

Original Article

Strategies of Secondary School-based Textbooks in Alleviating Cultural Aphasia of Local Culture

Qingqing Liu¹, Hongyuan Wang²

^{1,2}School of Foreign Languages, Sichuan University of Science and Engineering, Zigong, China

Received: 13 June 2024

Revised: 27 July 2024

Accepted: 15 August 2024

Published: 30 August 2024

Abstract - In the context of globalization, the preservation and transmission of local culture have become increasingly significant in the educational field, with the phenomenon of cultural “aphasia” posing a critical challenge to the continuation of local cultural values and customs. This study aims to analyze the causes of cultural aphasia, proposing to enhance students’ identification and expression of local culture by developing and applying school-based textbooks. It suggests that the integration of local cultural elements in teaching textbooks, the enhancement of students’ cultural communication abilities through diverse teaching activities, and the continuous training of teachers and updating of textbooks are essential for the sustainable transmission and effective preservation of local culture in the face of globalization.

Keywords - Cultural Aphasia, School-based textbook, Local culture preservation.

1. Introduction

In the era of globalization, there is increasing recognition within the educational sphere of the importance of preserving and transmitting local culture (Wang, 2013). Education not only serves as a vital tool for cultural continuity but also as a foundation for upholding societal values and traditional customs. This responsibility is particularly crucial in multicultural societies and regions where education plays a key role in maintaining local cultural identity and values. However, the dominance of foreign cultures and standardized educational systems has led to a gradual marginalization of local cultures within educational frameworks, posing a risk of cultural “aphasia.” This term refers to the gradual disappearance of languages and, more significantly, the erosion or extinction of local cultural values, customs, and social norms (Zhao, 2009).

Consequently, safeguarding and transmitting local culture through educational means has emerged as a pressing topic in current educational discourse. However, due to the promotion of standardized education and foreign cultures, insufficient attention has been paid to local cultures in secondary education, thus resulting in local culture aphasia in and out of English classrooms for secondary students.

In response to this challenge, developing school-based textbooks has become a pivotal policy direction in educational reform. School-based textbooks refer to teaching textbooks

crafted or selected by school educators or local educational institutions based on the specific needs and circumstances of their region (Li & Li, 2013). In recent years, national and local educational authorities have introduced policies encouraging schools to create curriculum textbooks that reflect local characteristics. These textbooks not only supplement deficiencies in national textbooks but also enhance the relevance and flexibility of education by incorporating elements of local culture into teaching practices. This approach opens up new avenues for the transmission of local culture within educational settings.

Nevertheless, what are the specific causes of local cultural aphasia in Chinese secondary education, and what are the roles of school-based textbooks in alleviating this phenomenon? It is imperative to explore the two questions above before disseminating local cultures. This study seeks to investigate the role of school-based textbooks in addressing cultural aphasia, focusing on how these textbooks effectively convey the essence of local culture to future generations. It aims to analyze how school-based textbooks integrate the values of local culture in curriculum design, selection of teaching textbooks, and classroom implementation.

Moreover, the study intends to offer practical recommendations to the academic community to counteract the marginalization of local culture within contemporary educational systems.



2. Literature Review

2.1. Concept of School-based Textbook

The concept of school-based textbooks has gradually assumed a significant role in educational reform, becoming a critical means of localizing and distinguishing school education content. School-based textbooks are typically defined as instructional textbooks independently developed by school teachers, guided by the school's educational philosophy, curriculum resources, and student needs to achieve the objectives of the school-based curricula (Li, 2006). This approach underscores the importance of the school's educational philosophy in guiding teachers to develop and design textbooks that suit the particular conditions and characteristics of their institution (Wang, 2010).

The development of school-based textbooks not only complements national unified textbooks but also plays a crucial role in enhancing educational quality and driving reform. By tailoring teaching content to local needs, school-based textbooks increase flexibility and responsiveness to diverse student learning styles (Li, 2022). Integrating local characteristics and cultural resources further fosters students' pride and connection to their cultural heritage (Ran & Tang, 2021). Additionally, the process of developing school-based textbooks cultivates teachers' professional growth by encouraging innovation and reflective teaching practices (Deng, 2016). Overall, the implementation of school-based curricula empowers education systems with greater autonomy and adaptability, facilitating deeper educational reform.

2.2. Related Research on Cultural Aphasia

Globalization has brought to the forefront the issue of cultural aphasia within local cultures, presenting a significant challenge in modern education. Cultural aphasia refers to a situation where younger generations possess extensive knowledge of Western cultural norms but lack understanding and appreciation of their own traditional customs and values, often displaying indifference towards them (Wang, 2013). This phenomenon highlights a breakdown in cultural transmission, exacerbated within educational systems that prioritize the dissemination of foreign cultures, sidelining local ones. Initially coined by Professor Cong from Nanjing University as "Chinese cultural aphasia" in 2000, this concept has sparked considerable academic interest, particularly in the realm of foreign language education, where insufficient understanding of local cultures among students hinders effective cross-cultural communication (Pang, 2014; Jiang & Sun, 2015).

In response to cultural aphasia, recent research has increasingly focused on leveraging school-based textbooks to integrate local cultural elements into teaching practices. This approach aims to enhance students' cultural identity and improve their intercultural communication skills (Zhu & Gao,

2019). For instance, incorporating local dialects, folk customs, and historical narratives into school-based textbooks has been suggested to deepen students' connection to and understanding of their own culture (Wang, 2016). Furthermore, proposals have been made to balance the representation of Eastern and Western cultures by increasing the presence of content related to Chinese traditional, modern, and local cultures in curriculum textbooks (Deng, 2016; Zhang, 2003).

Despite these efforts, existing research primarily focuses on higher education and foreign language teaching, neglecting the crucial role of primary and secondary education in cultural inheritance. There remains a critical need to explore how school-based textbooks can foster students' appreciation and identification effectively with local culture during their formative years. Moreover, current studies often concentrate on the content of teaching textbooks without adequately addressing the pivotal role of teachers in curriculum development and implementation, which significantly impacts the efficacy of cultural education (Liu, 2018).

This study aims to analyze the causes of cultural aphasia in English teaching and explore how school-based textbooks can mitigate this phenomenon. By conducting in-depth research on these issues, the study aims to provide theoretical insights and practical strategies for developing and utilizing curriculum textbooks that enhance students' engagement with local culture. Ultimately, it seeks to contribute to the effective preservation and development of local cultural heritage within educational settings.

3. Cultural Aphasia Phenomenon in Local Culture

Considering the current state of English education in China, there is an excessive emphasis on learning English culture throughout the entire learning process from kindergarten to university. In contrast, the foundational role of native culture is neglected, which has led to a phenomenon of cultural aphasia in English education (Tian, 2018). This issue largely arises from deficient awareness and capacity to promote local culture. In secondary school English education, these challenges weaken students' connection to their cultural heritage and undermine their confidence in effectively engaging in international cultural interactions.

3.1. Lack of Awareness in Disseminating Local Culture

A significant contributor to cultural aphasia is the lack of awareness in promoting local culture, especially in English teaching. In secondary school education, limited content diversity and insufficient cultural awareness among teachers hinder students' access to and appreciation of the depth and value of their local heritage.

English teaching textbooks in secondary schools predominantly highlight Western cultures. Textbooks often focus on language scenarios, cultural backgrounds, and social customs from English-speaking countries. While they aid students in understanding English-speaking cultural contexts and enhance their cross-cultural communication skills, they frequently overlook the promotion and introduction of local cultures. This bias in textbook content directs students' attention primarily towards Western cultures, diminishing their focus on local cultural elements over time.

Moreover, teachers typically prioritize the development of language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—over local cultural education in English classes. When cultural topics are addressed, they often center on Western cultures, neglecting the incorporation of local cultural content into classroom instruction. This lack of cultural awareness among educators prevents students from fully grasping the uniqueness and significance of their own cultural heritage.

Without recognizing their role in cultural promotion, teachers find it challenging to effectively guide students in developing a strong connection to and identity with their local culture. Addressing these challenges is crucial to fostering a more balanced and inclusive approach to cultural education within English teaching contexts.

3.2. Insufficient Dissemination Ability of Local Culture

Cultural disconnect in English education often stems from inadequate representation and integration of local culture. Insufficient teaching resources and a lack of cultural content integration inhibit students' comprehensive understanding and effective expression of local culture within their English learning environment.

For one thing, in secondary education, incorporating local cultural content into English teaching remains limited and lacks depth and systematic presentation. Consequently, students face challenges in fully grasping and articulating their cultural heritage when communicating in English. This gap not only hinders their confidence in cross-cultural communication but also exacerbates feelings of inadequacy in expressing their cultural identity on a global platform.

Another thing is that resources dedicated to promoting local culture within secondary English education are notably sparse compared to those focused on Western cultures. Teaching textbooks, extracurricular readings, and multimedia resources predominantly emphasize Western perspectives, further restricting students' exposure to and understanding of their own cultural heritage within English learning contexts. This imbalance perpetuates a cycle where students may struggle to effectively convey their cultural identity,

contributing to a phenomenon known as cultural aphasia in international interactions.

Addressing these disparities requires a concerted effort to enhance the integration of local cultural content into secondary English education. By developing comprehensive and accessible teaching resources that authentically represent local cultures, educators can empower students to confidently engage in cross-cultural communication and articulate their cultural identities effectively in English. This approach not only enriches the educational experience but also promotes cultural diversity and understanding on a global scale.

4. Strategies of Utilizing School-based Textbooks to Alleviate Cultural Aphasia

In the era of globalization and modernization, the issue of local cultural aphasia has become increasingly prominent. Secondary school English education, as a crucial channel for cultural transmission, should play a more prominent role in countering the erosion of local cultural identity. By integrating the development and implementation of school-based textbooks, students' lack of awareness and inadequate capacity for promoting local culture can be effectively addressed in English education, thereby fostering the sustainable development of cultural heritage.

4.1. To Develop School-based Textbooks and Promote the Integration of Local Culture

Firstly, it is essential to prioritize the development of school-based textbooks that facilitate comprehensive exploration and integration of local cultural content. These textbooks play a critical role in secondary school English education by effectively integrating elements such as local history, literature, folklore, and arts into their design. By including English explanations of significant local historical events, descriptions of traditional festivals, and biographies of local cultural figures, these resources enrich students' English learning experience. Such an approach not only deepens their exposure to and understanding of local culture but also fosters a stronger sense of connection and pride in their cultural heritage.

Secondly, there is a pressing need to enhance the comparative study of Eastern and Western cultures within school-based textbooks. By incorporating comparative analyses of Eastern and Western cultural practices, students can better appreciate the distinctiveness and significance of their local culture. For instance, when students are discussing Western holidays or customs, related local traditions can be included for contrast and comparative understanding. This strategy not only strengthens students' cross-cultural competence but also aids them in defining their cultural identity amidst the forces of globalization, thereby preventing the marginalization of local culture within the context of

English education.

4.2. To Apply School-based Textbooks and Enhance Teachers' and Students' Cultural Dissemination Abilities

On the one hand, teachers should pay more attention to designing teaching activities that revolve around local cultural themes to enhance students' cultural propagation abilities through diverse, curriculum-aligned activities. For instance, activities like English speech competitions, cultural exhibitions, and English drama performances using local cultural content can significantly improve students' English expression skills. These initiatives empower students to confidently showcase local culture in international exchanges, thereby mitigating instances of cultural aphasia.

On the other hand, educators can harness modern technology to augment the interactivity and attractiveness of curriculum textbooks. Integrating digital learning resources related to local culture—such as online platforms, interactive applications, and multimedia textbooks—enhances students' engagement and deepens their understanding of cultural nuances.

Moreover, leveraging online resources for activities like watching English documentaries on local culture or participating in virtual cultural exchanges integrates cultural dissemination seamlessly into English education, thereby bolstering students' proficiency in expressing cultural identity.

4.3. To Continuously Improve School-based Textbooks and Cultivate Teachers' Cultural Awareness

In addressing the integration of local culture into school-based textbooks, continuous updates are imperative to maintain their contemporary relevance in cultural transmission. Educational authorities and teachers must

regularly assess and refresh the content to ensure it reflects current local cultural elements. This dynamic approach ensures that students perceive the significance and vibrancy of local culture in their English learning experience.

Simultaneously, enhancing teachers' awareness and proficiency in cultural dissemination is crucial. Teachers play a pivotal role in developing and implementing school-based textbooks. Therefore, specialized training sessions, workshops, and seminars should be conducted to equip teachers with effective techniques for integrating local culture into English teaching. Their active involvement in curriculum development, drawing from teaching experience and local cultural insights, enables the creation of English teaching content that better resonates with students' educational needs.

5. Conclusion

In summary, it is strategic and significant to integrate school-based textbook development with secondary school English education to tackle local cultural disconnects effectively. Embedding local cultural elements into curriculum design and diversifying teaching activities can greatly enhance students' cultural fluency. Furthermore, continuous teacher training and curriculum updates are pivotal in maintaining relevance and ensuring these strategies bolster students' cultural confidence.

In doing so, not only do these efforts strengthen cultural preservation amidst globalization, but they also fortify students' cultural identities. Secondary school English education should persist in exploring innovative methods, thus ensuring that school-based textbooks optimally support the sustainable development and dissemination of local culture.

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