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Learning or becoming: Ideology and national identity in textbooks for international learners of Chinese

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Abstract: Textbooks in foreign-language education are by their nature ideological, representing the dominant culture and values. This study attempts to critically examine the discourse in language textbooks, specifically those used for Chinese as a foreign-language education in Mainland China, in order to reveal the national identity embedded in them. Drawing on a corpus-based analysis, this study found the frequency of referring to “nation” in relation to China far exceeded that of other countries, indicating that aspects of Chinese national identity may be emphasized and foregrounded. Furthermore, content analysis revealed five major aspects of national identity in the textbook, forming part of the social and cultural knowledge that only native speakers could be expected to have. The study finds that current Chinese as a foreign language textbooks contain a large part of the learning content involves topics pertaining to Chinese moral and civic education, which may not be of the interests for international language learners. The study ends by suggesting offering open discourse to enable a higher level of classroom participation of international learners, and to develop an intercultural understanding of cultural content in the curriculum.

Subjects: Chinese; Curriculum Studies; Language Teaching & Learning

Keywords: ideology; national identity; culture; textbooks; Chinese

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Textbooks in foreign-language education often represent the dominant culture and values. This study attempts to critically examine the discourse in language textbooks, specifically those used for Chinese as a foreign-language education in China, in order to reveal the national identity embedded in them. This study found the frequency of referring to “nation” in relation to China far exceeded that of other countries, indicating that aspects of Chinese national identity were emphasized. Furthermore, the study identified five major aspects of national identity, forming part of the social and cultural knowledge that only native speakers could be expected to have. The study ends by suggesting offering open discourse to enable a higher level of classroom participation of international learners, and to develop an intercultural understanding of cultural content in the curriculum.

1. Introduction

Textbooks are de facto curricula (McGrath, 2002), which implicitly or explicitly represent certain specific reasoning about what education is. Learning a language involves learning different aspects of cultural values over certain sociolinguistic, cultural and ideological dimensions. Curdt-Christiansen and Weninger (2015) provided a thorough review of textbook analysis studies, revealing the nature of foreign-language textbooks as sociocultural materials, institutionally sanctioned and ideologically embedded, presenting texts as closely related to the politics of identity. Due to the ideology-driven view of language, a large body of research has shown that textbooks are never a neutral vehicle in forming and transforming knowledge, but are capable of inflecting realities which serve the interests of particular groups and shape learners' understanding of social reality (Hodge & Kress, 1993). Numerous studies have been done with EFL textbooks to highlight the ideological nature of language education for international readers (Yuen, 2011 in Hong Kong; Xiong & Qian, 2012 in Mainland China; Yamanaka, 2006 in Japan; Lee, 2009 in Korea). Despite a few studies focused on Chinese textbooks (Curdt-Christiansen, 2008; Hong & He, 2015; Liu, 2005), there has been scant attention paid to the rising importance of international Chinese-language education.

Textbooks for international readers studying Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) have proliferated over the last three decades. Statistically, compared with the total sum of 146 CFL textbooks published in Mainland China between 1950 and 1985, the textbook market has recorded an astonishingly high figure of over 400 new titles between 1988 and 1999 (Li, 2002). Yet, the peak years of publication for Chinese textbooks did not come until the beginning of the twenty-first century (Hu, 2007). Studies found that teachers and educators in Mainland China were satisfied with the myriad of choices but were disappointed by the identical learning content and cultural representations, in addition to the dearth of popular culture attractions for young learners (Wang, 2000, 2005). Li (2002) also argued that the current Chinese textbook market is short of fine and innovative works, criticizing the oversupply of highly similar content that represented a centralized and authoritarian curriculum. Furthermore, Zhu (2004) pointed out that Chinese L2 textbooks were still under the influence of Chinese L1 teaching, focusing on linguistic knowledge, cultural elements and ideological orientations that are specifically relevant to native Chinese citizens rather than international learners.

One of the most serious critiques relates to the ideological content in CFL teaching which is conveyed through textbooks. Based on his own experience, McDonald (2011) found that Chinese as a foreign-language teaching in China exhibits a contemporary model of great power with the goal of constructing a Sinophone identity (p. 2). Drawing on the notion of cultural soft power (Nye, 2004), Lo Bianco (2014) noted that language-based "nationing" has been "exercised beyond the political borders of existing citizens through the attraction of cultural activities and language education". A number of studies have delved into China's cultural diplomacy through Confucius Institute projects that aim at manifesting a new and positive image of the country (Gil, 2008; Paradise, 2009; Starr, 2009; Wang & Adamson, 2014). While language teachers act as bona fide cultural ambassadors, language textbooks are model representatives of behavioural norms and cultural values. As a core instrument of linguistic instruction and cultural representations, textbooks are on the frontline of introducing China's language, culture and society to international learners from the rest of the world. What will international learners of Chinese learn about China through studying the Chinese language? This study sought to shed light on this question.

The structure of the paper is as follows. It will begin with a brief discussion of the ideological nature of foreign-language textbooks and inform readers about changing Chinese identity in China. Following this, it will introduce the data sources of this study, and the approaches and procedures used to analyse the data. Finally, pedagogical suggestions will be given to improve textbook design and curriculum development for foreign-language teaching in general.

1.1. Language textbooks as ideological discourse

Woolard (1992, 1998) defined ideology as dominant or subordinate “ideas, discourse, or signifying practices in the service of the struggle to acquire or maintain power” (p. 7). In language education, ideologies are often constructed through foregrounding certain discourses, cultures, beliefs towards language; these become hegemonic, while others remain in the background or were not even included at all.

The choice of texts to be carefully studied in a foreign-language class is never neutral. Fairclough (1992) pointed out that text serves an ideological purpose of naming or wording the social and natural world, shaping them for particular purposes and in the interests of certain privileged groups (pp. 185–190). As a form of social practice, the construction and transmission of knowledge is tied to specific historical and sociocultural contexts, and is the means by which existing social relations are produced or contested, and different interests are served (Liu, 2008, p. 59). Foreign-language textbooks present texts and multimodal resources as samples of the language and culture they focus on, and provide insights into the ideologies, values and beliefs. Without actual experience of the culture, textbook users may assume that the information provided by the language content applies to the target culture as a whole (Yuen, 2011). While students could have alternative access to understanding China outside the classroom, what the textbooks present to them in class by and large remains an official source of knowledge. Most importantly, their target language skills are often properly constructed on the basis of what they read and learn from the textbooks over time.

Bakhtin (1981) noted that the process of becoming proficient language users entails a process of ideological becoming. In a sense, foreign-language learners are in fact experiencing a process of identity construction through studying the ideologically embedded discourse, learning to speak, think and behave like native speakers. Apple (1999) also argued that the centralized textbooks have an identity-shaping discourse because they embody the official version of dominant cultural knowledge and particular constructions of the social world. Therefore, language textbooks are officially selected and legitimated to socialize foreign-language learners from other countries. By studying the texts, international learners learn how to recognize and represent the aspects of a particular national identity.

In order to discover how ideologies were discursively constructed in CFL textbooks, Hong and He (2015) examined three sets of Chinese-language textbooks officially approved by the Confucius Institutes Headquarters for international learners of Chinese. Through a corpus-assisted qualitative analysis and a content analysis, the study found that the Han ethnic group was dominantly emphasized while ethnic minorities were marginalized. Furthermore, CFL textbooks closely focused on introducing China, while leaving nationalities outside China under-represented. The narrow representations of international cultures suggested a lack of attention to multicultural awareness and intercultural education. By contrast, this is a clear manifestation that the ideological content mainly serves the purpose of strengthening the centralized curriculum with a strong focus on identity affiliation.

Liu (2005) reviewed a set of Chinese-language textbooks published by People’s Education Press in Mainland China, which was used nationwide by local primary school students in China from Grade 1 to Grade 6. Drawing on critical discourse analysis, the study found that the discourses constructed in the textbooks were a closed system that serve the purposes of social control and patriotism education but not the interests of developing language and literacy for native Chinese children.

Curdt-Christiansen (2008) scrutinized a set of Chinese-language textbooks published by the Overseas Affairs Office in Mainland China for heritage learners of Chinese from Kindergarten to Grade 5 in Canada. The study found traditional Chinese moral and cultural values permeated the stories and texts in these textbooks in Chinese diasporan communities, and some highly praised social attitudes in the textbooks were in conflict with the moral and ethical standards of mainstream society in Canada.

Different approaches have been adopted to explore the ideological discourse in language textbooks (Weninger & Kiss, 2015). Many studies were done to calculate the frequencies of referencing in the texts. They gave particular attention to nouns because text producers have at their disposal a whole range of options with which to represent the interests and power relations in the text (Fairclough, 1992). As Stubbs (1996) stated, fixed expressions encode cultural information, and “re-current phrases are of central importance in the study of language and ideology” (p. 159). For example, through calculating the frequencies of referencing, Yamanaka’s (2006) found the nouns nationalities of major English-speaking countries were better represented in EFL textbooks for Japanese school pupils. Hong and He (2015) have also adopted a similar method in order to demonstrate the unbalanced representations of the fictitious characters in the CFL textbooks. This study will also adopt this approach in analysing how nationalities were represented in the textbook.

1.2. Foreign-language education and national identity

Smith (1991) defined nation as “a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members” (p. 14). National identity therefore refers to positive, subjectively important emotional bonds with a nation (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In brief, a national identity is understood as the status quo in the process of individuals’ identifying with a nation (Blank & Schmidt, 2003). Over the years, in one’s life, the discourse of national identity is constantly maintained, deconstructed and reconstructed in the form of text presentation, symbolization and theatrical manifestations as well as in objects and materials (Sautman, 1997, p. 25). To native citizens, the construction of national identity builds on the emphasis on a common history, and history always has to do with remembrance and memory.

The concept of nation as an imagined community and a mental construct has become increasingly influential among social theorists and analysts over the last two decades (Wodak, De Cilla, Reigl, & Liebhart, 2009). In particular, Anderson (1991) argued that modern nation-states were conceived around these languages as imagined communities “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (p. 6). Hall (1996) stated that “a national culture is a discourse – a way of constructing meanings which influences both our actions and conception of ourselves (p. 613)”. In a similar sense, Wiley (2004) emphasized the need to study the construction of meanings of nations within particular social spaces, which will help us understand nation as a particular kind of logic (p. 91). In particular, Apple (1999) stated that textbooks both legitimate and transmit dominant cultural values and beliefs that serve the purpose of national identity formation while deliberately omitting or rejecting others. CFL textbooks published outside China also came under attack and were challenged by textbook writers, teachers and scholars from China’s institutions.

One incidence is of particular importance in understanding the ideological conflicts over learning materials produced in China and the United States. Qi (2000) criticized an intermediate level textbook, *A Trip to China* (Chou, Chao, & Gao, 2012), used in “Princeton in Beijing” (PiB), a summer programme co-organized by Princeton University and Beijing Normal University, on the grounds that it seriously infiltrated American ideology into Chinese-language teaching, because the textbook “demonized China and its people”. The study found that sensitive political issues regarding democratic government, human rights, freedom of speech, family planning, the independence of Taiwan and Tibet were presented in the learning materials for learners of Chinese in the PiB programme. In spite of the authors of the “sensitive” textbook having stated in the preface “If we are sometimes provocative, it is because we believe this is a useful way to engage the language students. We do not intend for this textbook to propagate any ideology or political philosophy” (p. xiii), Qi strongly suggested that the Chinese Government censor textbooks from overseas before allowing them to be used in China. Clearly, PiB textbooks emphasized that their primary consideration for text selection was pedagogical rather than ideological. Nevertheless, the PiB programme coordinator, Prof. Chou Chih-p’ing, was forced to accept an extensive revision of textbooks as a response. He later revealed

in an interview with *The New York Times* (2000), “the university authorities [of China] objected that the articles [in the textbooks], or the related discussion questions, were politically sensitive or else just made China look bad”. Also in the preface of *A Trip to China*, the authors from the United States problematized the issues of indoctrinating Chinese identity and nationalism in the CFL textbooks published in China. They pointed out:

Existing Chinese learning materials are based on introducing China, but what they introduce is China from the perspective of native Chinese people, therefore it is difficult to avoid a certain amount of nationalism. When they introduce China, they sing the praises of the greatness of the country, the strength and prosperity of Chinese ethnicity. (Chou et al., 2012, p. xi)

A small incident around a textbook can invoke a state-level ideological conflict. National identity is constructed discursively in texts (Martin & Wodak, 2003; van Dijk, 1997). It is therefore important to understand what aspects of national identity are presented to international learners through textbooks. In order to do so, this paper will offer an overview of the history of modern China as a backdrop to enrich the data analysis. However, as national identity is a complex and dynamic concept, this study does not intend to generalize the faces and images of the country under discussion.

Drawing on multiple data analysis methods, Pavlenko (2003) presented a comparative study on national identity that governments and their cultural elites constructed and transmitted within language education to learners studying English in the post-Second World War United States, post-Second World War Soviet Union and post-communist Eastern Europe. In examining discourses of national identity and foreign-language education, Pavlenko (2003) found that the most important characteristic of policy discourse is patriotism, through which foreign-language instruction was linked with a particular image of the nation’s identity during the critical years of nation building. She emphasized the importance of the link between decisions on foreign-language education policies and practices and constructions of national identity. In other words, for this study, it is essential to analyse the ideological discourse and identify the relevance between the choice of stories and the parts of national identity that textbook writers intended to present to international readers.

Furthermore, many studies have been done with content analysis in analysing identity politics in the textbooks (Curdt-Christiansen, 2008; Lee, 2009; Liu, 2005, 2008). Krippendorff (1980) has already stated that content analysis is a reliable “technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their contexts” (p. 21). Smith (1991) offered a framework of five basic aspects of national identity (p. 14): (1) common homeland; (2) common myths; (3) common culture; (4) common legal rights and duties; (5) common economy. van Dijk (1995) put forth the concept of “self-identity descriptions” (p. 147) as a framework for analysing ideological discourse, considering questions such as “who we are”, “what do we have”, “what is our tradition”, “what are we proud of”, “what are we confident to do”. He pointed out that ideological discourse was typically semantically oriented towards a few topics. This self-identity description model can be drawn together with Smith’s concept of national identity in informing the analytical framework of the study.

1.3. The changing modern Chinese national identity

A socio-historical context is essential for ideological discourse analysis. In general, there are three critical historical periods that have defined changing national identity for the Chinese nation–state. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, national identity has been a continuous discourse that dominates cultural politics. Chinese national identity was closely connected with hard struggles against colonization. For this reason, the birth and the initial development of modern Chinese identity were parallel to the inflow of foreign ideas and the invasion of foreign forces (Liu, 2008, p. 57). As a result, ethnicity was given the strongest emphasis as the dominant identity in terms of the survival of the Chinese nation, playing a role in mobilizing people to oppose foreign imperialism and unifying China (Zheng, 1999, p. 67). During the 1950s to late 1970s, the discourse of Chinese national identity

was forcefully reshaped by the Communist government to be intimately related to the Cold War (Zhao, 1998, p. 122). Externally, the United States and the West were described as potential threats to the independence of the nation while internally the Marxist concept of class struggle was used in dealing with domestic affairs (Zheng, 1999, p. 12).

However, since the beginning of the economic reforms in the early 1980s, the dominant discourse of national identity has once again undergone radical changes (Kang, 2007). The rise of patriotism in China is one of the most important events in international relations in the late twentieth century (Zheng, 1999, p. 1). This new national identity coincides with China's rapid economic growth. The improvement in material lives for the Chinese people also brought enormous social consequences, such as economic corruption, money worship, moral vacuum, as well as legal issues (Liu, 2008, p. 57). To combat this profound "identity crisis" (Tu, 1993) at an "ideological crossroads" (Link, 1994), the Chinese Government has begun to construct a new discourse that, they believe, could fix public morals and improve social integrity. The Chinese people are confronted with social problems in association with rapid urbanization and economic system reforms. Internationally, China is making great efforts to showcase its soft power by sponsoring the quasi-governmental Confucius Institutes to promote the Chinese language and culture across the world. One of the major tasks for Chinese foreign policy during this period is national image building, presenting a "true" China to the international community (Ding, 2007; Wang, 2003). "Patriotism" as a new version of Chinese national identity is, then, becoming one of the new discourses that have been constructed to legitimate the government's rule and generate popular support in an increasingly divided society (Townsend, 1992). That explains the reasons why nationalism and patriotism play major roles in a series of on-going debates on aspects of Chinese identity.

2. Research design

The purpose of the study is to reveal the discourse of national identity in Chinese-language textbooks for international learners. To be specific, the study sets out to answer one major research question: What aspects of national identity are represented in these textbooks?

2.1 Data source

The data source for this study is *The Bridge: A practical Intermediate Chinese Course* (Chen, 1996), a set of popular Chinese textbooks designed for international learners of Chinese in the second year of study. *The Bridge* was first published by Beijing Language and Culture University in 1996, which has been well received by teachers due to its emphasis on communication. It was one of the textbook series designated by the Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban) for "bridging" international students to an advanced level of Chinese studies. It is also the one of the bestselling Chinese textbooks for international Chinese readers in Mainland China. There was a second edition in 2000 but little was changed. Before the third edition was published in 2012, over 180,000 copies had been sold. Despite changes to the cover and layout, most of the main texts have remained unchanged over the last two decades. The study was done with the first edition for three reasons: (1) there are not many differences between the 1996 and the 2012 version in terms of the main contents of texts; (2) the 1996 version has been used by a good number of Chinese teachers therefore, which makes it easier for the study to find a second rater with teaching experiences of this textbook to enhance inter-coding reliability; and (3) most of the literature to interpret the historical background of this textbook was written in 1990s, therefore the 1996 version would be the justifiable resource to correspond to the period of time.

The textbook has a total of 125 articles in the form of main text for intensive study (30 articles) and supplementary texts for extensive reading (95 articles). The 30 articles were separated into two books with 15 lessons in each book. In order to integrate culture into language education, *The Bridge* follows a "Structure-Function-Culture" curriculum design philosophy. Multiple genres were included such as newspaper, prose, drama and fiction to enrich learners' understanding of the Chinese culture and society. The book was born in the years following the widespread of structuralism in CFL education when linguistic knowledge was overwhelmingly emphasized (Chen, 2000). *The Bridge*, in

contrast, had started to give space for developing students' practical communication and cultural understanding. While textbooks for beginners focus more on pronunciation practices and basic expressions, often organized in dialogue forms with fixed structures, textbooks at intermediate level or above provide various genres of texts to inform learners of particular aspects of culture, society and history. For this reason, this study chose *The Bridge* as an ideal data source for understanding how textbooks represent a national identity.

2.2. Data analysis

The research design is qualitative in nature supplemented by corpus analysis. In order to answer the research question, corpus analysis was adopted to pinpoint the places where self-identity description occurs, and content analysis was used to further categorize and describe the aspects of national identity in the textbook corpus. Drawing on the merits of the two analytical methods, this study attempts to critically examine language textbook discourses in order to reveal the ways in which national identity is embedded in them.

To begin with, a simple corpus-based analysis was adopted to locate and count the frequencies of references. Through the basic corpus concordancing of references of "nationality", the study is able to count the frequencies of representations of countries, and offer nodes for further coding and content analysis. In order to identify nouns for nationality, the two coders spent a considerable time reading through the 125 texts, giving initio codes to nouns that were related to nations. Following Yamanaka's (2006) research design, this study first identified all the nouns relating to Chinese nationality and non-Chinese nationalities. By juxtaposing the two groups of nouns, the study was able to show the frequencies of referencing.

An optical character recognition software was used to convert the printed image files into computer readable texts. QSR Nvivo 10 was used as a tool to construct the corpus containing texts from *The Bridge*, and count the frequency of references to nouns and themes related to Chinese identity. The data collected for analysis came from all the 125 articles with running paragraphs. Other learning content, such as visual images, tables and cartoons from vocabulary, grammar, exercises or discussions were not included for analysis in this study. First, we scanned the print texts and converted these PDF files into one Word file in plain text format. The data were used to construct a small-scale pool of ideological discourse for coding on Nvivo. Although the word processing was computer-assisted, data coding and categorizing was mainly done manually. Inconsistency and occasional omissions may therefore have occurred. To ensure the inter-coder reliability of the data analysis, a second coder was invited to carry out the coding. The second coder is an experienced Chinese-language teacher who has used the sample textbook for a few years by the time of data collection. She was invited to provide an expert judgement to the first coder's initial coding. Apart from a few paragraphs that could be coded with multiple themes, the two coders had reached over 98% of consistency with all the coding. While my arguments will rely on recurring patterns of discourse identified in the corpus, I acknowledge that the choice-making process of what is "representative" is a subjective decision.

In the next step, content analysis was employed to sketch out the aspects of national identities that were projected in the textbook. The five categories provided by Smith (1991) were referred for initial coding of aspects of identities in the corpus data. However, we also noted that national identity is fundamentally multidimensional, and can never be reduced to a single element. Based on the corpus analysis, the second part of the study tracked the paragraphs where the self-identity descriptions took place.

3. Results

3.1. Places of self-identity description

Corpus data provided a review of all the lexical items related to nationality in the whole textbook. Seven categories were found from referencing China at the national level. References of "others"

Table 1. Frequencies of references to nations in the texts

	China			Others	
	Frequencies	Percentage		Frequencies	Percentage
China, 中国	131	58.0	Foreign country, 外国	38	40.4
Nation, 国家	23	10.1	Overseas, 国外	26	27.7
Motherland, 祖国	8	3.5	Westerners, 西方人	12	12.8
Whole country, 全国	13	5.8	America, 美国	11	11.7
Our country, 我国	24	10.6	Russia, 俄罗斯	3	3.2
Domestic, 国内	9	4.0	France, 法国	1	1.1
People, 人民	11	5.0	Germany, 德国	1	1.1
Ethnic Chinese, 中华民族	7	3.1	Korea, 韩国	1	1.1
			Australia, 澳大利亚	1	1.1
Total	226	100%		94	100%

were also counted and presented according to the number of references in the text corpus. Table 1 showed that “China” was the most frequently referenced, indicating a strong identification of “who we are”. Similarly, by referring to “foreign country”, “overseas” and “Westerners”, international learners were positioned as Chinese nationals. Furthermore, although students were from many different countries across the world, only a few countries’ names appeared in the textbook corpus. It showed that the textbook gave little attention to intercultural competence as a part of the curriculum, though culture was an important part of the intended curriculum. Among the countries, America was the most frequently mentioned, followed by Russia, which represented the pattern of global political powers. No country in the Global South, Africa, Latin America and developing Asia including the Middle East, was mentioned in the entire text pool. A more structured and complex discourse analysis could be drawn from the corpus data to further categorize the extent to which the different choice of words represented national identity.

However, the study sought to go beyond a numerical account of representations by developing and presenting a holistic picture based on the themes of texts. Tracing the places of self-identity description, the study found five major aspects of national identities. In order to provide descriptive evidence, this study used content analysis to further categorize the aspects of national identities presented in the texts.

3.2. Aspects of national identities

All the texts provided as an example in this paper have been translated from Chinese to English, and some paragraphs have been slightly abridged. The original page numbers and corresponding volumes have been given in brackets at the end of the quoted examples. The 125 articles in the

Table 2. Aspects of national identity represented in textbooks

	Total	Percentage (%)
Love and sacrifice for the country (Common duties)	22	17.6
Commitment to maintain traditional values (Common culture)	19	15.2
Confidence to face economic reforms (Common economy)	17	13.6
Responsibility to make a lawful country (Common legal rights)	13	10.4
Proud of the beautiful and vast land (Common homeland)	8	6.4
Other themes	46	36.8
Total	125	100

textbook included five thematic categories of self-identity description. Table 2 shows the aspects of national identity represented in the textbooks. As can be seen, only 46 (36.8%) articles in the entire textbook were not directly related to national identity building, leaving the majority of the textbook discourse highly ideology-focused. Some texts included more than one aspect of Chinese national identity, but only the explicitly represented one was counted.

3.2.1. *Love and sacrifice for the country*

The texts described China as a country full of love and hope, and thus it is everyone's duty to reciprocally love and make sacrifices for the country. The country and its government departments were often portrayed as goodwill ambassadors, providing charity and social relief for people in need. Based on a social-psychological perspective, Tajfel (1969) argued the formation of national attitudes is a state of mind corresponding to political facts (p. 138). In the sense of "a generalised positive assessment of the nation", readers in this case were invited to develop an idealization of the nation.

The bright sunshine warmed the earth. Though winter came earlier, people felt like spring in their hearts. It was the People's Liberation Army who saved Liu Na's life, so let's change her surname to Jun (literally means "Army") and call her Jun Na. Her surname's changed and her birthday's changed too. An unfortunate girl has started her new life.

(Volume 2, Lesson 23, pp. 165)

This story depicted a homeless girl who was saved from a heart defect by the Army. In tribute to the Liberation Army's generous support, both her surname and birthday were changed, to those of the army.

Since the launch of the Hope Project in 1989, thousands of children returned to school to continue their study. After the kid received my money, he replied, but only in six characters: I can go to school now. These words are burning me. I can't help reading them over and over again. I feel a great pressure, a sense of responsibility for the new era.

(Volume 1, Lesson 1, pp. 1-2)

In a similar fashion to the above story, the Hope Project in this example, which is responsible for rescuing the poor children, is also a governmental organization. As the first lesson of the whole textbook series, the story was narrated in the first person, the narrator being a kind-hearted person who sponsored schooling for children in poverty-stricken areas. Helping poor children receive education through charity was depicted as a common duty, and showing "a sense of responsibility for the new era". While helping others is a responsibility, sacrificing for the country is glorious. Scientists who sacrificed themselves for national causes were extolled as national heroes.

Due to an unknown technical breakdown, the spacecraft would crash onto the earth in two hours. The astronaut was making a report to the control center: "Sir, I don't have much time, so I want to report to you about the exploration result first. This is much more important than my personal life." The commander said: "Comrade, on behalf of the whole country, I announce here, you are a national hero, the people's good son." "Thank you, Sir. Thank you for awarding me this glorious title. I am an astronaut. It is my honor to sacrifice my life for the space navigation project. I do not regret it." The whole control center shouted out: "Long live the nation! Long live the People! Long live the space navigation!"

(Volume 2, Lesson 17, pp. 19-21)

In this story, a famous USSR astronaut, Vladimir Komarov was portrayed as a national hero who sacrificed his life for the nation's space exploration. In this article, repetition makes the representation of national identity more salient and explicit. To be specific, "country" is repeated 11 times, "people" 7 times, "hero" 5 times. The story has a USSR background, which proved that Chinese textbooks were still under the ideological influence of the cold war. Lastly, slogans were used as

persuasive techniques. Pinto (2004) pointed out “slogans are a useful form of political discourse given that they are easy to remember, induce polarized thinking, unify public thoughts, and facilitate memorization” (p. 661). Through the analysis, the study confirmed that textbook discourse is not merely an expression of social practice, but also serves particular ends, namely, the exercise of power (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 35).

3.2.2. *Commitment to maintain traditional values*

Another aspect of national identity is related to the determination to maintain traditional values. The following excerpts were taken from the textbooks to demonstrate the cases where traditional ethics and values were emphasized. Due to time constraints, the study did not further classify the types of values that Chinese society holds in the highest esteem. In general, textbooks included articles on promoting integrity, loyalty, filial piety, obedience, marital fidelity and hard work, etc.

Do you know who is the most famous person in China? His reputation is growing bigger and going further. Many people are learning from him. Consequently, everybody will become “Mr. Good Enough”. If so, China will become a country for lazy people.

(Volume 1, Lesson 2, pp. 18–19)

The whole text served as a personification, presenting an imaginary figure, “Mr. Good Enough” to ironically criticize people who were not working hard or being careful. In contrast, the text warned the readers that if good values were not maintained, the whole country would suffer. The text also offered good exemplars of Chinese social values, such as responsibility, meticulousness and diligence. In the meantime, a substantial number of texts were concerned to educate readers about the kind of behaviour and beliefs that Chinese society and Chinese people would highly appreciate or value in the workplace. Among all the social changes, moral crisis was of the most important themes in the textbooks.

Three young men came for a job interview. The manager sent them to buy a bottle of yogurt in the grocery store 300 meters to the west of the company. The first one came back with nothing and reported he couldn't find one there. The second one also came back with empty hands, but he asked if he could try another one to the east of the company. The third one came back with a bottle of yogurt, telling the manager that the grocery store was actually at the east side of the company. Who finally got the job? You must have guessed wrong here. The first one got the job, because he is obedient, focused, never self-assertive, so the most trustworthy one.

(Volume 1, Lesson 9, pp. 148–149)

The manager was testing if they were loyal enough by sending them on a mission that was designed to fail. Three interviewees were compared, and only the one who failed to finish the task won the job. The story might confuse international learners by legitimating a Chinese way of succeeding in a job interview—choosing whether to show one's ability to accomplish a task or to please the interviewer by strictly following his or her instruction, regardless of whether it is correct. Through this comparison, trustworthiness has been set out as the most important quality that Chinese society values. With rapid economic development, Chinese people have experienced a loss of values since the early 1990s. The textbook included many similar educational articles demonstrating the most desirable social behaviours in a changing Chinese society, suggesting an alternative value system to international learners.

3.2.3. *Confidence to face economic reforms*

The Chinese social economy system has changed dramatically since the end of the 1980s. While many new economic forms appeared, society was not ready to face the challenges and changes at the beginning. Texts in this category attempted to represent the confidence of the Chinese people in

accepting economic reforms as a natural process towards the market economy and a better life. The rapid development of China's economy has made many of these stories obsolete even for the new generations of Chinese people. However, quite a number of stories were kept in the third edition to depict the early years of economic reforms, when private business started to boom in the planned economy.

"Thanks to the self-employed laborer." Chen Jin felt gratitude in her heart. "Sorry to trouble you so much", she said to the girl in the private bicycle repair shop. "Not at all, my brother thought you weren't courageous enough to come to our shop, so he sent me there to bring you in", that girl said, with an embarrassed smile.

(Volume 1, Lesson 4, pp. 50–51)

Chen Jin worked late and on her way home, found her bike had broken down. She could not find any public shop open, only a private bicycle shop was still open for business. However, she hesitated about whether she should go that shop until a girl came out and invited her in. This story described Chinese people's changing attitudes, from denying to acknowledging private business. Stories like this generated a pride and the prospect of China becoming a powerful economy in future. However, without adequate knowledge about the history of development of China's economy, young international learners may find it very difficult to understand the story—why would private businesses be a problem? Yet, it is even harder for them to appreciate the flexibility and ability of Chinese people to accept social change.

3.2.4. *Responsibility to make a lawful society*

China is now experiencing a rapid transformation from a socialist society to a capitalist society. Along with the transformation, there have been many social problems and ideological tensions (Link, 1994). The textbook data included a few typical cases representing the responsibility and determination to build a modern and legal society, with detailed descriptions of lawsuits.

Because the briefcase owner refused to pay for the reward, Xi Ying made an accusation against him at the Municipal People's Law Court, asking for a ruling that he must carrying out his promise. Although it is the traditional virtue of the Chinese nation not to pocket the money one picks up, you cannot say it is wrong to ask for some in a society where everything's not free.

(Volume 1, Lesson 15, pp. 258–260)

Law cases like this were provided for learners to discuss who was right and who was wrong. The confidence to build a legal foundation for society to combat social problems was usually revealed by the end of the text, informing the readers that the Chinese Government was on the right track in the market economy.

"Your son always has good luck, so please let me take him to draw the lottery tickets this time", Liu asked. "Sure, but you have to give me half of the prize if you win", Zhang answered him. They both agreed. Zhang's son drew the first prize of eighty thousand that day, but Liu didn't want to share the portion with Zhang any more. To whom does the eighty thousand belong?

(Volume 1, Lesson 12, pp. 203–204)

Some texts in the textbooks focused on social justice and the legal rights of citizens. It was hard for international readers to understand why stories about breaking promises were so frequent in China. These stories, conversely, made it clear that China was experiencing public moral hazard (Liu, 2005), where personal credit was no longer reliable, therefore people had to rely on legal means to deal with these issues. However, almost all the closing remarks of the texts served to reassure the reader that the silver lining was that a legal and just society would be formed to solve all these social

problems. Throughout the text, Chinese traditional virtues were foregrounded and emphasized. Other similar topics covered “copyright”, “business complaints” and “counterfeit goods”.

3.2.5. *Proud of the beautiful and vast land*

A few texts in the textbook focused closely on western China to generate a sense of harmony in the multiracial country, and also served as a means of identification with the geographic landscape and people in the West and the countryside. The corpus included much direct and indirect landscape description, situating the stories in vast and beautiful lands, such as “*Somewhere Far Away—Singer in the Western China*” (Lesson 14), and “*Rereading Tibet*” (Lesson 25). In these texts, adjectives applied to the scenery were almost always positive, used to describe the magnificent landscape and the friendship between Han and other ethnic minorities, such as Uygur and Tibetan. No controversial issues between ethnic minorities were mentioned in the entire textbook. As argued by Zheng (1999), the fear of ethnic conflicts within China has pushed the regime to construct a new identity to love nature and appreciate the beauty of landscapes in Tibet and Xinjiang (p. 93). Furthermore, in the lesson introducing the Yellow River, through inclusive pronouns such as “we” and “us”, the text built up both an authority and solidarity with readers, emphasizing the common responsibility to protect the homeland.

Yellow River is the cradle of the Chinese nation, without her, there would not be Chinese people with black eyes and brown skin. The pollution of the Yellow River is threatening the survival and development of the Chinese nation. If we want to protect ourselves, protect the Chinese nation, we need to find solutions to save our Mother River.

(Volume 2, Lesson 21, pp. 184–185)

Textbook users were already invited to think as if they were Chinese citizens who share the same motherland and therefore shoulder the responsibility to save the Yellow River. It is inappropriate to request foreign students to “project the Chinese nation” through saving the environment.

4. Discussion and pedagogical implications

These five aspects of national identity formed an inter-textual chain of texts that built up a particular version of the image of China. By painting a warm picture of the country, international Chinese learners were positioned to identify themselves with the Chinese nation and culture. Corresponding to what Liu (2005) found in his study, the textbook in this study also constantly and explicitly portrayed Chinese people as living happily in a beautiful land with an increasingly brighter future, and with indefatigable faith to build a legal and moral Chinese society. The running texts contributed to the construction of a sense of pride in, and love for, the country, by sacrificing one’s life for it, being determined to maintain traditional values, being able to influence other people’s lives. The textbooks provided similar stories representing an intimacy to the country, but left out “sensitive” social problems that were known in the international world. Focusing narrowly on matters related China, the textbooks may have deliberately omitted or avoided certain critical issues or international affairs that were more openly discussed in the learners’ home countries. As can be observed, one of the major functions of the textbook discourse was to offer learners of Chinese a path to understand, reconcile and engage in constructing their Chinese national identities. As Pavlenko (2003) has stressed “foreign language learners are not passive consumers of institutional ideologies and may engage in resistance and opposition”. The study argues that forcing foreign-language learners to accept a Chinese identity might eventually enlarge the ethnic differences or alienate international learners.

Foreign-language education for international learners is fundamentally different from citizenship education or moral education. International learners taking this course were adult learners, who were not supposed to be receiving moral and civic education to construct their social value systems. Rather, texts calling for sacrifice and love of the country can also be very optional since international learners of Chinese are not Chinese citizens. Ting-Tommey (1999) pointed out that an individual’s

culture and ethnic identities are typically expressed through language, and this can pose challenges when crossing cultures (p. 85). Therefore, attempting to domesticate foreign-language learners may cause an identity crisis. However, little research has done to listen to or investigate international learners' feelings and attitudes towards the patriotic texts. Considering the diversified linguistic and cultural background of learners of Chinese, it might be an arduous task to conduct such a survey, but could be a very valuable supplement to this paper's findings.

Data analysis in this study revealed a problem with the representations of nations in the textbook. To fill this gap, the textbook writers should consider articles to diversify the cultural elements represented in the entire textbook. Text selection for textbooks should put less emphasis on structural perfectionism but increase the possibility of students' developing intercultural competence by drawing on their own experience and knowledge of China (Li Wei & Hua, 2013). Students could also be encouraged to contribute to the class Chinese articles about their home culture or any particular culture they hope to study with teachers' help. A similar concept was proposed by Kramsch and Vinall (2015) to use language textbooks as discourses of engagement, rather than as political indoctrination. The study argues that using multiple sources could enable a deeper understanding of how the self and others operate within their respective cultural boundaries, hence a comfortable participation in cross-cultural encounters. In the meantime, it is important to introduce critical discourse analysis into CFL research to harness the valuable perspectives emerging along with the economic and social changes in China. To develop intercultural understanding, Chinese-language teachers need to learn pedagogical techniques to maximize the possibility of engaging and empowering international learners of Chinese in the reading and learning processes.

This paper recommends using open discourses in textbooks to enable a higher level of student participation. Open discourses can be constructed by including texts of situations Chinese learners encounter in their daily lives, instead of articles for which one needs informed background to understand the details (Jin & Cortazzi, 1998; Luke, 1989). A critical pedagogy would be particularly relevant to implementing the open discourse in language classroom (Wink, 2005). Critical pedagogy is a prism that "has a tendency to focus on shades of social, cultural, political, and even economic conditions, and it does all of this under the broad view of history" (Wink, 2005, p. 26).

Pedagogically, providing open discourse will benefit the Chinese classroom in the multicultural context. To confront ideological tensions and competing discourses, both Chinese teachers and learners can adopt different reading positions and decode the texts based on their own life experiences and background knowledge. The open discourse will in turn promote a critical understanding of how these texts position the reader and whose interests or values they convey. As Apple (1999) suggests, a critical approach to cultural knowledge requires learners and teachers to read texts as a record told from one perspective that can be examined from other perspectives. Students' language awareness can be enhanced alongside their learning of Chinese, and they can then develop a critical perspective towards the power relations affiliated with a particular discourse and texts (Fairclough, 1992). In short, through open discourse, learners can empower themselves and actively participate in negotiating meanings or cultural knowledge beyond textbooks.

5. Conclusion

The textbook examined in this study illustrates that Chinese-language education for international students is laden with ideology and identity shaping. The study concluded that the textbooks were constructed in line with the interests of the Chinese Government, in order to showcase soft power, but not with the interests of the learners in mind, to help them to understand the multiple facets of contemporary China. The standardized textbooks serve as a vehicle in reinforcing national Chinese identity and patriotism through offering learning content about specific aspects of Chinese society. The profusion of patriotic themes and examples in CFL teaching may be one of the reasons why international learners have found that Chinese-language education has put too much and too urgent an emphasis on imposing a univocal Sinophone identity of Mainland China (McDonald, 2011), which

has created huge cultural and ideological barriers to language learning and intercultural understanding.

Due to this narrow focus on Chinese national identity shaping, few Chinese textbooks are suitable for international learning contexts outside China. Numerous independent publishers have mushroomed, aiming for the potential profitable market for Chinese learning materials both in and outside China. Each country is investing human resources to write textbooks fit for specific national and local contexts (Duff & Lester, 2008; Zhao, 2009). However, although the publication of textbooks in China is decided by a few stakeholders in official policy-making and by central curriculum writers (Richards, 2013), its popularity and success is also driven by its science of design.

It is also worth noting that the result of the study shares some similar findings with what Liu (2005) discovered about Chinese textbooks for native Chinese pupils in China. The authors of *The Bridge*, if not deliberately having a political agenda of imposing Chinese identity on international learners, may not have had an informed agenda to enhance students' multicultural understanding. This study also reveals the curriculum for CFL teacher education pays little attention to managing multicultural classrooms and developing intercultural competence (Wang, Moloney, & Li, 2013). The study highlights the importance of curriculum development for CFL teaching professionals, both in producing internationally appropriate Chinese-language learning materials and effective teaching methods.

There are some limitations in this study. First, this study was based on one textbook analysis as an example of CFL textbooks for international learners. Therefore, findings from this study should not be generalized to represent all textbooks. Second, the study has predominantly focused on national identity, one aspect of the themes that could be generated from the 125 texts. There are other aspects that have not been explored or represented in this study due to the constraints of research focus.

Lastly, the study was conducted as a single case in a unidimensional manner which may not be able to provide rich data to inform readers from different ideological contexts. Future study will include textbooks published outside Mainland China in a comparative approach.

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