ perception and the Chinese textbook contents—the discourse within the textbooks imposes certain Chinese cultural norms, values, and ideology upon readers, which results in the “identity confusion” to the CHL learners.
Implications

- Textbook writers should take an objective stance in composing the texts rather than aim to impose certain political values or norms on the learners.
- Teachers should critically think about the discourse in the textbook and related pedagogical practices and outcomes of the practice.
- Learners are encouraged to critically think about the texts rather than accept everything written in the textbooks.
Pedagogical recommendations

• Take a comparative and international approach
• Provide learners opportunities to recreate the texts: e.g. 曹冲称象, 司马光砸缸;
• Maintain transnational connections: e.g. interview project;
• Connect textbook contents with learners’ reality
Future research

• Compare the K-12 level HL textbook with the HLL textbooks in higher education;
• Gather data about teachers’ and learners’ responses to the textbook content;