# CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (CFL) TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING LANGUAGE THROUGH CULTURAL CONTEXT

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# I. Introduction

- **Content:** Culture plays an important role in foreign language (FL) education, according to the **ACTFL** World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). However, many Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) teachers still face the challenge of integrating "**cultural context**" into the regular curriculum.
- **Purpose: The survey study** aims to investigate **CFL teachers' perceptions** of teaching the Chinese language through cultural context as well as **conclude and reflect on their feedback** of **"culture-integrated language teaching."**

- **Materials:** a **7-point Likert scale**, **multiple-choice questions**, and **open-ended questions** (see Appendix I.).
- **Participants: 260 CFL teachers** participated in the online survey, mostly from the U.S, followed by Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Turkey, England, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, Czech, Peru, and South Africa. **Most teachers are Chinese native speakers (97.7%)** and teach in Chinese schools worldwide.

The survey was posted on the CFL teachers' group on **Facebook from April 7 to April 14.** The data was collected through **Google form.**

# Appendix I. Instructors Perception Survey Sheet

**Participants' general information**

- Institution:
- Position:
- Your Age:
- Years of Teaching Chinese:
- Your Native language:
- Your Family Language (languages that you speak at home):
- Other Foreign Languages You Speak:
- Level of Students You Teach:
- Age of Students You Teach:

**Section 1— Closed-ended questions**

**7-Point Likert Scale Questionnaire:** Please rate each item (1-- strongly disagree, to 7-- strongly agree.)

**I would like to prepare extensive cultural materials for my Chinese class because:**

1) I am very interested in introducing culture to my students and broadening their eyes to see the world.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2) I feel confident in teaching Chinese through culture.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3) I consider teaching Chinese through culture is a good way for students to learn the language.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4) I do not have enough time to prepare the extensive cultural materials.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5) I have already gotten used to using traditional (word and grammar-based) instruction followed by most Chinese textbooks provided by most Chinese schools.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6) I would like to add more cultural elements to my regular Chinese classroom.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7) I think it is worthwhile to prepare extensive cultural materials for students to learn because this is how language is used in a real-life situation.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**Multiple-choice questions**

8) Do you use mainly Chinese or English to teach the culture class?
1) Chinese 2) English 3) Other

9) What do you observe about students' performance in Chinese speaking in the cultural teaching class than in the regular class?
1) Less engaged 2) Average 3) More engaged

10) Do students improve on their real-life (or immediate) communication ability through culture teaching class?
1) Yes 2) No 3) I don't notice.

**Section 2— Open-ended questions**

11) What topics of Chinese culture have you brought into your class so far?

12) What is your feedback about teaching the Chinese language through culture?



# Measurement

**Section 1: Closed-ended questions**

- The **7-point Likert scale,** including the following categories:

(1) Instructors' perception of teaching Chinese through culture **(teacher perception, interest)**

(2) Instructors' confidence in teaching Chinese through culture **(teacher confidence)**

(3) Instructors' time for preparing cultural materials **(time preparation)**

(4) Instructors' usage of traditional textbooks (word and grammar-based) instruction **(textbook usage)**

(5) Instructors' willingness to integrate cultural elements in Chinese class **(future wiliness)**

- **Multiple-choice questions**

(1) The language used in the culture class **(target language use)**

(2) Teachers' observation of students' language performance and interpersonal communication in the culture class **(observe students' performance)**

**Section 2: Open-ended questions**

**(1) Most-commonly taught cultural topics**

(2) Instructors' feedback about teaching Chinese through culture **(feedback)**

# II. Research Questions

**Framework: The "Cultures" standard is one of the most important standards in World Language Education** (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015).
Learners need to use the target language to **investigate, explain, and reflect** on the relationships among the products, practices, and perspectives (the cultural 3 Ps) of the target culture (ACTFL, 2015).

Thus, I explore the following research questions:

1. What is CFL **teachers' perception** of **culture-integrated language teaching**, including teacher confidence, preparation time, textbook usage, and student performance?

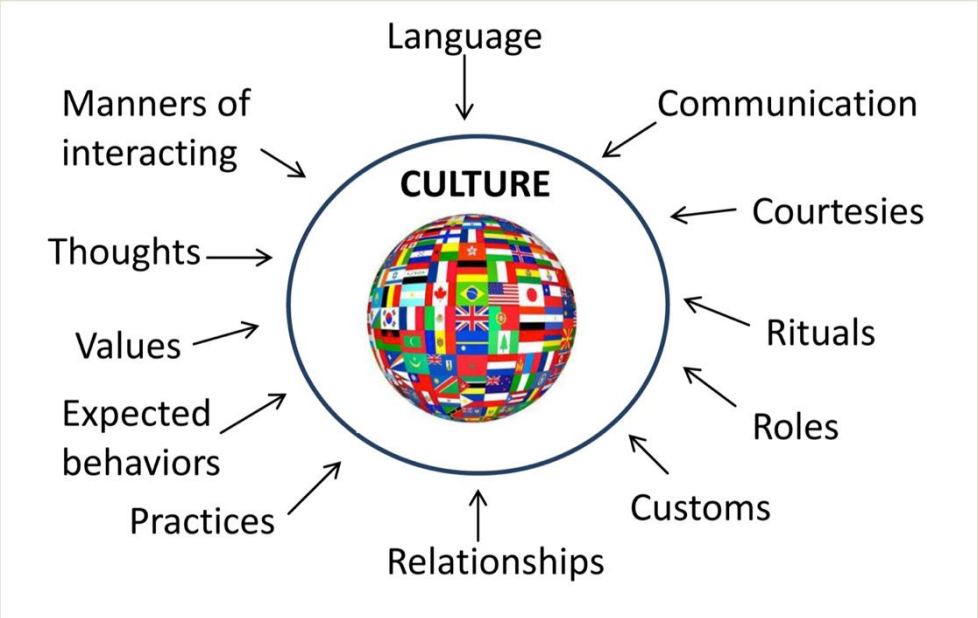
2. How do CFL **teachers' reflections** on teaching Chinese through cultural context, regarding **students' interpersonal communication skills** and **intercultural competence**?

3. What impact does **culture-integrated language teaching benefit in Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) Education?**

# III. Data Collection and Analysis

- https://strawpoll.com/NoZrzxwA3Z3
- How to use this PIN code:**356158**
  - Visit https://strawpoll.live
  - Enter the PIN code
  - Vote in the poll

## Poll



**(1) Teachers' perceptions of teaching Chinese through culture (perceptions)**

(1.1) I am very **interested** in introducing culture to my students and broadening their eyes to see the world.

| | Disagree (1~3) | Neutral (4) | Agree (5~7) | Minimum | Maximum | Medium | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Respondents | 3/259 (1.2%) | 3/259 (1.2%) | 253/259 (97.6%) | 3 | 7 | 7 | 6.7 |

(1.2) I consider teaching Chinese through culture is a **good way** for students to learn the language.

| | Disagree (1~3) | Neutral (4) | Agree (5~7) | Minimum | Maximum | Medium | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Respondents | 2/260 (0.8%) | 11/260 (4.2%) | 247/260 (95%) | 2 | 7 | 7 | 6.3 |

(1.3) I think it is **worthwhile** to prepare extensive cultural materials for students to learn because this is how language is used in a real-life situation.

| | Disagree (1~3) | Neutral (4) | Agree (5~7) | Minimum | Maximum | Medium | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Respondents | 5/260 (1.9%) | 6/260 (2.3%) | 249/260 (95.8%) | 1 | 7 | 7 | 6.4 |

**(2) Instructors' confidence in teaching Chinese through culture (teacher confidence)**

(2.1) I feel confident in teaching Chinese through cultural topics.

| | Disagree (1~3) | Neutral (4) | Agree\ (5~7) | Minimum | Maximum | Medium | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Respondents | 12/260 (4.6%) | 23/260 (8.8%) | 225/260 (86.6%) | 1 | 7 | 6 | 5.8 |

**(3) Instructors' time for preparing cultural materials (preparation time)**

(3.1) I do not have enough time to prepare the extensive cultural materials.

| | Disagree (1~3) | Neutral (4) | Agree (5~7) | Minimum | Maximum | Medium | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Respondents | 49/260 (18.8%) | 48/260 (18.5%) | 163/260 (62.7%) | 1 | 7 | 5 | 4.8 |

**(4) Instructors' usage to use traditional (word and grammar-based) instruction (textbook usage)**

(4.1) I have already gotten used to using traditional (word and grammar-based) instruction followed by most Chinese textbooks provided by Chinese schools.

| | Disagree (1~3) | Neutral (4) | Agree (5~7) | Minimum | Maximum | Medium | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Participants | 91/260 (35%) | 64/260 (24.6%) | 105/260 (40.4%) | 1 | 7 | 4 | 3.9 |

**(5) Instructors' willingness to integrate more cultural topics in Chinese class (teacher willingness)**

(5.1) I would like to add more cultural elements to my regular Chinese classroom.

| | Disagree (1~3) | Neutral (4) | Agree (5~7) | Minimum | Maximum | Medium | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Participants | 4/260 (1.5%) | 14/260 (5.4%) | 242/260 (93.1%) | 1 | 7. | 7. | 3. |

- **Teacher perception (interest), 97%**
- **Future willingness, 93%**
- **Teacher confidence, 86%**
- **Preparation time, 62%**
- **Textbook usage, 40%**
  - Most CFL teachers **strongly agree** that teaching Chinese through culture is valuable and can improve language learning (**very high averages ~6.3–6.7**). However, there is still reliance on **traditional grammar/textbook-based instruction, and time constraint is a major barrier.**

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- How to use this PIN code:**772453**
  - Visit https://strawpoll.live
  - Enter the PIN code
  - Vote in the poll

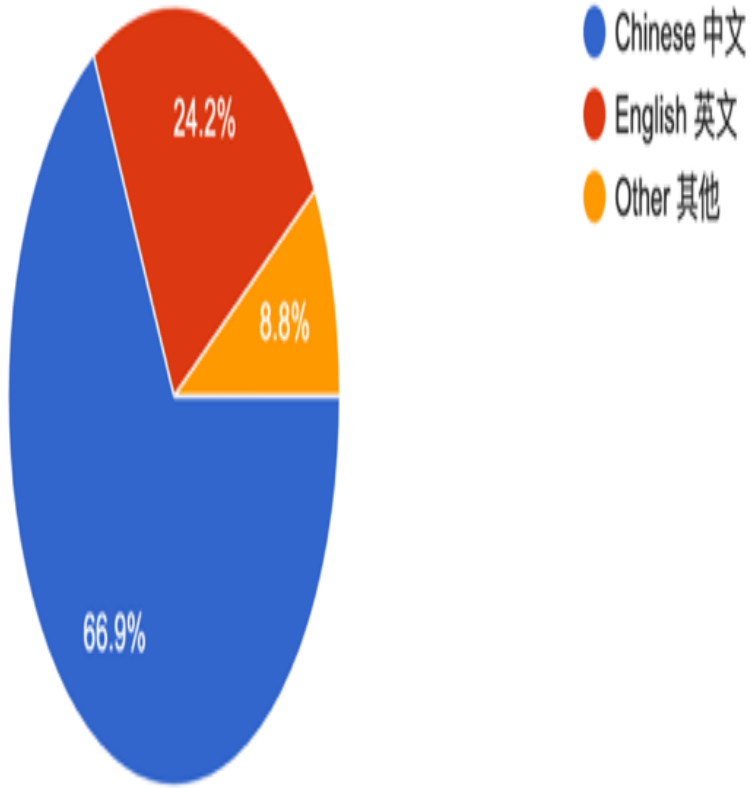
# Poll



## Do you use mainly Chinese or English to teach the culture class?

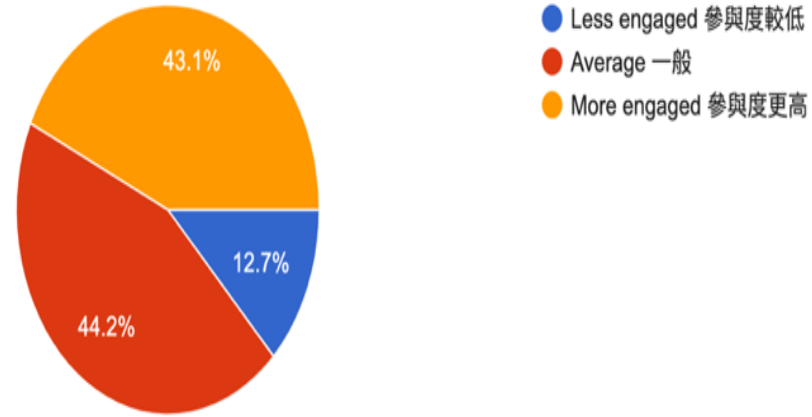
## 你主要使用中文還是英文教授文化課?

260 responses



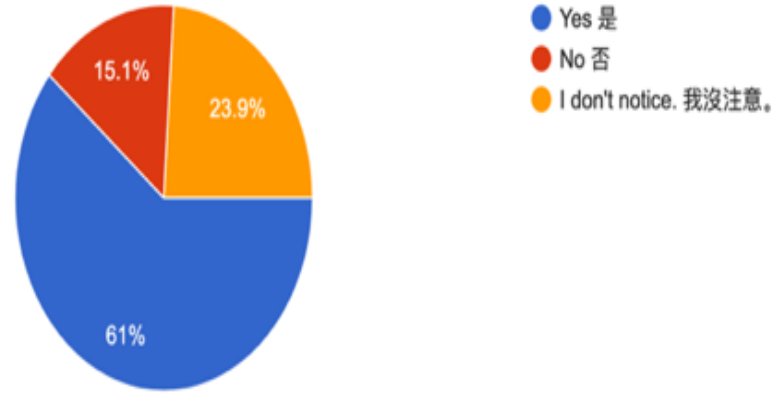

## What do you observe about students' performance on Chinese speaking in the cultural teaching class than in the regular class? 你觀察到學生在文化課上的漢語口語表現如何?

260 responses




## Do students improve on their real-life (or immediate) communication ability through culture teaching class? 學生是否有通過學習文化課提高他們在現實生活中（或即時）的交流能力?

259 responses



- **Target Language use: 67%**
- **Interpersonal communication: 61%**
- **Students' language performance: 44%**
  - ➢ CFL teachers believe **culture improves interpersonal communication**, but **student language performance in cultural lessons is more varied** (**lower average ~3.9–4.8**).
  - ➢ Although **students' language use is mixed**, **cultural context can support real life and immediate communication skills.**

- **Most-Commonly Taught Cultural Topics**
  - **Food** (Dim Sum, Dumplings, Hotpot, Street food, Night market, Tea culture, Chopstick)
  - **Festivals** (Chinese New Year, Moon Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, Lantern Festival)
  - **Arts** (Calligraphy, Traditional costumes, Traditional music, Popular music, Chinese board games)
  - **Behaviors** (Greetings, Lucky words, Social interaction, Gift giving culture, Currency and money)
  - **Taboo** (Eating etiquette/taboo, Numbers and colors)
  - **Beliefs and Thoughts** (Chinese zodiac, Chinese philosophy, Confucius, Feng Shui)



# IV. Findings and Conclusions

1. What is CFL **teachers' perception** of **culture-integrated language teaching**, including teacher confidence, preparation time, textbook usage, and student performance?--→ **Data Collection and Analysis**

2. How do CFL **teachers' reflections** on teaching Chinese through cultural context, regarding **students' interpersonal communication skills** and **intercultural competence**?

---> With **culture-integrated language teaching** in Chinese classrooms, students not only develop **linguistic and cultural competence** but also **demonstrate improved interpersonal communication skills.**

3. What impact does **culture-integrated language teaching benefit Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) Education?**

---> CFL teachers can **start to immerse students in cultural context**, although they are still **at the novice or beginning level** and to **engage them in more cultural activities** inside or outside the classroom, **connecting** to other standards of 5Cs, e.g., the **"Cultures" and "Communities" , or the "Comparisons" standards**.

# V. Discussions

**1. Are the survey results of teachers' perceptions** of teaching Chinese through cultural context, including teacher confidence, preparation time, textbook usage, and student performance**, similar as what you thought?**

2. How do you wonder about **Language/Culture Competence vs. Language/Culture Performance vs. Language/Culture Proficiency?**

3. What **suggestions** would you make for your culture-integrated language teaching class?

For example:

- Apply **high-impact** or **high-leverage strategies**: **use authentic cultural resources** or **design communicative activities,** guided by the ACTFL Core Practices (Swanson, 2016, p.19) , such as using visual representations, real life scenario, short video clips, social media posts, etc.

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# Thank you for your listening☺

- **Any Questions? Your Feedback Matters!**
- **Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching Language through Cultural Context**
- **Hui-Chun Cheng**

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