

A Study on the Effectiveness of Integrating Chinese Culture into Chinese Language Instruction: A Case Study from an Activity Theory Perspective

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Abstract

There is unprecedented growth in the teaching and learning of the Chinese language across the world. From the perspective of second language learners, effective language acquisition and expertise in the target language depends on the efficiency of the language acquisition process and the successful integration into the selected foreign language. As per the existing knowledge, the success of second language acquisition depends on the effective integration of culture into the teaching-learning process. The absence of a host language culture can isolate the language learner from acquiring the authentic scope and employment of the foreign language. Therefore, this study focuses on identifying challenges in integrating Chinese culture into foreign language acquisition at prominent Sri Lankan universities that offer specialised Chinese language degree programs. Furthermore, the study uses Activity theory in the Chinese cultural integration to get effective results on the research phenomena. Structured Surveys were conducted focusing on 60 students enrolled in both special and general Chinese language degree programs at the Universities of Kelaniya and Sabaragamuwa in Sri Lanka. Additionally, interviews were conducted with two groups: 10 Chinese language learners from both universities and 2 local lecturers, along with 2 native Chinese lecturers responsible for delivering lectures on the 'Chinese Culture' subject course at these universities. As per the major findings of the study, there were many reasons that resulted in the gap in the integration of Chinese culture into language acquisition. These reasons are the absence of a standardised curriculum, unclear scope and depth of course content, unstructured teaching methodologies, and inadequacies in the professionalism and applicability of culture-related teaching materials. In response to these challenges, the study offers recommendations, including curriculum and course content improvements related to Chinese culture, optimisation of teaching methods, effective utilisation of teaching materials, enhancement of teaching approaches, and the strengthening of lecturers' cultural knowledge.

Keywords: Chinese, Chinese Culture, Language Instruction, Undergraduates

INTRODUCTION

In the global linguistic spectrum, the Chinese language acquires significance as a language spoken by a vast range of communities. This idea is reclaimed by Yang (2020) in stating the wide popularity and enthusiasm of individuals to acquire the Chinese language. According to Ganahan (2020), China's Expansive Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has served as an encouragement for Chinese outbound investment throughout Asia, including Sri Lanka. The BRI is a massive international investment and development initiative by China that aims to improve commerce and infrastructure networks throughout Asia and beyond. As part of Asia, Sri Lanka has profited from Chinese investments because of its advantageous geographic location. Consequently, as the ability to speak and comprehend Chinese becomes more and more important for trade, business, and diplomacy, there is a growing interest in learning the language and its culture. The teaching and learning of Chinese has advanced

in recent years due to China's global impact and overall national strength. Teaching and learning Chinese has advanced in the Sri Lankan educational system in recent years due to China's global impact and overall national strength (Kandambi, 2020).

Chinese language learners from a wide range of nations are dedicated to teaching the language in their native countries. The ability of language to facilitate cross-cultural communication is well established. According to Gumperz (1982), Language is not merely a means of expression; it is a reflection of cultural values, norms, and identity. In fact, a complex interaction of cultural settings and societal dynamics shapes the developmental trajectory of language, which is defined as the acquisition and development of communicative skills and linguistic competence (Yusupov, 2023). This implies the function of Chinese in intercultural

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communication and understanding. In this context, it's critical to pinpoint the difficulties and successful methods utilised by Chinese language learners from diverse linguistic origins. In this regard, it is significant to identify the geographical and socio-economic background of China. In addition to the language acquisition process, a second language learner's ability to acquire the culture of the target language significantly influences the effectiveness of acquiring and learning it. The ability to speak effectively and naturally in the target language is also frequently the ultimate goal of learning a second language. The awareness of the cultural context of the target language is also necessary for effective language utilisation. According to this viewpoint, learning Chinese as a second or foreign language involves dealing with the collision, exchange, understanding, and mutual understanding between the learner's own culture and the Chinese culture along with developing communication skills in Chinese.

In recent years, the number of people who want to learn Chinese and Chinese culture has been steadily increasing, and the momentum of Chinese language education is developing well nationwide. However, as a country in the non-Chinese-character cultural sphere, the primary language spoken in Sri Lanka, Sinhala, which is an inflected language, belongs to the Indo-European language family and the Indo-Aryan group. This makes it significantly different from Chinese, which is an isolating language. In terms of culture, ancient Sri Lankan culture originated from Indian culture, and Sri Lanka's history, culture, customs, and languages have been influenced by the North Indian culture, with relatively less influence from the Chinese culture. Therefore, Sri Lankan learners of Chinese face significant challenges in learning the language, particularly in terms of phonetics, vocabulary, grammar, Chinese characters, and cultural aspects (Yang Kai, 2020).

However, many Sri Lankan students are currently studying Chinese in order to work as Chinese teachers, tour guides, or employees of Chinese-invested businesses, according to recent surveys. The primary objectives of the majority of Chinese learners in Sri Lanka are the first two of these. Since Chinese people are the target audience for these related sectors and more and more students are interested in learning the language, it is necessary for students to understand the Chinese culture in addition to the language. However, at the moment, only honours students are allowed to enrol in the 'Chinese Culture' course offered by the program in certain Sri Lankan universities that offer Chinese programs; regular degree candidates are not permitted to attend advanced culture courses. Students from Sri Lanka, in particular, those who are learning in a non-target language setting, are typically limited to learning and practising Chinese in the classroom. Furthermore, students further from the capital hardly ever have access to such opportunities to learn the culture, with the exception of a small number of university students in Colombo, which is close to the capital, who can take part in Chinese cultural and festival activities. Learning and comprehending the Chinese culture is made much more challenging for many students who are unable to locate a language practice setting outside of the classroom. These students also feel that they have to understand and absorb Chinese culture in order to fulfil their future professional aspirations in the country. Thus, addressing this practical learning

requirement and offering appropriate instruction to Sri Lankan students becomes a crucial issue impacting the accomplishment of many learning objectives.

The present work will examine the implementation of Chinese cultural education at two Sri Lankan universities in response to the mentioned circumstance, drawing on the writer's own experiences with learning and teaching Chinese. The study intends to comprehend the features and current problems of Chinese cultural education at these universities by looking at the textbooks, teaching strategies, course structure, and content of the 'Chinese Culture' courses. The Activity theory will be used to analyse the causes of these problems and offer related answers and recommendations in the hopes of offering helpful resources to advance Chinese culture courses at Sri Lankan universities.

Objectives of the Study

Theoretical Significance: There were significant studies conducted on the teaching-learning process of the Chinese culture in Chinese language acquisition in Sri Lankan universities. Many studies focused on the curriculum development and teaching methodologies used in Chinese language instruction. However, this study depicts a broader perspective in finding various problems and challenges encountered in the teaching of the Chinese language and addresses a broader spectrum by emphasising the content of the subject, study materials and teaching materials with selected teaching methodologies employed specifically to assimilate Sri Lankan undergraduates into the Chinese culture.

Practical Significance: It is scientifically proven that second-language acquirers undergo challenges and difficulties in acquiring a language. It requires an active teaching-learning process. A similar notion can be identified in relation to the cultural integration of the Chinese language into the language acquisition process. As the process is difficult and effective methodologies are not implemented to mitigate the concern, it directly affects to demotivate students in engaging with the language. Therefore, this study seeks to explore teaching strategies and methodologies for the effective integration of culture and language proficiency in Sri Lanka. On the other hand, this study conducts a pragmatic survey on the current condition of the Chinese language contexts in Sri Lankan universities that has the capability to provide a deeper insight into the situation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Correlation Between Culture and Language Teaching and Learning

It is obvious that foreign language and teaching which has grown to a significant scope since the onset of international relations has gained immense popularity and significance at present due to global relevance (Celik & Yildiz, 2019). Owing to the benefits attributed to an individual by the acquisition of a foreign language, it is argued that this feature and acquisition has a tendency to enable the person to better understand the world, overcome cultural and linguistic barriers and have a profession in this scope (Odabaşı, 1997). Moreover, foreign language acquisition gives the possibility to elevate one's knowledge to a higher level and to access a vast arena of the pool of knowledge with the cultural

accumulation of participants in the respective language community.

The correlation between language and culture with each influencing the other has a deep symbolic rapport in the global set-up. Language epitomises a holistic view of culture as language articulates the culture of the speaker's mindset. On the other hand, culture depicts language and further economic, religious and philosophical systems of a speech community (Kuo & Lai). As per Sun (2013) language is recognised as the primary source of cultural expression, beliefs, ethos and norms of a community. Similarly, language is deeply influenced by culture; without culture, language would be like water without a source or a tree without roots (Sun, 2013). Teaching foreign languages requires a symbiotic relationship between language and culture because learning a new language involves more than simply mastering the language; it also entails comprehending the traditions, values, and customs of a linguistic community, which facilitates effective communication with its speakers.

According to Brown (2007), language and culture are inseparable with language both reflecting and influencing cultural development. According to Brown (2000), "a language is a part of a culture, and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture" (p. 177). This argument is supported by other academics. Since the forms and uses of language reflect the cultural values of the culture in which it is spoken, linguists and anthropologists are well acquainted with this link. Krasner (1999) indicates that cultural awareness is equally important as linguistic ability in ensuring language competency.

In addition to that, Kramsch (2001) depicts the relationship between culture and language by proposing that culture and language are inseparable and constitute a single universe or domain of experience. In this view, the significance of cultural integration in language teaching is highlighted as an integral aspect as these two cannot be isolated in the effective process of foreign language acquisition. This perspective is widely accepted in foreign language teaching literature (e.g., Kramsch, 1993; Méndez, 2003; Guillén, 2005; Holme, 1999). For instance, Nida (2007) argues further that language and culture are amalgamated; which eventually makes language teaching and cultural awareness of a speech community a fundamental component of language instruction. Furthermore, learning and studying a foreign culture is crucial for cross-cultural communication, while equally reflecting on one's own culture to better comprehend how one's own system works. According to Wang Li Fei (2000), this sort of self-awareness can promote personal development and offer insightful information.

The significance of comprehending cultural dynamics and their influence on the successful acquisition of foreign languages was highlighted by research conducted in the 1980s (Canale & Swain, 1980; Cargill, 1987; Byram, 1989). Translation between languages is consequently not always simple because of the disparities in cultural contexts, which means that language learning is intrinsically located within a cultural framework.

Factors Affecting Culture in Foreign Language Teaching

Due to the close correlation between language and culture, students undergo difficulties to understand a language while also understanding its cultural context. Stockwell (2018) emphasises that meaning is constructed and interpreted through language in a cultural context. Cultural standards have a significant influence on factors such as word choice and appropriate behaviour in particular contexts. Furthermore, when employed outside of their cultural context, linguistically correct sentences have a possibility to cause confusion. These problems highlight how important it is to include cultural understanding in language instruction.

It is obvious that many language instructors acknowledge the significance of the respective culture in language teaching yet deviate from effectively inculcating cultural norms of foreign languages through effective teaching strategies. As per Atay (2005), while language teachers are aware of the correlation between language and culture, these instructors often feel unprepared or lack cultural knowledge about the target language. Similarly, Kahraman's (2016) study revealed that despite instructors' reported eagerness to teach culture, they spent less time doing so than teaching language because of issues including overloaded curriculum, time constraints, and teaching requirements that were mostly exam-focused. Three groups of teachers were identified by Yang and Chen (2014, 2016) based on their attitudes towards teaching culture: those who think it is unnecessary to teach culture, those who think it is secondary to teaching grammar, and those who think it is crucial for providing meaningful context. Due to a lack of understanding of its importance, teachers in the first group frequently leave out cultural elements from their lessons and evaluations.

Furthermore, many studies upsized that cultural integration in language classrooms begins with the attitudes of teachers. As per Stockwell (2018), the necessity of language instructors to have an obvious understanding of cultural elements is evident not only in focusing on the mechanics of the language but also in raising students' awareness of the inseparable link between language and culture. By integrating culture into language teaching, teachers help students develop a more holistic understanding of the language, enhancing their overall proficiency and ability to engage meaningfully with speakers of the target language.

Consequently, another major concern related to cultural integration in language instruction is access to teaching materials. According to Lu Jianji's (1990) study, teaching materials are classified under two categories;

- 1) Culture-centric materials and
- 2) Language-centric materials.

In culture-centric materials, all teaching materials focus on cultural projects which are applicable to advanced learners while language-centric materials are integrated with cultural projects that are more aligned with beginners. The integration of cultural elements into different kinds of Chinese language teaching materials, such as comprehensive and sub-skill teaching resources, was examined by Han Ming (2011). Similarly, nine cultural textbooks were assessed by Zhou Xiaobing and associates

(2010) based on their instructional designs, content selection, and learning objectives. They found that some textbooks lacked clearly defined learning objectives or detailed analysis of learners' language proficiency levels, limiting their effectiveness in teaching culture. Sri Lankan universities usually use the textbooks named “跟我学汉语”

(Learn Chinese with Me) and “新使用汉语课本” (New Practical Chinese Reader), and both these books are published in China; their examples, setting and everything else is based in China. The lack of time prevents students from understanding the entire textbook because all of the passages and content involve cultural implications that the teacher has to clarify (Sammanie, 2018). According to Byrd (2014), language instructors frequently find it difficult to locate cultural resources for their students, which could be one reason for this. According to Kahraman (2016), teachers hardly ever offer extra resources for teaching culture; instead, the textbook is the most frequently used resource.

The growing interest in foreign language teaching across the world puts immense pressure on educators to achieve learning objectives and desired outcomes. Traditional teaching methods and teaching approaches such as Grammar translation method, Communicative teaching methods and functional language teaching were utilised as major teaching mechanisms over decades. Yet these approaches were unable to fulfil the objectives and goals of foreign language instruction and cultural education (Celik & Yildiz, 2019).

Multimedia teaching can improve student engagement by using dynamic resources including audio, video, and interactive content to create authentic cultural contexts. Multimedia provides access to real resources like interviews and virtual tours and facilitates multisensory learning, accommodating different learning styles. However, because language education systems continue to mostly rely on conventional procedures, Sammanie (2018) discovered that the existing use of multimedia tools in universities does not adequately correspond to the academic needs of teachers. Robinson and Nocon (1996) also underlined the value of immersion in the target culture for genuine cultural learning, underscoring the shortcomings of traditional educational settings in promoting cultural comprehension.

Chinese Language Teaching in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lankan universities, much emphasis and significance is given by Chinese lecturers to improve teaching standards which has increased issues and concerns related to Chinese language instruction in Sri Lanka. Chinese teaching seminars are held annually by Sri Lankan universities in addition to Master's degree courses in the subject. Research on Chinese language instruction in high schools and universities accounts for the great majority of exceptional Master's degree theses, Doctoral theses, international research seminar papers, and Chinese language research-related research papers published in other publications that can be retrieved. As an example, the article 'The Current Situation, Problems and Prospects of Chinese Teaching and Promotion in Sri Lanka' published by Yang Gang (2012) in Southeast Asia and South Asia Studies (Part 2) emphasises the necessity to increase the number of language instructors and teachers in Confucius Institute and Confucius classrooms in Sri Lanka that resulted in unstable students' teams and the scarcity of

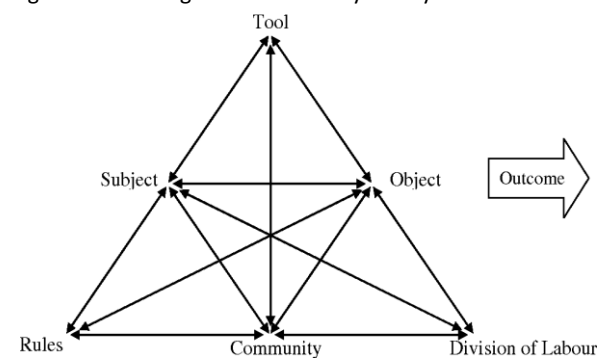
local teaching materials. Moreover, Kumari's (2015) study on current problems in Chinese teaching in Sri Lankan universities focused on the University of Kelaniya as the research sample manifested current problems and concerns in Chinese language instruction in terms of teachers, students, teaching materials, teaching methods and curriculum settings.

The research gap that results from this context concerns the development and successful incorporation of cultural teaching resources into Chinese language education. Few studies have thoroughly examined the creation and incorporation of culturally relevant materials into the Chinese language curriculum at Sri Lankan universities, despite the fact that previous research has mentioned the significance of culture in foreign language instruction and some studies have addressed problems with Chinese language instruction in Sri Lanka. An innovative approach to address the particular requirements of this particular language instructional setting is to place a strong emphasis on the development and implementation of culturally-enriched resources.

Theoretical Framework

Activity theory is a philosophical framework for studying the interactive processes between individuals and their external environments, developed based on the dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels. According to Xiong Shuhui (2010), scholars such as Vygotsky and Leont'ev carried out research and improved study on the Activity theory. Engeström (1987) carried out further research and development on the subject of Activity theory. He introduced a new 'triangular model' that incorporates the influence of collective activities. The new 'triangular model' consists of seven elements, namely: subject, object, tools, rules, community, division of labour, and outcomes.

Figure 1: Second-generation activity theory



Source: Engeström, 1987

According to the triangular model, the subject, object, and tools are located in the upper half of the model, which explains the way the subject applies specific tools to the object in order to transform them into results. Yet rather than occurring in a vacuum, this process happens in a sociocultural setting that is impacted by community, regulations, and the division of labour (Li Lin, 2016).

Activity theory, developed by Vygotsky, serves as the theoretical foundation for this study. According to Yang Luxin (2016), activity theory uses 'activity' as its logical starting point and as one of its primary categories to investigate and clarify psychological theories of human psychological development. According to Vygotsky (1978), in order to accomplish the desired objectives, the subject

and the object use either psychological (such as experience, language, etc.) or physical (such as hammers, sickles, etc.) approaches. The second generation of activity theory was formed by Leont'ev (1981) and Engeström (1987), who expanded on the idea that the subject is always in a community with social people and is subject to rules and division of labour constraints or supports (see Figure 1). Additionally, as "the capacity for socially and culturally mediated action" (Ahearn, 2001:112), agency plays a crucial role in resolving contradictions among the various elements within an activity system (Engeström, 1987).

The application of activity theory to investigate how subjects connect objects with community assistance through the use of intermediary resources is evident. It also enables one to expand beyond personal worries by problems undergo along the acquisition process (Yang, 2022). As active participants in this study, Chinese language learners at two institutions actively used language learning resources and other intermediary aids while taking Chinese culture classes. In the community that has been established with lecturers, they followed the guidelines to finish the division of labour and transfer the goal of their efforts to achieve the intended outcomes. The absence of any component in the activity system, such as inappropriate teaching techniques, culturally insensitive teachers, or inappropriate learning materials, could, of course, have an impact on the teaching-learning process.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to integrate qualitative and quantitative research approaches, this study uses a sequential explanatory mixed method design. A mixed strategy was employed to obtain a comprehensive perspective on the research scope.

Classroom Observations

Here, researchers attended Chinese Culture courses at the University of Sabaragamuwa and the University of Kelaniya in Sri Lanka, each lasting for 15 weeks. These language courses were conducted on a weekly basis, in two-hour sessions. By the end of the semester, 30 sessions were completed. In order to get an authentic experience and to refer to collected data later, these lecturers were recorded with comprehensive notes and specific details were documented. Furthermore, the Observation Method was employed to explore the content of the course, teaching methods, differentiated learning styles and the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process. Then classroom observation was utilised in the structuring of questionnaires and interviews.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with 8 randomly selected students from both universities. These students have been exposed to the language in both Sri Lanka and China. In addition to that, a semi-structured interview was conducted with 4 Chinese language lecturers from both universities who are specialised in teaching Chinese culture.

Lecturer Interviews: The researcher selected four lecturers who deliver 'Chinese Culture' courses at the Universities of Sabaragamuwa and Kelaniya as resources for this section. Both Chinese and Sri Lankan faculty members were represented among the lecturers who were interviewed. One of the primary sources of data for this study is a Zoom

interview with each lecturer (a total of approximately 4500 words of transcribed text). Interviews with local instructors were conducted in Sinhala, whereas interviews with Chinese lecturers were conducted in Chinese. The interview was fully recorded by the researcher, who also transcribed the transcripts and related information. The present study employed a combination of inductive and deductive methodologies for thematic coding analysis, and data collection and analysis were conducted concurrently (Hood, 2009).

Learner Interviews: In this segment, interviews were conducted with two specific categories of students:

1. Four Sri Lankan university students who were enrolled in 'Chinese Culture' courses at the mentioned universities.
2. Students who had experience studying in both China and Sri Lanka, offering a unique perspective on the subject matter.

Questionnaires

The structured questionnaire was given to 60 Chinese language students at the University of Kelaniya and Sabaragamuwa, ages 20 to 25, based on the results of classroom observations and interviews. These students, who are in their second to fourth years of study, represent both general and particular Chinese degree programs. Twenty questions in all, the questionnaire was created with a practical emphasis on elements of learning Chinese and assimilating into the culture.

The study uses a sequential exploratory design, which begins with the gathering and analysis of qualitative data and then moves into a quantitative phase that applies the results to a broader population. In order to understand the complex connection between cultural exposure and language competency, this method was selected since it offers both deep contextual understanding and measurable patterns.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Structured Interviews with Lecturers

In advance of extracting data from lecturers at Sabaragamuwa and Kelaniya Universities, the researcher examines the data several times in order to modify relevant themes. During this process, the second generation of Activity theory was used as an analytical framework to merge related themes, resulting in two theme codes and three sub-themes (see Table 1). The first theme code, 'intermediary tools,' focuses on insufficient or inadequate intermediary resources, such as 'teaching.' There are two sub-theme codes: 'There is a lack of unified syllabus in terms of curriculum and the scope and depth of teaching content are not clear enough' and 'The professionalism and applicability of cultural textbooks need to be improved.' 'Rules and Division of Labour' is the second theme code, and it focuses on lecturers' low performance at work, including 'Neglecting important teaching content,' and the inability to fulfil their teaching responsibilities.

Table 1: Data encoding and examples (Lecturers) Universities of Sabaragamuwa & Kelaniya

Theme coding	Coding unit	Selected results
Intermediary tool	There is a lack of unified syllabus in terms of curriculum and the scope and depth of course teaching content are not clear enough.	"I'm not very satisfied with the curriculum of cultural courses because the textbooks currently used for cultural courses are often compiled by the lecturers themselves, mainly focusing on contemporary Chinese culture, with very little emphasis on Chinese history and other subjects. It's also difficult to find cultural materials that are suitable for students' levels." (Kelaniya)
	The professionalism and applicability of cultural textbooks need to be improved	"The recommended reading list in the curriculum mostly consists of outdated and less relevant content, with limited utility and assistance for students. If we want students to understand contemporary cultural content, lecturers must search for a larger number of relevant materials separately. Additionally, due to the limitations in students' Chinese language proficiency, it is also challenging for lecturers to make specific content adjustments when students cannot express their thoughts and needs effectively. (Sabaragamuwa)" "I feel that the content of the textbooks currently in use is quite challenging and as a lecturer, I also find it difficult to understand. So, it would be better if we could have localized cultural materials or materials that compare the similarities and differences between Chinese and Sri Lankan cultures." (Kelaniya) "Because these textbooks are designed for students from all countries, lecturers need to re-prepare their lessons based on the cultural characteristics of Sri Lanka, the characteristics of the students, their areas of interest and their actual needs, among other factors. As a Chinese culture course lecturer, preparing lessons requires searching for a lot of materials." (Sabaragamuwa)
Rules and Division of Labor.	Neglecting important teaching content	"As there is a certain relationship between students' learning interests and their level of understanding, lecturers generally do not choose topics that are too difficult. However, among some of the more challenging topics, there are important cultural content included and local lecturers will still touch upon these contents. Currently at Kelaniya University, there are only two local lecturers who have a relatively good understanding of cultural knowledge, while other local lecturers have relatively limited knowledge of culture." (Kelaniya) Students enjoy learning about Chinese cuisine culture, art, festivals, Chinese songs, Chinese films and Chinese literature but they do not want to study content that is more complex than their current Chinese language proficiency level. (Sabaragamuwa)

Source: Developed by author, 2024

Structured Interviews with Students

Interviews with the students from both universities are coded as given below (see Table 2). The first theme code "Rules and Division of Labor" focuses on inappropriate or imperfect rules and division of labour, including "learning." There are three sub-theme codes: "Ignoring students' Chinese Level", "insufficient lesson preparation by the lecturer" and "Not providing feedback."

Table 2: Data encoding and examples (students) Universities of Sabaragamuwa & Kelaniya

Theme coding	Coding unit	Selected results
Rules and Division of Labour	Ignoring students' Chinese Level	Most of the information in the cultural class is not understood as our current Chinese language proficiency is not high. Therefore, when Chinese lecturers explain the course materials, most of the content is not comprehensible. Most of the content in the cultural class materials looks unfamiliar and almost all the words are "new vocabulary."
	insufficient lesson preparation by the lecturer	"The lecturer sends us the class presentation a few hours or a day before the lecture and sometimes we don't have enough time to preview it, so we can't keep understanding the content during the class."
	Not providing feedback	"Although the lecturer often mentioned about improving cultural understanding, they haven't provided any specific methods. Additionally, while homework is assigned after class, we only receive checked assignments towards the end of the semester. This is affecting our learning."

Source: Developed by author, 2024

Structured Interviews Conducted with Lecturers

Through the interviews conducted with lecturers from both Sabaragamuwa University and Kelaniya University, and the subsequent analysis of the extracted data, a systematic coding process was applied to identify key themes and strategies. This process resulted in the development of the first thematic code, 'Subjective Agency,' which focuses on the proactive strategies that can be adopted by both students and lecturers to improve teaching and learning outcomes. The category of Subjective Agency highlights actions that students can take to enhance their learning experience. Three specific action codes were identified within this category: establishing explicit learning goals to provide direction and clarity in their studies, adjusting their mind set to foster resilience and a positive attitude toward challenges, and seeking tutoring and engaging in self-study as methods to reinforce understanding and independence.

On the other hand, 'Labor Agency' captures the strategies that lecturers can employ to optimize their teaching practices. This category includes four action codes: defining clear teaching objectives to ensure that learning goals are well-communicated, selecting appropriate teaching materials to align with curriculum requirements and student needs, diversifying teaching methodologies to address

various learning styles, and strengthening their cultural knowledge foundation to better connect with students in diverse educational contexts. Together, these codes and sub-themes provide a structured framework for understanding how both students and lecturers can actively contribute to fostering effective educational practices. This dual perspective underscores the collaborative nature of the teaching-learning process.

Table 3: Data encoding and examples (lecturers & students) Universities of Sabaragamuwa & Kelaniya

Theme coding	Coding unit	Selected results
Subjective Agency	The explicit learning goal	"I must obtain my degree and pass the Chinese Culture subject exam."
	Adjusting mindset	"This is my own choice, so I will proceed with determination and I can't give it up."
	Seeking tutoring and self-study.	"I've not only hired a tutor but also self-study."
Labor Agency	Make clear teaching goals	"When formulating teaching objectives, it is necessary to take students' learning goals and interests into account and it is also important to consider the standards of the cultural course."
	Selecting teaching materials appropriately	"Selecting appropriate teaching materials for Chinese culture courses and recommending experienced Chinese language instructors in Sri Lanka to form a team and collaborate in developing culturally relevant course materials for Sri Lankan students."
	Diversifying teaching methods	"Enriching the teaching methods for Chinese culture courses is essential and incorporating modern teaching methods can be very effective."
	Strengthening teachers' cultural knowledge foundation	"As most of the local lecturers did not get their degrees from Chinese universities, they have a very limited understanding of Chinese culture. Similarly, when Chinese lecturers deliver lectures, they use English as the classroom language but due to their pronunciation and English proficiency issues among Chinese lecturers, students may not effectively convey the content of the Chinese culture subject. This sometimes leads to cross-cultural communication problems. To address these challenges, it would be beneficial to implement the following strategies: Teacher Training programs, Collaborative Teaching, Resource Sharing and Cultural Education etc."

Source: Developed by author, 2024

Questionnaires were given to 30 Chinese language learners from each university, who were between the ages of 20 and 25, in order to comprehend the educational setting of Chinese cultural courses among students at the

Universities of Sabaragamuwa and Kelaniya. This questionnaire was created with the unique conditions of teaching Chinese in Sri Lankan universities in mind, drawing from an earlier study by Peng (2020). There were twenty-nine questions in all on the questionnaire survey (specific content provided below).

Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

The analysis of the "Chinese Culture" course at the University of Sabaragamuwa in Sri Lanka, based on a combination of classroom observations and interviews, has yielded several important insights. First, the University of Sabaragamuwa offers a four-year Honors Bachelor's degree program with mandatory "Chinese Culture" courses. The Chinese culture courses are integrated into the curriculum in the second, third, and fourth years for Honors students. Second, the Confucius Institute at Sabaragamuwa University, staffed by dedicated Chinese teachers, contributes significantly to teaching the Chinese culture. The primary teaching material is "Common Knowledge about Chinese Culture," supplemented with online resources.

However, students find this content challenging, often requiring more class time for explanation. Teaching methods, such as translation and lectures, have not evolved to reflect modern approaches. Additionally, the absence of a standardised teaching syllabus and suitable cultural course materials poses a significant challenge for the "Chinese Culture" courses at Sabaragamuwa University. This absence makes it difficult to define clear teaching objectives and match instructional content with student proficiency levels. Moreover, interviews with lecturers at Sabaragamuwa University have revealed a substantial challenge within the "Chinese Culture" courses. Specifically, the absence of a standardised teaching syllabus and the unavailability of appropriate cultural course materials hinder the definition of clear teaching objectives. This gap also prevents the effective alignment of instructional content with the proficiency levels of the students.

University of Kelaniya

The University of Kelaniya is one of the earliest universities in Sri Lanka that offer Chinese language degree programs and the Confucius Centre of the university has played a key role in this regard. It has created a conducive learning environment for Chinese language learners at the university. The University of Kelaniya offers two types of degree programs: a four-year Bachelor of Arts in Business and academic Chinese degree and a three-year General Bachelor's degree. It is obvious that both programs offer a 'Chinese culture course' as a mandatory language specification for both special and general degree followers. Moreover, a noticeable similarity can be identified in the course materials of these courses in both universities. However, the lecturers at Kelaniya often rely on materials they have compiled themselves, sometimes using the content from textbooks like 'New Practical Chinese Reader' and 'Common Knowledge about Chinese Culture'.

Yet, for students with lower Chinese language proficiency, the content of these textbooks may not be entirely suitable. Furthermore, the use of teaching methods and strategies by both local and Chinese lecturers can be identified as stereotypical language instruction methodologies such as translation, visual aids, and comparative analysis. Through

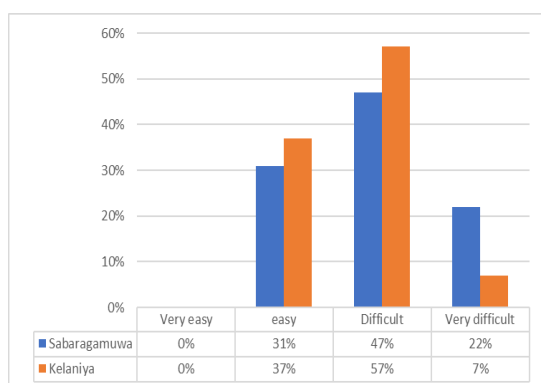
interviews with lecturers of the University of Kelaniya, it is evident that these instructors also perceive certain issues with the current curriculum for cultural courses, which deviate from adequately catering to the needs of students and bridging the gap between learner requirements and professional development needs required in the global professional scope. Based on the information supplied, the survey results from the students' questionnaires were analysed.

Findings of the Questionnaire Survey

The questionnaire was designed to understand the learning experiences of students in Chinese culture courses at Sabaragamuwa and Kelaniya Universities. The following charts summarize specific statistical charts and results for each question in the learner survey.

Figure 2: Perceived difficulty of learning Chinese culture at two universities

Q.1 What do you think about the content of the subject "Chinese Culture"?



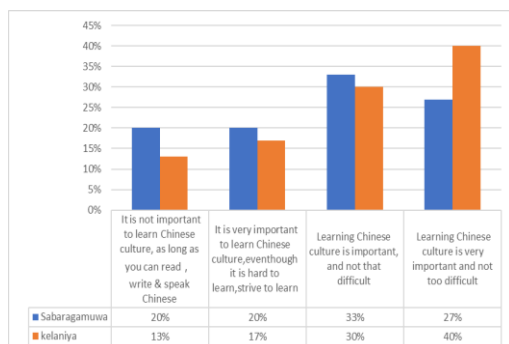
Source: Developed by author, 2024

At Sabaragamuwa University, 47% of the respondents stated that students considered the categorisation of the content as 'difficult.' 31% of the students claimed it was 'easy,' while 22% stated it was "very difficult." None of the learners thought it was 'very easy.'

According to the University of Kelaniya survey, 57% of respondents chose 'finding learning Chinese culture "difficult"' as the primary concern. The cultural course was regarded as 'easy' by 37% of the respondents. 7% of students also said it was extremely difficult, and nobody selected the option that 'learning Chinese culture is very easy'.

Figure 3: Students' attitudes towards studying Chinese culture at the two universities

Q.2 What is your attitude towards studying the subject of "Chinese culture"?



Source: Developed by author, 2024

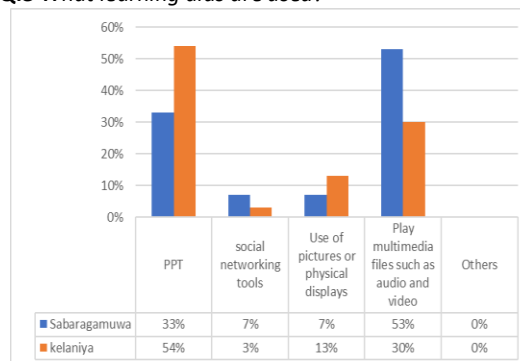
As per the survey, the most common response to the question about students' "attitude towards studying the subject of the Chinese culture" at the University of Sabaragamuwa was "Learning the Chinese culture is important and not that difficult," which was chosen by 33% of the students. "Learning the Chinese culture is very important and not too difficult" was chosen by 27% of the students, and "It is not important to learn the Chinese culture as long as you can read, write, and speak Chinese" and "It is very important to learn the Chinese culture, even though it is hard to learn, strive to learn" was chosen by 20% of the students.

On the other hand, the University of Kelaniya students' survey indicated the following perspectives on studying "The Chinese Culture": 30% of students selected "Learning the Chinese culture is important and not that difficult," while 40% of students selected "Learning the Chinese culture is very important and not too difficult." 17% of students selected "It is very important to learn the Chinese culture even though it is hard to learn, and needs extra effort to learn," and 13% chose "It is not important to learn the Chinese culture as long as you can read, write, and speak Chinese."

Based on the statistical results of these survey questions, it appears that the majority of students at the University of Kelaniya had already recognised the importance of learning the culture. In contrast, students at the University of Sabaragamuwa seem to find Chinese culture difficult and therefore, less desirable to learn. This attitude among the University of Sabaragamuwa students has the tendency to affect the effectiveness of teaching. It is essential to highlight the significance of cultural integration into language proficiency as concurrent concepts and considerations in foreign language instruction. In second language acquisition, the importance of acquiring pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and writing systems is undisputed. However, what is often overlooked by learners is the development of cultural competence which includes shared beliefs among members of language communities from different thought systems, conveyed through language (Bentahila & Davies, 1989). This reinforces the idea that language learning should not neglect the study of relevant cultures.

Figure 4: Teaching methods used by lecturers for Chinese culture courses at the two universities

Q.3 What learning aids are used?



Source: Developed by author, 2024

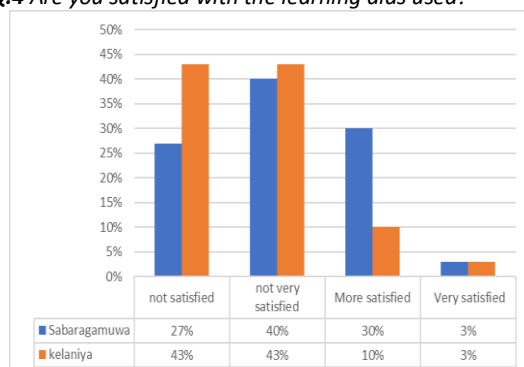
The responses related to teaching materials grants importance in this study. 53% of undergraduates from Sabaragamuwa University stated that multimedia files such

as audio and videos were the commonly used teaching materials. 33% of students stated that the employment of PowerPoint slides (PPT) and both 'Social network tools' and 'Use of pictures or physical displays' options were chosen by 7% each. There were no students who chose 'other' options. Moreover, undergraduates of the University of Kelaniya stated a similar notion related to teaching materials. 54% of undergraduates selected the use of PowerPoint slides as the major source of teaching materials while 30% of students chose the use of multimedia files as the source. On the other hand, 13% Chose 'Use of pictures or physical displays'. A very small percentage of 3% selected the option 'Social network tools'. By comparing these survey results, it's evident that lecturers in both universities frequently use methods such as playing multimedia files and using PowerPoint (PPT) presentations in the Chinese culture subject. Lecturers also make use of videos and images. However, using social network tools is less common.

Teaching the Chinese culture effectively often requires a variety of learning tools and resources to engage students and provide them with a comprehensive understanding of the subject. Research on teaching the Chinese culture indicates that incorporating games into teaching can enhance student engagement, promote social and emotional learning and encourage students to take risks. Flexibility and creativity in teaching methods are key to keeping students engaged and motivated in learning the Chinese culture. In the classroom, lecturers can use Cultural Artefacts, Online Resources, Discussions and Debates, Cultural Workshops, Cultural Competitions, Role-Playing, Creative projects, Storytelling etc. These approaches can be beneficial for improving students' cultural knowledge and Chinese language proficiency.

Figure 5: Student satisfaction with teaching materials for Chinese culture courses at the two universities

Q.4 Are you satisfied with the learning aids used?



Source: Developed by author,2024

Accordingly, it is obvious that students exhibit diversified opinions related to the use of learning tools in the course content of Chinese culture. At Sabaragamuwa University, the majority of students, indicated by 40%, depicted their dissatisfaction regarding the use of current teaching materials. Yet 30% expressed that they are "more satisfied" with the teaching tools utilised by lecturers at present. Additionally, 27% of students indicated that they are 'not satisfied' while only 3% of students mentioned that they are 'very satisfied'.

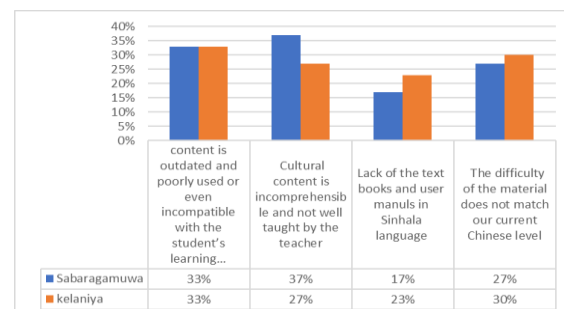
In relation to the University of Kelaniya, the majority (43%) of students reported their dissatisfaction related to the teaching aids while 10% expressed that they are 'more

satisfied'. Only 3% of students mentioned that they are 'very satisfied'.

According to the findings of the survey, students of the University of Sabaragamuwa and the University of Kelaniya have different opinions about the usage of learning tools in the 'Chinese Culture' course. The majority of students of Sabaragamuwa University are not particularly pleased with the course materials, however, a smaller portion demonstrated greater satisfaction. In contrast, the majority of students in Kelaniya expressed dissatisfaction with the course contents, while a small minority expressed greater satisfaction. These results underline the necessity of a more thorough analysis of the instructional resources utilised and possible enhancements to better satisfy the requirements and expectations of the students. The overall educational experience for students enrolled in the "Chinese Culture" course may be improved by additional research and modifications in this domain.

Figure 6: Reasons for student dissatisfaction with learning aids at the two universities

Q.5 What are the reasons why you are not satisfied with the learning aids used?



Source: Developed by author,2024

The following are the findings of a Sabaragamuwa University survey about reasons for dissatisfaction related to learning tools: 'Cultural content is incomprehensible and not well taught by the teacher' is the most often cited cause for discontent (37%). 'Outdated and poorly used or even incompatible with the student's learning' is the second most frequently cited cause (33%). Students cited 'The difficulty of the material does not match our current level' as the third justification (27%). Furthermore, 17% of undergraduates cited 'Lack of textbooks and user manuals in Sinhala language' as their main source of dissatisfaction.

The following are the findings of a survey conducted at the University of Kelaniya about the reasons for student dissatisfaction with instructional materials: 'Content is outdated and poorly used or even incompatible with the student's learning' is the most often stated reason by students (33%). 'The complexity of the material does not match our current level' is the second most commonly cited reason (30%). Among the reasons given by students, "Cultural content is incomprehensible and not well taught by the teacher" ranks third with a proportion of 27%. Finally, 'Lack of textbooks and user manuals in Sinhala language' was cited by 23% of the students.

Teaching materials are essential tools for disseminating Chinese culture and assisting in Chinese language instruction. However, in actual teaching, international students often spend limited time reading textbooks. On

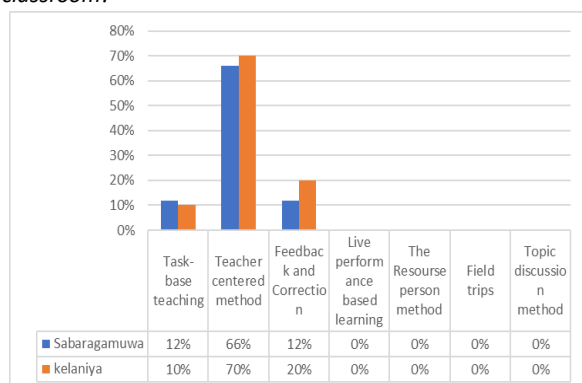
one hand, the content of textbooks may not always capture their interest and attention. On the other hand, many students prefer to learn about Chinese culture through interactions with lecturers or classmates. Moreover, traditional Chinese culture is profound and complex, making it impossible to grasp the full scope of Chinese culture solely through oral communication.

Therefore, there is a necessity for lecturers to start with teaching materials that cater to students' areas of interest, enrich the content of teaching materials, incorporate images and online video materials as appropriate and use well-designed Chinese culture teaching materials for more effective cultural instruction. In Sri Lanka, there are very few textbooks compiled of Chinese culture and most of the currently used materials are not suitable for the students' Chinese proficiency level. The survey results highlight the significant impact of lecturers' use of teaching materials on students' cultural learning. It is important to identify that, students are less motivated to acquire the content when concepts taught by lecturers are complex and less interesting.

Although lecturers at both universities employ Sinhala, which is the mother tongue of Sri Lankan students, many students still do not understand the teaching content which is a significant issue. It is obvious that Bilingual instruction is also not possible to find solutions for the problem. Additionally, the content of textbooks such as the currently used 'New Practical Chinese Reader', 'Common Knowledge about Chinese Culture' and 'Chinese Culture Essentials' have become outdated and especially failed to meet the current level of students' proficiency.

Figure 7: Teaching methods used by lecturers in Chinese culture courses at two universities

Q.6 What teaching methods does the lecturer use in the classroom?



Source: Developed by author, 2024

The following are the findings of a survey conducted at Sabaragamuwa University regarding the instructional strategies used by lecturers: The teacher-centred style was preferred by 66% of students, task-based instruction by 12%, and feedback and correction by 12%. None of the students selected the 'live performance-based learning' option, 'the resource person method,' 'field trips', or 'topic discussion method.'

As per findings of the sample from the University of Kelaniya, in the classroom, the lecturer employs the following instructional strategies: 10% of students selected 'task-based teaching,' 20% selected 'feedback and

correction,' and 70% selected 'teacher-centred method.' Students did not select the "live performance-based learning" option, "the resource person method, 'field trips,' or 'topic discussion method.'

In conclusion, the predominant teaching method employed by lecturers in both universities is the 'Teacher-Centred Method' followed by 'Feedback and correction'. Lecturers also incorporate 'Task-based teaching' into their teaching approaches to a certain extent. The absence of selection for other teaching methods suggests that these methods may not be widely utilised or preferred in these Universities. Further discussions and research may be necessary to explore potential opportunities for diversifying teaching methods and aligning them with student preferences and learning outcomes.

Discussion

As per the results of the survey, valuable insights and findings regarding the Chinese cultural course were identified. These findings cater to several important factors related to the content of the course, perceptions and attitudes of students, teaching methods and teaching materials with challenges associated with the teaching-learning process. In this section, the researcher focuses on analysing major findings in order to identify implications and recommendations for enhancing the quality of these degree programs.

The findings of the survey, first and foremost, reveal a notable difference in students' views on studying Chinese culture. Many students at the University of Kelaniya agree that knowing Chinese culture is vital, and a significant percentage of them say that it is "very important and not too difficult." In contrast, students at the University of Sabaragamuwa are more likely to find the subject challenging and to place less value on learning Chinese culture. Since students' lack of interest and motivation could hinder their learning progress, this attitude gap could have an impact on the overall efficacy of instruction.

The importance of integrating cultural competence into language learning is up-sized by the survey findings. Language acquisition undoubtedly includes mastering pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and writing systems. However, the cultural context in which language is embedded is often overlooked. Cultural competence, which encompasses shared beliefs, customs, and thought systems within a language community, is essential for comprehensive language proficiency. As such, it is imperative that Chinese language courses incorporate cultural elements to enhance students' language skills.

The results of the survey also provide insight into the common teaching strategies in these Chinese culture courses. It is obvious that PowerPoint presentations and multimedia are common instructional resources, suggesting that visual aids are important in instruction. However, the limited usage of social networking tools indicates that there is potential for more technological integration and online platform engagement with students. Lecturers should experiment with a variety of techniques to increase student involvement, including role-playing, creative projects, discussions, debates, cultural workshops, cultural artefacts,

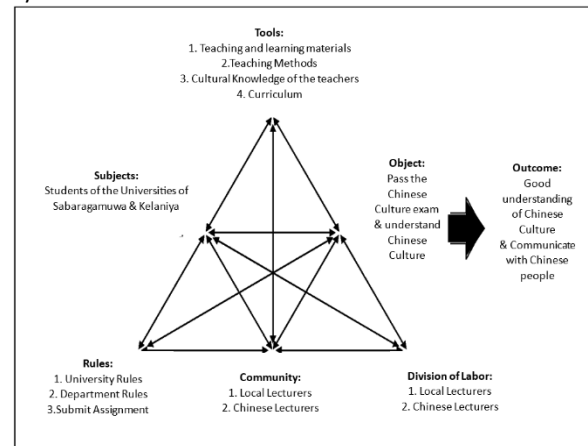
internet resources, and storytelling, all of which can promote language and cultural knowledge.

Moreover, the survey also reveals that students have mixed opinions about the teaching materials. The majority of students and lecturers were dissatisfied with the curriculum and teaching materials employed. The survey revealed that most of the content is outdated, less challenging and incompatible with addressing the language proficiency of students. This upsizes the need for culturally relevant and engaging teaching materials that align with students' interests and abilities. Lecturers should consider adapting materials to the specific needs of all the students equally, and there is an opportunity for collaboration with Chinese language instructors in Sri Lanka to develop more suitable course materials.

In terms of teaching methods employed by lecturers, the dominant use of the 'Teacher-Centred Method' in both universities indicates the need for diversification. Incorporating more student-centred approaches, task-based teaching, and interactive methods can cater to diverse learning styles and preferences. It is crucial to align teaching methods with students' expectations and desired learning outcomes. It is important to align teaching methods with the expectations of learners and desired learning outcomes. The use of the 'Teacher-Centred Method' by lecturers is prevalent in both universities, indicating the need for diversification. The addition of more student-centred approaches, task-based teaching, and interactive methods can accommodate a range of learning preferences and styles.

According to Swain (2000), collaborative learning or collaborative discourse describes exchanges in which students and teachers work together to solve problems and expand knowledge. This concept has been suggested in Sri Lanka and instruction in terms of students learning by working with peers in group or pair projects while developing mutual knowledge with teachers. A comprehensive strategy is required to solve these issues. Collaborative teaching and learning, involving both local and Chinese lecturers, can bridge cultural knowledge gaps and ensure effective communication. Resource sharing and cultural education initiatives can provide lecturers with the tools and materials needed for culturally relevant and engaging instruction. Furthermore, strengthening the foundation of teachers' cultural knowledge can be achieved through training programs and continuous professional development.

Figure 8: Students' Chinese cultural course learning activity system



Source: Developed by author, 2024

Furthermore, the analysis of data from the survey and observations are incorporated with the framework of Activity theory to gain a deeper understanding of diversified elements related to the integration of Chinese culture in the Chinese language proficiency courses. In the study, the Activity theory provides a comprehensive framework for examining the complex interactions between subjects, tools, rules, community and division of labour in educational settings, which can provide valuable insights into the issues and potential solutions identified in the survey results.

Understanding the Problems through Activity Theory:

According to Activity theory, participants in the learning process, namely students and lecturers, possess subjective goals that shape their engagement and outcomes. The survey data reveals that students hold diverse objectives, with some prioritizing the attainment of a degree while others are motivated by personal interests. These differing goals can result in varying levels of motivation and satisfaction, underscoring the importance of aligning individual objectives within the educational framework.

Teaching materials and methods are conceptualized as tools within the Activity system that facilitate the achievement of learning objectives. The dissatisfaction expressed by students regarding teaching materials indicates a disconnect between these tools and the intended objective of fostering cultural competence. Such a misalignment disrupts the cohesion of the activity system and can significantly hinder the effectiveness of the learning process.

Furthermore, the survey findings highlight disparities in cultural knowledge among lecturers, which directly affect the division of labour within the educational community. In line with activity theory, the division of labour plays a critical role in determining the effectiveness of collective activities. The limited number of lecturers with adequate cultural knowledge represents a barrier to achieving the overarching goals of the educational activity. The focus on this gap is essential to ensuring the alignment and success of the learning process.

Solutions through Activity Theory: As per the argument of Psychologist Vygotsky, individuals grant the capability to acquire desired goals and objectives through interaction with objects (the environment) via mediating tools by

emphasizing the cognitive ability of individuals through a process which enables participants of the subject in social practice, negotiations with meanings and regulate and change objects by internally and externally. This mechanism is employed by material or symbolic meditating tools (Lantolf et al., 2018).

According to the Activity theory, major emphasis is attributed to aligning with the goals and objectives of participants of the Activity system. Yet, in order to address the differentiated attitudes and motivations of students, it is required to set obvious and effective learning objectives in Chinese language proficiency programs. According to Hattie (2009) and Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, and Curran (2004), establishing a positive teacher-student relationship is a fundamental component of culturally responsive teaching and is crucial for encouraging a sense of motivation and belonging in the classroom. Furthermore, multiple cultural viewpoints are incorporated into a culturally responsive curriculum, which enhances the educational process and reflects students' real-world experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2010). Learning and cognition are seen by sociocultural theory as intricate social practices that are gained through dialogic communication within historical and cultural contexts (Kostogriz, 2000).

According to sociocultural theory, cognitive growth is thus conceptualised as a result of an individual's interactions with other individuals, objects, and events. Therefore, it is impossible to separate human activity-driven growth from its historical, social, and cultural context (Johnson, 2009). Higher functions of individuals are shaped by social and cultural instruments, making learning contextual from a sociocultural standpoint (Snow, 1994). The Activity theory furthermore upsizes tools and mechanisms needed to be compatible for objectives. In order to enhance the satisfaction of students with the teaching materials, lecturers can enhance the exposure to culturally relevant materials. The study recommends that a participatory approach can help ensure that the tools (materials) better serve the desired outcomes. Both teachers and students must actively participate in the process of learning Chinese as a second language. In addition to providing guidance, the instructor also takes part in the teaching process. Students are constantly influenced by the teacher, who offers the required support during the learning activities. Furthermore, each participant in the educational process makes a unique contribution (Yue, 2013).

It is critical to address the disparity in the instructors' cultural understanding. The gap can be overcome by collaborative instruction with experienced Chinese educators from Sri Lanka. The total quality of instruction can be raised and better aligned with the intended goals by lecturers sharing knowledge and resources.

As per the findings of the study, the necessity to initiate a collaborative teaching-learning process, teachers should have an adequate level of knowledge and experience regarding basic conceptualizations of collaborative learning. Moreover, undergraduates should transform from their traditional procedure of language learning to a cooperative language teaching scope in the language classroom. It is difficult to infuse these changes at once, yet language educators should be optimistic regarding possible

applications and implications of the initial implementation of collaborative learning. In order to overcome these challenges, Wilhelm's (1997) study claims to conduct comprehensive training programs with exposure to collaborative and learner-centred techniques as a major solution.

Activity theory encourages the exploration of various methods to achieve objectives. To address the dominance of the 'Teacher-Centred Method,' lecturers can incorporate more student-centred approaches, such as task-based teaching, interactive discussions, and group projects. Diversifying teaching methods can better accommodate students with different learning styles and preferences.

The interconnection of the Activity theory with the major findings of the study has accounted for providing an in-depth understanding of the problem with solutions and analysed these considerations related to the Sri Lankan scope with a holistic perspective. Further exposure to the correlation between participants, tools, rules and objectives within the Activity system, enables higher educational institutes to develop effective strategies for teaching Chinese culture effectively. This approach aligns with the core principles of activity theory, emphasising the need for systemic and collaborative solutions to complex issues within the educational context.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results of the survey from the University of Sabaragamuwa and the University of Kelaniya provide an overview of the possibilities and challenges associated with teaching Chinese culture. According to the aforementioned information, there are differences in student attitudes, teaching strategies, learning aid satisfaction, and challenges with instructional resources.

Activity theory, which was incorporated into the discussion, has provided a useful framework for understanding these issues and proposing potential solutions. These findings can be categorised under a few sub-themes:

1. **Diverse Student Attitudes:** The perspectives of students at Kelaniya and Sabaragamuwa regarding understanding Chinese culture differ significantly; the first group consider it as important, while the latter finds it more difficult and unimportant. It is essential to align the course objectives with the objectives and aims of the students.
2. **Teaching Methods and Learning Aids:** Both universities predominantly employ stereotypical teaching methods such as PowerPoint slides and multimedia tools. However, there is a tendency for diversified teaching approaches, incorporating student-centred methods, and making effective use of available learning aids, particularly social network tools.
3. **Teaching Materials and Cultural Competence:** Dissatisfaction with instructional materials is a common concern. To increase cultural competency, it is crucial to provide interesting and culturally relevant resources, predominately by working with students.
4. **Division of Labour and Cultural Knowledge:** Discrepancies in lecturers' cultural knowledge can

impact the effectiveness of teaching in the context. Collaborative teaching involving experienced instructors and resource sharing can help bridge this knowledge gap.

A holistic approach is essential to resolving these problems and developing an improved educational setting for the Chinese culture. This involves promoting dialogue and cooperation between instructors and students, revising the course objectives in accordance with the objectives of the students, and developing relevant teaching resources and strategies. Furthermore, implementing contemporary teaching strategies including interactive exercises and task-based learning can improve student engagement and learning outcomes.

Finally, the universities can improve the quality of Chinese cultural education and enhance the ability of students to deal with the complexities of an increasingly globalised world by working together and resolving the particular issues observed in the findings of the survey. Students and lecturers can both benefit from a more peaceful and productive learning atmosphere created by applying the ideas of activity theory, which will ultimately promote a deeper comprehension of the Chinese language and culture.

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