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Comparative Study of Chinese and Foreign Cultures Based on the "Zone of Proximal Development" Theory: Taking 2012 and 2024 Editions for Grade 7 for Example

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ABSTRACT: *This study aims to compare and contrast the cultural content in old and new secondary English textbooks abiding by the theory of Proximal Development Zone, exploring the sustainability of cultural education within these materials. Adopting a mixed-method approach, this research analyzes the cultural themes, content presentation, and their impact on students' cultural cognition and intercultural competence. The results indicate significant improvements in cultural diversity and intercultural education in the newer textbooks, though gaps remain between the depth of content and students' actual understanding. Based on these findings, the paper offers several recommendations to enhance the development and teaching practices of secondary school English textbooks.*

Key words*: Proximal Development Zone, Secondary school English textbooks, Intercultural content.*

1. Introduction

With the spread and acceptance of globalization throughout the world, cross-cultural communication and mutual understanding are growing important. Textbooks are regarded essential for comprehensible language input for Chinese students, young ones in particular, who study English as a foreign language. Due to the lack-of-English learning circumstance, textbooks are playing an irreplaceable role in their English learning. In addition, the "2022 Edition of English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education in Junior High School" issued by the Ministry of Education of China aims to cultivate cultural awareness among junior high school students and also proposes different requirements for different stages in cross-cultural cognition, attitudes, and behavioral choices. Wang Wenbin and others (2017) proposed that textbook research is an important component of the discipline system of foreign language education and has significant implications for the construction of the discipline.

The importance of textbook in English language teaching has been well recognized (Sheldon, 1988; Hutchinson and Torres, 1994; Cunningsworth, 1995; Richards, 2001; Mahmood, 2011). Textbooks of junior high school are undergoing drastic alteration in 2024, which has aroused a heated discussion among teachers and researchers. It was mostly criticized for the incongruence with students' practical English proficiency, i.e.,

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too high above the students' real level like too many words beyond the requirements of curriculum. Meanwhile, attention was also paid to the culture part in the new version, but as for the portion and evaluation of cultural parts remain new to the public.

Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development emphasizes the dominant and decisive role of teaching in children's development, revealing that the essential characteristic of teaching lies not in "training" or "strengthening" the already formed internal psychological functions, but in stimulating and forming psychological functions that currently do not exist (Yu, 1994). From this, it can be seen that the content setting of cultural elements in textbooks serves as an intermediary for students' cultural learning. Building a good scaffold can help students reach their highest level of development and achieve cognitive and psychological development. Based on the theory of "zone of proximal development", compare the old and new versions of textbooks, set assessment standards for cultural elements, and combine the experiences of students and teachers to explore whether the presentation and setting of Chinese and foreign cultures in the textbooks are in line with students' cognitive and mastery levels, and provide suggestions for the textbooks. Therefore, in order to draw better conclusions, the author will list the following three main issues that need to be addressed in this study:

1) How do the new and old version of secondary English textbooks in China represent the foreign and Chinese cultures?

2) According to the theory of Proximal Development Zone, do the new secondary English textbooks have a better design and arrangement of the cultural contents?

3) What are the suggestions to improve the design and arrangement for a better acquisition?

Through in-depth analysis and evaluation of Chinese and Western cultural research in textbooks, this study aims to provide more targeted and diversified teaching guidance for Chinese junior high school English education, and provide substantive suggestions for future textbook development and teaching practices.

2. Theoretical Framework

This part analyzes the content characteristics of the English textbook for Grade 7 Volume 1 published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press in 2012, and summarizes the changes and innovations of the English textbook for Grade 7 Volume 1 published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press in 2024.

2.1. Overview of the Characteristics and Content of Old-version English Textbooks

The characteristics of the 2012 edition textbook mainly include six aspects, as noted in the foreword (Chen and Greenall, 2012). Firstly, it emphasizes the basics and covers a large amount of basic English knowledge, including vocabulary, grammar, sentence patterns, etc., laying a solid foundation for students' subsequent English learning. Secondly, the structure is clear and reasonable. It takes modules as the basic constituent units, including a "Preparatory Level" (Starter) for the transition from primary school to junior high school English learning, as well as 10 learning modules (Module) and two review modules (Revision Module). The first and second units of each learning module present new language content, and the third unit conducts exercises for consolidation. Thirdly, it follows the cognitive law. The content starts from daily life language and gradually expands to topics such as safety and rescue, communication, and nature, conforming to the cognitive development law of junior high school students. Fourthly, it focuses on the cultivation of comprehensive language abilities. It covers the training of four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Through various forms such as dialogues, stories, activities, and songs, it enhances students' comprehensive English application abilities. Fifthly, it reflects cultural integration. There are characters such as Chinese students Daming and Lingling, as well as British student Tony and American student Betty in the textbook. While learning the language, it enhances students' understanding of world cultures and cultivates their cross-cultural communication awareness. Sixthly, it emphasizes the guidance of learning strategies. It guides students to form effective English learning strategies. For example, in vocabulary learning, students remember words by classification (such as food category, animal category, etc.), and in grammar learning, students master the rules through a large number of examples and exercises.

2.2. Introduction of Alteration and Innovation of New English Textbooks

Compared with the 2012 edition, the English textbook for Grade 7 Volume 1 of junior high school published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press in 2024 has the following main changes and innovations (Sun, 2024). Firstly, in terms of the framework structure: in terms of the number of units, the

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2012 edition has 10 modules, while the 2024 edition is adjusted to 6 units. The subdivision of modules is reduced, and the content of each unit is increased. There are fewer repetitions of grammar knowledge points for review, requiring students to have a solid grammar foundation before entering a higher grade. Secondly, the difficulty of grammar content has increased: in the 2024 edition, some grammar knowledge of Grade 7 Volume 2 is integrated into Grade 7 Volume 1. The grammar points are divided into six key points: pronouns (personal and possessive), there be sentence pattern, noun possessive case, simple present tense, simple future tense, and present continuous tense, with an increased difficulty level. Thirdly, there is an increase in writing training: the 2024 edition has added a writing special topic for each unit, having more diverse writing topics and higher requirements for vocabulary and grammar with the aim to improve students' writing abilities and writing scores in subsequent high school entrance examinations. Fourthly, in terms of vocabulary quantity and difficulty: the vocabulary quantity in the 2024 edition has increased significantly. Some words and collocations of Grades 8 and 9 appear in the Grade 7 textbook, and the reading difficulty has increased accordingly. Students need to continuously practice and remember the usages of words. Fifthly, in terms of textbook concepts: it focuses on cultivating thinking. The 2024 edition textbook focuses on cultivating thinking and closely follows the requirements of the new curriculum standards. The content design pays more attention to stimulating students' thinking abilities and learning interests, such as guiding students to think actively through diversified tasks and activities. Sixthly, in terms of cultural integration: the cultural content has been updated. The 2024 edition incorporates more cultural elements of China and foreign countries that keep pace with the times. It not only broadens students' cultural horizons but also enhances their cross-cultural communication awareness, helping students better understand and use English for cross-cultural communication. Seventhly, in terms of textbook design: the aesthetics of the textbook has been improved. The 2024 edition textbook is more beautifully designed, and the illustrations, layout, etc. are more attractive, which helps to improve students' learning enthusiasm.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Application of the Theory of Proximal Development Zone in Education

The research on the theory of "zone of proximal development" in foreign theoretical circles originated from Vygotsky's 1935 work "The Intellectual Development of Children in the Teaching Process": the gap between the actual development level of children's independent problem-solving and the potential development level of problem-solving under adult guidance or in cooperation with capable peer. In the late 1970s, Vygotsky's theory was introduced to the West, and scholars' continuous research on Vygotsky's theory formed a "Vygotsky research fever". The research of Western scholars has confirmed the value of this idea in teaching and uncovered the importance of mediating learning. American psychologist Feulstein believed that cognitive development is the result of mediated learning, proposing that mediation helps children realize the meaning of learning activities and ultimately improve their ability to regulate their own cognition through internalization (Brown & Ferrara, 1999).

Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" theory is mentioned in educational psychology and child psychology textbooks in China, but mostly limited to brief introductions. Liang Aimin (2010) summarized the laws of transcendence and dynamism in the concept and teaching development of the "zone of proximal development". According to the literature search results, research related to the "zone of proximal development" theory has been involved in the distribution of grades, including ordinary middle schools, vocational colleges, and even universities, indicating the wide applicability of the "zone of proximal development" theory (Qi, 2003). In terms of teaching content, it focuses on a series of knowledge-based aspects such as English teaching reading and vocabulary, and there is a lack of teaching in the cultivation of cultural awareness among middle school students, that is, the theory is unevenly distributed in the teaching content of English teaching practice (Guo, 2018). In fact, so far, there has been little applied research on this theory in China, which is in stark contrast to related studies abroad (Guo, 2023).

3.2. Application of PDZ in Education

Based on the existing research data statistics of CNKI and SSCI, as of January 2024, foreign scholars' research on the "zone of proximal development" has been in a sustained and prosperous stage in the past 20 years, and there is a significant proportion of theoretical integration with scaffolding, dynamic evaluation, and socio-cultural theory. But overall research mainly focuses on the study of teacher teaching and the cultivation

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of students' basic skills. There has been little exploration of the integration of this theory with textbooks, such as Diana Prut et al.'s proposal to use textbooks as tools to support culture, transferring textbooks from the usual teaching environment to more fundamental and broader cultural backgrounds. And the concept of this cultural tool occupies a central position in Vygotsky's theory. As Vygotsky pointed out in his "General Genetic Laws of Cultural Development," cultural tools are the building materials of development, namely cultural infrastructure (Plut, & Pešić, 2003). Wass et al.'s experiment verified that textbooks can provide high-level material support for students' knowledge acquisition (Wass, 2011). Infante and Poehner (2021) reexamined the importance of providing dialogue support for learners when using teaching materials in real tasks, and based on this theory, proposed mediation development, making concept-based textbooks a cognitive tool for regulating learners' second language use (Infante and Poehner 2019).

3.3. Research on Intercultural Competence Development in Textbooks

Since the 1960s, with the rise and development of sociolinguistics, social psychology, grammar, and intercultural communication, cultural teaching has become a hot topic in foreign language teaching. Therefore, there has been some discussion in the academic community on how to integrate culture into textbooks. Zhou Shi Huang Hua reveals how to integrate culture into English teaching in the context of Vietnamese language teaching, and points out that it is important to intentionally incorporate multicultural content into English textbooks (Chao & Vien, 2023). Ruan Shicuiming and others conducted a similar study on the cultural content of Vietnamese textbooks, analyzing the materials from cross-cultural and critical perspectives, as well as the description of culture itself in the textbooks. They found that the textbooks only focus on cultivating students' ability to communicate with English speaking countries/Western English users in English, and lack a cross-cultural and critical perspective to promote students' cross-cultural learning (Nguyen & Cao, 2019). It can be seen that the investigation of cultural content in English textbooks is more urgent.

There are relatively few studies on cultural research in textbooks, especially in junior high school English, and research on a certain version is even rarer in China. Yu (2023) summarized the statistical analysis of research papers on English textbooks published in eight CSSCI journals in China from 2000 to 2022. In terms of quantity, there is generally a lack of research on English textbooks, with an average of only 7 articles per year. Moreover, the lack of research on basic education English textbooks accounts for 17.3% of the total 156 articles. This stage is an important period for students to form essential character traits and correct concepts. The selection of textbook content, form design, and usage methods play a crucial role in students' development of what kind of person they are. In terms of categories, existing research tends to focus more on ideological and political education and Chinese cultural elements in textbooks, while the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press version is relatively scarce. Guo (2018) searched the full-text database of Chinese journals using keywords such as "zone of proximal development", "middle school English textbooks", "Western culture", and "new curriculum standards". The search results showed 333 titles and 1167 abstracts for "zone of proximal development"; The title of the article "Western Culture in Middle School English Textbooks" is 0, with 3 abstracts; 61 articles and 242 abstracts on "English Teaching in the Recent Development Zone"; Title 0 and Abstract 13 of the "New Curriculum Standards for Western Culture". Huang Dan and Huang Li (2023) also proposed that research on cultivating cross-cultural communication awareness in middle school English teaching needs to be enriched. According to existing research, the literature on cultivating students' cross-cultural communication awareness in English teaching mainly focuses on high schools and universities, with relatively few studies in junior high schools. In the past decade, there have only been 63 relevant articles. Colleges and universities offer courses related to English and American culture, cross-cultural communication, and other related topics, so there are also many related studies. However, in basic education, English education places more emphasis on language knowledge and exam skills, making it difficult for students to systematically learn about domestic and foreign cultures. There is also limited research on cultivating cultural awareness in middle school English teaching. The "Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards" (2022) clearly state that "English curriculum content consists of elements such as themes, discourse, cultural knowledge, language skills, and learning strategies The "Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards" (2022) clearly state that "English curriculum content consists of elements such as themes, discourse, cultural knowledge, language skills, and learning strategies. Cultural knowledge lays the foundation for students' humanistic heritage, cultivates scientific spirit, forms good character and correct

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values, and provides content resources. At the same time, it also plans the three-dimensional performance goals that cultural awareness needs to achieve in each stage of study: comparison and judgment, adjustment and communication, perception and internalization.

In the basic education stage, textbooks play a crucial intermediary and bridging role in cultivating students' cultural awareness and language knowledge learning. The theoretical research on the "zone of proximal development" focuses on internal theoretical guidance, but lacks practical research. Textbook research tends to lean towards practical research. Therefore, this study adopts a parallel approach of "internal theoretical research+external practical research" to conduct research.

4. Research Methodology

This research mainly adopts the content analysis method to compare the design and organization of cultural themes and cultural contents in the English textbooks for Grade 7 Volume 1 published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press in 2012 and 2024.

4.1. Research Design

In the preparation stage of the research, first is to determine the research questions: 1) How do the new and old version of secondary English textbooks in China represent the foreign and Chinese cultures? 2) According to the theory of Proximal Development Zone, do the new secondary English textbooks have a better design and arrangement of the cultural contents? 3) What are the suggestions to improve the design and arrangement for a better acquisition?

Secondly is to collect the two editions of textbooks. Collecting the English textbooks for the first volume of grade seven published by FLTRP in 2012 and 2024 to ensure the completeness and accuracy of the textbook versions. Thirdly is to construct coding categories. Determining the possible cultural theme categories of the two editions of textbooks, such as campus culture, family culture, social etiquette culture, festival culture, food culture, natural culture, etc. For each category, further subdivide related themes of different countries or regions, such as Chinese festival culture and Western festival culture. Determine the coding categories of cultural content presentation methods, such as text description, picture display, activity design, etc. Fourthly is to train coding personnel. Training the personnel participating in coding to make them familiar with the research purpose, coding categories and coding rules. Through practical operation exercises, ensure that coding personnel can code accurately and consistently.

In the coding stage of the research. First is to conduct preliminary coding. Coding personnel independently code the 2012 textbook. Carefully read the textbook content and mark and classify the parts involving cultural themes and cultural content presentation methods according to the preset coding categories. Record the coding results in a special coding document and record the coding information of each analysis unit (such as text, picture, activity, etc.). Secondly is to conduct cross-validation and discussion. After coding personnel complete preliminary coding, conduct cross-validation. Randomly select a certain proportion of coding samples and conduct re-coding by different coding personnel. Discuss the inconsistent parts of the coding results, analyze the reasons, clarify the coding standards, and adjust and improve the coding categories if necessary. Thirdly is to conduct repeated coding. According to the discussion results, coding personnel re-code the textbook to ensure the accuracy and consistency of coding. Last is to code the 2024 textbook. Follow the same coding process and standards to code the 2024 textbook.

In the data analysis stage, it organizes the data and conducts quantitative and qualitative analysis. In quantitative analysis, it calculates the frequency and proportion of different cultural theme categories appearing in the two sets of textbooks and compares their differences. It analyzes the distribution of various cultural content presentation method categories in the textbooks, such as the usage times of text description, picture display, and activity design in each unit. In qualitative analysis, through detailed examination of the coded data, it deeply understands the specific content and characteristics of the presentation methods of each cultural theme. It also summarizes the overall patterns and trends of textbook design and organization in cultural themes and cultural content, and finds out its changes and innovations.

In the result interpretation and discussion stage, according to the data analysis results, it explains the differences and reasons in the design and organization of cultural themes and cultural content of the two textbooks. We should consider the influence of factors such as the era background of textbook compilation, educational goals, curriculum standards, and social and cultural environment on textbook changes. It also

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discusses the impact of these changes on students' cultural learning and the cultivation of intercultural communication abilities. It analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of textbooks in cultural education and provide suggestions for further improvement of textbooks.

In the research summary stage, it summarizes the main findings of the research and generalize the characteristics and changing trends of the two textbooks in cultural theme and cultural content design and organization. It also emphasizes the inspiration and significance of the research results for English textbook compilation.

4.2. Subjects

This research takes the English textbooks for Grade 7 Volume 1 published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press in 2012 and 2024 as the research objects and compares the contents of Chinese and foreign cultures in the new and old textbooks.

There are differences in framework, content, and difficulty between the 2012 and 2024 editions of the English textbook for the first grade of junior high school published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. The modification instructions are as follows: In terms of framework adjustment, the 2012 edition textbook has about 10 modules, and each module contains several units. In the 2024 edition, there are 6 units and an additional primary - junior high school connection unit. There are fewer module subdivisions, more content in each unit, more prominent unit themes, a more concentrated knowledge system, and it is closer to the layout mode of high school textbooks. Regarding the grammar content, the 2024 edition has changed the distribution and difficulty of grammar knowledge points. Some grammar in the second semester of the seventh grade has been advanced, such as some tenses, and the overall grammar difficulty has increased. There are six key grammar points in the unit, including pronouns, there be sentence patterns, etc. The 2024 edition also adds a writing section, which has higher requirements for students' writing ability, also reflects the emphasis on the cultivation of comprehensive application ability, and may affect the proportion of writing scores in the high school entrance examination. In terms of vocabulary, the 2024 edition has a significant increase in vocabulary volume and difficulty, with more words and collocations from the eighth and ninth grades, and the reading difficulty has increased.

In terms of content, the overall structure of the 2012 edition consists of multiple modules, which are developed around specific themes and include listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities, covering topics such as daily communication, family, etc. Units explore the theme from different angles. Its content focuses on the learning and accumulation of basic language knowledge, helping students master vocabulary, grammar, and expression skills through various forms, with pictures for auxiliary understanding, and the style is relatively traditional. The 2024 edition consists of 6 learning units and an appendix. Each unit is divided into three links of "comprehension - development – practice", including five sections, namely background activation (Starting out), theme understanding (Understanding ideas), thinking expansion (Developing ideas), theme practice (Presenting ideas), and self-evaluation (Reflection）. Its discourse has rich themes and genres, the language is authentic and vivid, with moderate difficulty, in line with students' interests, can enrich the experience and enhance the discourse awareness. The activity design focuses on the theme context, aiming at meaning construction and production, prompting students to solve problems, focusing on cultivating comprehensive language application and thinking ability, and emphasizing the learning concepts of experience, practice, and transfer innovation.

4.3. Data Collection and Analysis

4.3.1. Data Collection

When conducting data collection, first is determining the unit of analysis. In this study, text paragraphs, pictures, charts, exercises, and related annotation explanations in the textbook are taken as analysis units. These units cover various elements that transmit cultural information in the textbook. Secondly is coding the two textbooks. Trained coders code the textbooks. For each analysis unit, classify and code according to the preset coding categories. Coding categories include cultural theme categories such as campus culture, family culture, social etiquette culture, festival culture, food culture, natural culture, etc. Cultural content presentation method categories such as text description, picture display, and activity design. Finally, recording the data. Record the coding results in a special data document. Each record contains the following information:

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textbook version (2012 or 2024), unit number, page number, analysis unit type (text, picture, activity), cultural theme category, cultural content presentation method category, and a brief description of the analysis unit.

This study collected the cultural themes and presentation methods of cultural content in the starter unit and ten formal units of the first volume of grade seven published by FLTRP in 2012. Collected the cultural themes and presentation methods of cultural content in the starter unit and six formal units of the first volume of grade seven published by FLTRP in 2024.

4.3.2. Data Analysis

At this stage, the data is organized and quantitative and qualitative analyses are conducted. During quantitative analysis, it calculates the frequency of different cultural theme categories appearing in the two sets of textbooks and compares their differences. It analyzes the distribution of various cultural content presentation method categories in the textbooks, such as the usage times of text description, picture display, and activity design in each unit. During qualitative analysis, through detailed examination of the coded data, deeply understand the specific content and characteristics of the presentation methods of each cultural theme.

The following is a quantitative analysis of the presentation methods of cultural themes and cultural content in the two textbooks. First, in terms of comparing cultural themes. Count the number and proportion of different cultural themes in each version of the textbook. Under the campus culture theme, there are 3 units in the 2012 edition textbook, and the 2024 edition textbook also involves 3 units. It can be seen that both editions of textbooks pay attention to students' campus learning and life, are close to students' lives, and are conducive to students' healthy learning under the experience of campus culture. In terms of family culture, one unit of each version of the textbook is involved. In terms of festival culture, one unit of each version of the textbook is also mentioned. In terms of natural culture, one unit of each version of the textbook is mentioned. The rest of the cultural themes are relatively scattered. In the 2012 version, one unit involves food health culture, one unit involves network culture, and one unit involves daily life. In the 2024 version, one unit involves Chinese traditional musical instrument culture. In addition, this study also conducts a quantitative count of various presentation methods of cultural content in the two textbooks. Including the number of texts, cultural pictures of one category, and activity designs. Among them, the 2012 edition textbook presents texts 30 times, pictures 16 times, and activity designs 21 times. Since the 2012 edition textbook is counted as 11 units, the average occurrence times need to be calculated here. The 2012 edition textbook presents texts an average of 2.7 times per unit, pictures an average of 1.5 times per unit, and activities an average of 1.9 times per unit. The 2024 edition textbook presents texts 21 times, cultural pictures 18 times, and activity designs 21 times. The 2024 edition textbook has a total of 6 units, so the text is presented an average of 3.5 times per unit, pictures are presented an average of 3 times per unit, and activities are presented an average of 3.5 times per unit. It can be seen that in the new textbook, whether in terms of text, picture or activity presentation, there are more cultural elements than in the old textbook.

The qualitative analysis of the presentation methods of cultural themes and cultural content in the two textbooks is as follows. This part is mainly analyzed from three aspects, namely text, picture and activity presentation. First, in terms of text comparison. This study compared the presentation forms of cultural content texts in two versions of textbooks. The texts in the 2012 edition textbook are mostly presented in the form of dialogues, and the texts are relatively basic and short, which is conducive to consolidating students' basic knowledge. The texts in the 2024 edition textbook are mostly presented in the form of discourse, paying more attention to students' comprehensive discourse reading ability, and the difficulty has increased. Moreover, the 2024 edition textbook pays more attention to story and interest, while the 2012 edition textbook may be more traditional. Second, in terms of picture analysis. This study compared the quantity, quality and cultural expressiveness of pictures in two versions of textbooks. It was found that the 2024 edition textbook has more pictures than the 2012 edition textbook in terms of picture quantity presentation, and has been optimized in terms of picture quality and cultural expressiveness. The pictures in the textbook may be more exquisite and diverse, and can better assist in understanding cultural content. Finally, in terms of exercise and activity evaluation. This study analyzed the diversity and effectiveness of culture-related exercises and activities in two versions of textbooks. It was found that the 2024 edition textbook is more diverse in activity design, such as holding parties, making festival posters, making family albums, etc. In terms of quantity, the activity design in the new textbook is more and more diverse than the old textbook. The activities in the 2024 edition textbook pay more attention to students' independent inquiry and cooperative learning abilities, and

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are more in line with students' actual learning needs, so it is more effective than the 2012 edition textbook. While the activity design forms of the 2012 edition textbook are relatively limited, limited to dialogue and writing activities, and the forms are relatively boring. Exercises and activities are more focused on consolidating knowledge.

5. Results and Discussion

The 2024 version has been noted that be rich in reading materials and multicultures (Sun, 2024). Thus, this part mainly makes a comparison between the old and new textbooks in terms of cultural themes, cultural content, and possible impact.

5.1. Comparison of Cultural Themes in Old and New Textbooks

The "English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022)" divides the context categories into three types: "Man and Self", "Man and Society", and "Man and Nature". Among them, "Man and Self" involves 9 sub-theme contents under two theme groups, namely "Life and Learning" and "Being a Person and Doing Things"; "Man and Society" involves 15 sub-theme contents under four theme groups, namely "Social Services and Interpersonal Communication", "Literature, Art and Sports", "History, Society and Culture", and "Science and Technology"; "Man and Nature" involves 5 sub-theme contents under four theme groups, namely "Natural Ecology", "Environmental Protection", "Disaster Prevention", and "Space Exploration". The analytical framework adopted by the author refers to the above classification dimensions. Under the three general cultural themes of "Man and Self", "Man and Society", and "Man and Nature", the author has explored the cultural themes in the two versions of English textbooks. They mainly include the following 9 cultural themes: campus culture, family culture, festival culture, natural culture, musical instrument culture, diet and health culture, science and technology network culture, gift culture, and daily life culture. (See Table 1).

Table 1. Classification of cultural themes.

Cultural themes	**Sub-cultural themes**
Man and self	Campus culture
	Dietary health culture
Man and society	Family culture
	Festival culture
	Musical instrument culture
	Science and technology network culture
	Gift culture
	Daily life culture.
Man and nature	Natural culture

The similarities between the old and new textbooks are as follows. (See Table 2).

Table 2. Similarities of cultural themes.

Item	**Sub-item**	**Similarities**
Man and self	Campus culture	They all include self-introduction, communication methods, campus life and activities.
Man and society	Family culture	They all explore family structure and member relationships.
	Festival culture	They all present the differences between Chinese and Western cultures.
Man and nature	Natural culture	They all advocate respecting and protecting nature.

First, campus culture is the attention of Both editions of textbooks. In the 2012 textbook, "Unit 1 My classmates" introduces the communication methods, self-introduction habits of students from China and other countries, and the relationship among class members. "Unit 3 My school" and "Unit 5 My school day" describe school facilities, curriculum settings, and students' daily activities, reflecting the differences in

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interpersonal communication and school culture among different countries. The 2024 textbook shows the differences in campus culture between China and the West from the perspectives of "Starter Welcome to junior high" (freshmen's adaptation to the campus environment and learning rhythm), "Unit 1 A new start" (classmate and teacher-student communication and participation in campus activities in the new environment), and "Unit 5 Fantastic friends" (establishment and maintenance of campus friendship). It can be seen that both editions of textbooks attach importance to the presentation of different cultures in campus life. Second, in terms of festival culture. Both highlight the differences in festival cultures between China and the West. The "Unit 10 Spring Festival" in the 2012 textbook describes in detail the traditional customs of the Chinese Spring Festival, showing the charm of traditional Chinese culture and introducing the differences in festival cultures between China and foreign countries. The "Unit 4 Time to celebrate" in the 2024 textbook is about the celebration of various festivals, highlighting the differences in celebration methods and symbolic meanings of festival cultures between China and the West. Third, in terms of family culture. Both editions of textbooks explore the differences in family structure and member relationships in family cultures between China and the West. In 2012, "Unit 2 My family" involves family structure, member names and relationships, and cultural traditions in family activities. In 2024, "Unit 3 Family ties" discusses family structure, member relationships, and family emotional bonds, showing the differences in family cultures between China and the West. Fourth, in terms of natural culture. Both textbooks involve natural themes and advocate respecting and protecting nature.

The differences between the two textbooks mainly lie in the following five points. (See Table 3).

Table 3. Differences of cultural themes.

Item	Sub-item	Edition	Yes	No	Differences
Man and self	Campus culture	Old	√		Refine the campus culture theme from different perspectives such as junior high school adaptation, campus communication, and campus friendship.
		New	√		It's relatively general.
Man and society	Musical instrument culture	Old		√	Not involve
		New	√		Introduce the differences between Chinese and Western traditional musical instruments and students' after-school hobbies.
	Science, technology and network culture	Old	√		"Unit 7 Computers" introduces the use of computers and the Internet as well as related cultural phenomena.
		New		√	Not involve
	Daily life culture	Old	√		"Unit 9 People and places" describes the diversity of people's lifestyles and cultural characteristics.
		New		√	Not involve
Man and nature	Natural culture	Old	√		The value and cultural connotations of plants.
		New	√		Animals in different countries.

First, the 2024 textbook adds new traditional culture themes. "Unit 2 More than fun" introduces the differences in traditional musical instruments and students' after-school hobbies between China and the West, and also involves traditional Chinese cultures such as Peking Opera and paper-cutting, enriching the cultural content of the textbook and allowing students to understand the characteristics of different cultures in leisure and entertainment. Second, in the natural culture category of the 2024 textbook, the value of plants and the cultural connotations behind them are explored. "Unit 6 The power of plants" expounds on the role and significance of plants in life and ecology, and compares the differences in perceptions of plants between China and the West, such as different views on plants in medicine and cultural symbols, broadening students' cultural horizons. However, the 2012 textbook's "Unit 6 A trip to the zoo" discusses animals in different countries and advocates protecting animals and nature, and the significance of the cultural theme is not prominent. Third, the 2012 textbook has themes of technology and network culture and daily activities and

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life culture. “Unit 7 Computers” introduces the usage methods of computers, network applications, and related cultural phenomena, showing the impact of technology on culture. “Unit 9 People and places” shows the diversity of lifestyles and cultural characteristics between China and foreign countries by describing people’s activities at different times and places. The 2024 textbook does not involve these two aspects. Fourth, in the campus culture category, the 2024 textbook is more refined. It’s expounded from different angles such as junior high school adaptation, campus communication, and campus friendship. For example, “Starter Welcome to junior high” involves freshmen’s adaptation to the campus environment and learning rhythm and the differences in the initial stages of campus between China and the West. “Unit 1 A new start” focuses on classmate and teacher-student communication and participation in campus activities in the new environment, and compares the differences in classroom interaction and after-school club activities. “Unit 5 Fantastic friends” focuses on friend characteristics and the establishment and maintenance of friendship, reflecting the differences in campus friendship cultures between China and the West and the different emphases on qualities such as loyalty and mutual assistance among friends. In contrast, the elaboration on campus culture in the 2012 textbook is relatively general.

5.2. Comparison of Cultural Content Presentation Methods

This part mainly compares the presentation methods of cultural content in the old and new textbooks from three aspects: text, pictures, and activities. (See Table 4).

Table 4. Comparison of the presentation methods of cultural content

Methods	Edition	Similarities	Samples	Differences	Samples
Text	Old	Both introduce part of the cultural content through dialogue.	Module 1: Make self-introductions through dialogues.	The way of topic introduction is direct with a shallow depth of cultural connotation and obvious text in the dialogue.	Module 1: In “My classmates”, the differences in communication ways between China and foreign countries are introduced by presenting students’ information.
	New		Unit 1: Practice study plans through dialogues and give suggestions.	The topic introduction adds questions for thinking, has a deep cultural connotation, and the dialogue is presented through practice.	Unit 5 Fantastic friends: It reflects the relationship among human activities, animal survival and the protection of cultural heritage.
Pictures	Old	Both use pictures to assist in understanding cultural content, making the culture more vivid and intuitive.	Module 2: Family photos reflect the family structure.	The picture type is regular, and the picture directly reflects the text content.	In Module 1, the differences in names are introduced by showing the pictures of Yang Liwei and Bill Gates.
	New		Unit 4: Display festival flower baskets.	The pictures have cultural characteristics and guide students to think about cultural issues.	Unit 2: The pictures of Peking Opera facial makeup and paper-cutting. Unit 1 A new start: The picture of a class in session helps students think about the famous sayings of Confucius.
Activities	Old	Both design various activity forms to help	Listening, speaking, reading, writing.	The activity type is regular and the activity focuses on students’ language	Module 2: Write an essay about your own family.

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		students understand and experience the culture.		use.	
	New			New activities are added, with the activity focusing on the cultivation of cultural awareness and thinking quality.	Unit 3 Family ties: Make a family photo album.

In terms of text, both the old and new textbooks introduce some cultural content through dialogue. For example, the 2012 textbook presents basic communication differences between China and the West through daily dialogues in Starter Module. The 2024 textbook also uses dialogue to assist in introducing culture in multiple units, such as introducing activities on the first day of school in different countries in Unit 1. Both involve descriptions of cultural differences between China and foreign countries, covering multiple fields such as family, school, and diet, helping students understand lifestyles and concepts under different cultural backgrounds. The differences between the old and new textbooks in text lie in two aspects: theme introduction methods and the depth of cultural connotations. First, the theme introduction methods are different. The 2012 textbook mostly introduces themes by directly describing relevant cultural scenes or character information. For example, “Module 1 My classmates” leads to differences in communication methods between China and foreign countries by introducing student information. In addition to direct description, the 2024 textbook more often uses questions to guide students to think about cultural themes. For example, “Unit 2 More than fun” introduces cultural content about the diversity of personal interests by guiding students to think about the benefits of hobbies through questions. Second, the depth of cultural connotations is different. The 2012 textbook mainly presents cultural phenomena and differences, and the exploration of cultural connotations is relatively shallow. For example, “Module 2 My family” introduces differences in family structure and customs, and rarely involves discussions on cultural inheritance and deep-seated values. The 2024 textbook not only shows differences but also focuses on cultural integration and inheritance. For example, “Unit 1 A new start” integrates traditional Chinese culture into English learning and discusses the relationship between culture and other fields. Another example is that “Unit 5 Fantastic friends” reflects the relationship between human activities and animal survival and the protection of cultural heritage.

In terms of pictures, both the old and new textbooks use pictures to assist in understanding cultural content, making cultural knowledge more intuitive and vivid. For example, pictures of campus scenes show campus culture, and family photos reflect differences in family structure and lifestyle. The differences between them lie in two aspects: picture types and the degree of closeness to text. First, in terms of picture types, the picture types in the 2012 textbook are relatively conventional. Most are pictures related to common themes such as people, campus, family, and food to assist in explaining cultural differences. For example, pictures of Yang Liwei and Bill Gates introduce name differences, and food classification charts compare food cultures. On the basis of conventional pictures, the 2024 textbook adds a large number of pictures with cultural characteristics, such as Peking Opera masks and paper-cut pictures to show traditional Chinese culture, and pictures of animals related to “Shan Hai Jing” to assist in understanding knowledge of ancient cultural classics. Second, in terms of the degree of closeness to text. The combination of pictures and text in the 2012 textbook is relatively close. Most are intuitive displays of text content. For example, in Module 3 My school, the campus building map corresponds to the text description of the campus building layout. The combination of pictures and text in the 2024 textbook is more diverse. In addition to intuitive display, pictures are also used to guide students to think about cultural issues. For example, in Unit 1 A new start, pictures of classes in class help students think about Confucius’ famous sayings.

In terms of activities, both the old and new textbooks design various activity forms to help students understand and experience culture, such as pair work, writing activities, and making posters. The differences lie in two aspects: the richness of activity types and the focus of activity purposes. In terms of the richness of activity types, the activity types in the 2012 textbook are relatively concentrated in some common forms, mainly focusing on understanding cultural phenomena and comparing differences. For example, the poster-making activity in Module 6 A trip to the zoo is about understanding animal culture. The activity types in the 2024 textbook are more diverse. In addition to common forms, activities such as making family albums in

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Unit 3 Family ties and making school club plans in Unit 2 More than fun are added, paying more attention to cultural experience and inheritance. In terms of the focus of activity purposes, the activity purposes of the 2012 textbook are mainly to let students experience cultural differences and improve language proficiency. For example, the activity of making shopping lists in Module 4 Healthy food allows students to understand food prices and purchase channels while learning English expressions. The activity purposes of the 2024 textbook are more diversified. In addition to experiencing differences and language application, it also focuses on cultivating students' cultural identity. For example, the activity of making festival posters in Unit 4 Time to celebrate, cultivating critical thinking ability. For example, pair work discussions in Unit 1 A new start about the first class and students' organizational ability. For example, the activity of making club plans in Unit 2 More than fun.

In conclusion, the 2024 edition of the English textbook for grade seven published by FLTRP has innovations in Chinese and foreign cultural themes, leading students to experience more traditional Chinese culture. In terms of the presentation methods of Chinese and foreign cultural content, the new textbook pays more attention to the combination with students' actual lives. It uses diverse text forms, high-quality pictures and multimedia resources, as well as creative exercises and activity designs, so that students can understand Chinese and foreign cultures more intuitively and vividly, and improve students' learning interests and intercultural communication abilities.

5.3. Impact on Students' Cultural Cognition and Intercultural Competence

Compared with the 2012 edition, the new changes in the foreign and Chinese cultures in the 2024 edition of the English textbook for Grade 7 of the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press have the following impacts on students' cultural cognition and intercultural competence. (See Table 5)

Table 5. Changes in the impacts of the new textbook on students' cultural cognition and intercultural competence.

Impact	Changes	Samples
Cultural Cognition	(1) Strengthen the awareness and recognition of local culture. (2) Increase the proportion of traditional culture content. (3) Broaden the understanding of foreign cultures.	Unit 1: Ancient thinkers like Confucius and Mencius Unit 4: Introduce Chinese Spring Festival to foreign friends
Intercultural Competence	(1) Pay attention to cultural differences and improve the accuracy and appropriateness of language use. (2) Encourage students to conduct comparison, analysis and critical thinking to form a cross-cultural thinking mode. (3) Increase cross-cultural communication scenes and activity designs to improve practical ability.	Integrating cultural background differences in vocabulary, grammar, etc. Unit 4: Introduce Chinese Spring Festival to foreign friends

In terms of cultural awareness, the new textbook enhances students' cognition and identification of local culture. The 2024 edition textbook increases the proportion of traditional cultural content. For example, there are introductions to ancient thinkers such as Confucius and Mencius, as well as Chinese traditional festivals (Spring Festival, Dragon Boat Festival), tea culture and other contents. This enables students to understand their own country's culture more systematically and deeply, recognize the profoundness and unique value of local culture, and thus enhance their sense of identity and pride in local culture. In the learning process, students will gradually form a clear understanding of local culture and understand that traditional culture is the spiritual pillar of the nation, laying a foundation for inheriting and promoting local culture. In addition, the new textbook broadens the dimension of understanding foreign culture. When presenting foreign culture, the new textbook pays more attention to the combination with students' actual lives, making it easier for students to understand and feel foreign culture. For example, the new textbook involves relevant knowledge of Western musical instruments such as violins and Chinese musical instruments such as erhu and guzheng,

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including their history, playing methods and status in their respective cultures, allowing students to understand foreign culture from the dimension of music art.

In terms of intercultural communication ability, the new textbook is conducive to improving the accuracy and propriety of students' language use, cultivating students' thinking ability in intercultural communication, and enhancing students' practical ability in intercultural communication. In terms of improving the accuracy and propriety of language use, the 2024 edition textbook pays more attention to the reflection of cultural differences in language expression and text content. For example, in the explanation of vocabulary and grammar, differences in language usage habits under different cultural backgrounds may be integrated. Through learning these contents, students can better understand how to correctly use English expressions in different cultural situations and avoid improper language use due to cultural differences, thereby improving the accuracy and propriety of language use and laying a solid language foundation for intercultural communication. Second, in terms of cultivating thinking ability in intercultural communication. The rich and diverse cultural content and presentation methods in the new textbook encourage students to compare, analyze and think critically. In the learning process, students will continuously compare the similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign cultures and gradually form an intercultural thinking mode. This thinking ability can help students better understand the viewpoints and behaviors of the other party in intercultural communication, respect cultural differences, and communicate effectively. Third, in terms of enhancing the practical ability of intercultural communication. The textbook adds more intercultural communication scenarios and activity designs, such as introducing the Chinese Spring Festival to foreign friends, allowing students to exercise their intercultural communication ability in practice. Through simulating communication scenarios under different cultural backgrounds, students can better master the skills and methods of intercultural communication and improve their ability to deal with intercultural communication situations, making better preparations for real intercultural communication in the future.

In short, compared with the 2012 edition textbook, the 2024 textbook has obvious advantages in cultivating cultural awareness and intercultural communication ability. In terms of cultural awareness, it increases the proportion of local cultural content, enhances students' cognition and identification of local culture, and at the same time broadens the dimension of understanding foreign culture. In terms of intercultural communication ability, it improves the accuracy and propriety of language use, cultivates thinking ability, and enhances practical ability. Through various ways, it makes more sufficient preparations for students' improvement of cultural literacy and intercultural communication.

5.4. Analysis Based on PDZ

Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development holds that learning should be matched with children's development level in a certain way. There are two levels of students' development: one is the actual development level of students, that is, the development level of children's psychological functions established due to certain completed development cycles; the other is the potential development level of students, which is the potential obtained through teaching. The difference between them is the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). The theory of the zone of proximal development inspires teaching to focus on the potential development space of students, based on the existing cultural knowledge level of students, and through teaching activities to guide and help students cross the existing level and achieve more advanced development. The following is a comparative analysis of the cultural themes and presentation methods of the 2024 and 2012 versions of the English textbooks for Grade 7 of the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press based on this theory.

First, in terms of the scope and depth of cultural themes. The cultural themes of the 2012 edition are relatively basic and common, mainly focusing on aspects such as daily life, school, and family. For example, introducing one's classmates and family members allows students to initially understand some basic life scenes and interpersonal relationships in English-speaking countries. These themes are relatively easy for students who are just starting junior high school English to understand and accept, in line with their cognitive level at that time. However, in terms of in-depth exploration and expansion of cultural themes, it is relatively limited. For example, when introducing Western festivals, it may only briefly mention the names of festivals and some basic celebration methods, lacking in-depth discussion of the cultural connotations and historical origins behind the festivals. The cultural themes of the 2024 edition are more diverse and rich, not only covering traditional themes such as daily life, school, and family, but also adding a large amount of content

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related to traditional Chinese culture, popular science explanations, and comparisons between Chinese and Western cultures. For example, there are introductions to traditional Chinese festivals such as the Spring Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival, as well as discussions on the differences in music cultures between China and the West. This kind of theme setting not only allows students to understand the excellent culture of their own nation, enhancing cultural confidence, but also broadens students' cognitive horizons of different cultures. There has been a great improvement in the depth and breadth of cultural themes, which is more conducive to stimulating students' learning interests and exploration desires. It is in line with students' continuously developing cognitive abilities and learning needs in junior high school. It is within the zone of proximal development of students and can guide students to further improve their understanding and recognition of culture.

Second, in terms of the presentation methods of cultural content. The presentation method of cultural content in the 2012 edition is relatively single, mainly presented in the form of texts and dialogues, and there are relatively few auxiliary materials such as pictures. Although this presentation method can directly convey cultural information, it may lack sufficient attractiveness and interest for students, making it difficult for students to deeply understand and feel the charm of culture. Moreover, there is also a deficiency in knowledge expansion and extension. In the learning process, students may only passively accept knowledge and lack opportunities for active thinking and exploration. The 2024 edition is more diversified and vivid in presentation methods. In addition to traditional texts and dialogues, a large number of multimedia resources such as pictures, charts, audio, and video are added, allowing students to more intuitively feel the characteristics and charm of different cultures. For example, when introducing the differences between Western rock music and Chinese erhu music, the textbook not only has text descriptions but also is accompanied by relevant music clips, allowing students to listen to the different styles of the two kinds of music. At the same time, the textbook also sets up many interactive activities and tasks, such as group discussions and cultural comparison analyses, encouraging students to actively participate, exert their subjective initiative, and improve their understanding and application ability of culture in practice. This presentation method is more in line with students' learning characteristics and cognitive laws, can effectively stimulate students' learning interests and enthusiasm, help students better cross the zone of proximal development, and improve their cultural literacy.

Third, in terms of the emphasis on cultural comparison. In the 2012 edition, although there are some simple comparisons between Chinese and Western cultures, they are not systematic and in-depth enough. For example, in terms of food culture, it may only simply list some foods in China and the West, without in-depth analysis of the differences in dietary concepts and cooking methods behind them. This kind of comparison method is difficult for students to truly understand the essential differences between Chinese and Western cultures and has limited effects on cultivating students' intercultural communication abilities. The 2024 edition pays more attention to the comparison and integration of Chinese and Western cultures, guiding students to deeply think about the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western cultures through specific cases and activities. For example, in the textbook, some comparisons of celebration methods of Chinese and Western festivals are set up, allowing students to analyze the differences in cultural connotations and value concepts behind different festivals, so as to better understand the mutual influence and integration between different cultures. This kind of cultural comparison presentation method helps students continuously think and reflect during the learning process, improves students' intercultural communication awareness and ability, and enables students to conduct effective communication and exchanges between different cultures, in line with students' development needs in cross-cultural learning.

In conclusion, the 2024 edition of the English textbook for Grade 7 of the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press is significantly superior to the 2012 edition in terms of cultural themes and the presentation of cultural content. Based on the theory of the zone of proximal development, the 2024 edition has a more diverse and profound theme scope, a more attractive and interactive presentation method, and a more in-depth emphasis on cultural comparison. These advantages enable students to better cross the existing level based on their existing cultural knowledge, stimulate their learning interest, enhance their cultural literacy and cross-cultural communication skills, and meet the cognitive needs of students during the junior high school stage.

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6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This part mainly summarizes the main findings of the research. It puts forward reasonable suggestions for the future development of textbooks. And it also summarizes the deficiencies of the research and the directions for future research.

6.1. Key Findings

By comparing the new and old version of textbooks, similarity and difference are identified across four aspects: cultural themes, presentation of cultural content, comparison and integration of cultures, and orientation of cultivating thinking.

6.1.1. Cultural themes

The 2012 textbook's cultural themes are relatively basic and common, mainly focusing on topics about daily life, school, and family. This simplicity suits junior high school English beginners, aligning with their initial cognitive abilities. However, it falls short in delivering deeper into and expanding cultural themes. For instance, when introducing Western festivals, it merely lists festival names and basic celebration methods, neglecting in-depth exploration of cultural connotations and historical origins.

Conversely, the 2024 textbook offers a comparatively diverse and abundant range of cultural themes. It encompasses traditional themes and incorporates a wealth of content related to traditional Chinese culture. Detailed introductions to festivals like the Spring Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival help students enhance their cultural confidence and understand their national heritage. Furthermore, the textbook covers themes of popular science explanations and cross-cultural comparisons. Discussions on the differences in Chinese and Western music cultures, for instance, broaden students' cultural horizons.

6.1.2. Presentation of Cultural Content

The 2012 textbook presents cultural content in a relatively monotonous way, primarily through texts and dialogues, with few supplementary materials like pictures. While this approach can convey cultural information directly, it lacked appeal and interest, making it hard for students to truly appreciate the charms of different cultures. Moreover, there is limit knowledge expansion, and it is not applicable for active learning.

Oppositely, the 2024 textbook presents cultural content in a more diverse and vivid manner. Besides traditional texts and dialogues, it incorporates numerous multimedia resources like pictures, charts, audio, and video. This enables students to have a more intuitive perception of the characteristics and charm of various cultures. When introducing different music styles between China and the West, for instance, relevant music clips are provided for learners to directly perceive the differences. The textbook also lists many interactive activities and tasks, such as group discussions and cultural comparison analyses. These encourages students to actively participate, exercise their initiative, and improve their practical understanding and application of cultural knowledge.

6.1.3. Comparison and Integration of Cultures

The 2012 textbook does compare Chinese and foreign cultures to some extent, but the comparison is limited in scope, lacking systematic depth. It merely focuses on simple cultural phenomena, such as festival celebration methods and food culture differences.

The 2024 textbook stresses on the comparison and integration of Chinese and Western cultures. Through specific cases and activities, it guides students to think deeply about the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western cultures. Comparing festival celebration methods and analyzing cultural connotations and value concepts helps students improve their intercultural communication awareness and skills. This enables them to communicate effectively across cultures and better meet the cognitive development needs within their zone of proximal development.

6.1.4. Orientation of Cultivating Thinking

The 2012 textbook focuses more language knowledge transfer and basic cultural information comprehension, with relatively little emphasis on cultivating students' thinking abilities. During learning, students passively receive cultural knowledge.

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The 2024 textbook, however, emphasizes the cultivation of students' thinking abilities, particularly critical and innovative thinking. When presenting cultural content, it provides open-ended questions and discussion topics. These encourage students to express their views, promoting independent thinking and innovation.

6.2. Recommendations for Textbook Developments

This study mainly puts forward some suggestions for the development of future textbooks from three aspects: the selection of cultural themes, the presentation methods of cultural content, and the in-depth exploration of culture.

6.2.1. Cultural Theme Selection

The selection of textbook themes should focus on three aspects: diversity and comprehensiveness, timeliness and relevance, and coherence and systematization of themes. Diversity and comprehensiveness require that textbooks should cover a wider range of cultural themes. Not only should they include traditional Western cultures such as those of the United Kingdom and the United States, but they should also increase the introduction of cultures of other non-English-speaking countries, such as those in Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe, so that students can understand the diversity of world cultures. At the same time, we should further dig deeper into different aspects of Chinese culture, such as traditional philosophical thoughts, folk crafts, and local characteristic cultures, to enhance students' understanding and recognition of local culture. For example, special units can be set up to introduce Chinese Taoism and Confucianism, or ethnic minority areas with unique cultures. Timeliness and relevance require that cultural themes should be closely combined with current social hotspots and development trends of the times, so that students can connect English learning with real life. For example, introducing themes such as artificial intelligence, sustainable development, and social media, and discussing people's views and practices on these issues under different cultural backgrounds to cultivate students' cross-cultural thinking ability and attention to global issues. The coherence and systematization of themes require that the arrangement of cultural themes in textbooks should have a certain degree of coherence and systematization, guiding students to gradually understand different cultures in depth from easy to difficult and from shallow to deep. For example, relevant themes can be classified and connected according to different dimensions of culture, such as values, lifestyles, and art forms, to help students establish an overall cognitive framework of culture.

6.2.2. Presentation Methods of Cultural Content

This part pays attention to the presentation methods of situational presentation, comparative presentation, multimedia fusion presentation, and practice activity-guided presentation. Situational presentation presents cultural content by creating rich situations, allowing students to feel and understand culture in specific situations. For example, in the form of stories, dialogues, and short essays, describe people's living scenes, social activities, and family relationships under different cultural backgrounds, making students feel as if they are in it and enhancing their perceptual understanding of culture. Or set up some virtual cultural experience activities, such as allowing students to simulate participating in British afternoon tea or American Thanksgiving dinner, and experience cultural differences in practice. Comparative presentation requires strengthening the comparative presentation of Chinese and foreign cultures, so that students can clearly see the similarities and differences between different cultures. For example, when introducing Western festival culture, compare the corresponding festivals in China at the same time, and analyze the differences in origin, celebration methods, and cultural connotations to help students better understand the diversity and uniqueness of culture and cultivate their cross-cultural communication awareness and critical thinking ability. Multimedia fusion presentation fully utilizes multimedia technologies such as pictures, audio, and video to enrich the presentation forms of cultural content. For example, when explaining the architectural culture of a certain country, pictures and videos of related buildings can be inserted to allow students to intuitively feel the style and characteristics of the architecture; when introducing music culture, play music clips of different styles to allow students to appreciate and experience. We can also develop supporting electronic textbooks or online learning platforms to provide more multimedia resources and interactive learning functions. Practice activity-guided presentation requires that textbooks should set up more practical activities related to cultural themes to guide students to deeply understand and experience culture through practice. For example, organize students

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to carry out cultural research, cultural project presentations, and cultural theme speeches, so that students can express their understanding and views on culture in practice and improve their language application ability and cultural literacy. Or arrange some cultural exchange activities, such as online exchanges with students from foreign schools to share each other's cultural experiences and enhance students' cross-cultural communication ability.

6.2.3. In-depth Exploration of Culture

This part pays attention to in-depth analysis of cultural connotations, in-depth narration of cultural stories, and reflection and summary of cultural experiences. In-depth analysis of cultural connotations requires not only staying on the surface presentation of cultural phenomena, but also deeply digging into the connotations, values, historical backgrounds, etc. behind culture. For example, when introducing Western democratic systems, objectively analyze its historical background, development process, and existing problems to help students form a comprehensive understanding; when explaining traditional Chinese culture, deeply interpret the philosophical thoughts and moral concepts it contains to enable students to truly understand the essence of culture. In-depth narration of cultural stories means that by telling vivid cultural stories, students can better understand the inheritance and development of culture. For example, some Western myths and legends, historical stories, and Chinese folk tales and historical allusions can be told to let students feel the charm and power of culture in the stories. At the same time, students are encouraged to adapt, continue, or create cultural stories to cultivate their innovative thinking and cultural expression ability. Reflection and summary of cultural experiences means that after students carry out cultural experience activities, guide them to reflect and summarize to help them raise perceptual understanding to rational understanding. For example, after students complete a cultural research activity, organize them to discuss and exchange, share their discoveries and feelings, analyze the differences and commonalities between different cultures, and how to better understand and respect others in cross-cultural communication.

6.3. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This part mainly summarizes the deficiencies of the research and puts forward reasonable suggestions for future research directions.

6.3.1. Research Limitations

The main shortcomings of this research are manifested in three aspects: sample limitations, limited analysis dimensions, and single data collection methods.

First, the selected samples in this research are limited. This research only focuses on the English textbooks for grade seven published by FLTRP. It lacks comparative analysis for the entire junior high school stage or other versions of textbooks, and may not be able to fully reflect the overall situation of the presentation of Chinese and foreign cultures in junior high school English textbooks. The research object only covers two versions of textbooks, and the number of samples is relatively small, which may have certain limitations and affect the universality and representativeness of the research results. Second, the analysis dimensions of this research are limited. In the analysis of cultural themes and content presentation methods, although aspects such as texts, pictures, exercises, and activities are involved, other important dimensions may be ignored, such as the impact of supporting resources of textbooks and teachers' teaching methods on cultural presentation. The analysis of cultural content mainly focuses on the surface themes and presentation forms, and may not be able to deeply dig into the deep connotations such as values and thinking modes behind culture. Third, the data collection method of this research is relatively single. This research mainly uses content analysis to analyze textbooks, and the data collection method is relatively single. It may not be able to comprehensively and accurately capture all aspects of cultural presentation in textbooks, and may also be affected by the subjective factors of researchers. There is a lack of collection of actual feedback from students and teachers, so it is impossible to understand their feelings and evaluations of the cultural content in textbooks and the actual application situation in the teaching process.

6.3.2. Future Research Directions

First, the research scope can be expanded to conduct comparative analysis on junior high school English textbooks of different versions and grades to comprehensively understand the characteristics and changing trends of the presentation of Chinese and foreign cultures in junior high school English textbooks. The

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research scope can be extended to primary school and high school English textbooks to explore the continuity and coherence of cultural presentation in English textbooks at different stages. Second, analysis dimensions can be enriched. Comprehensively consider the influence of multiple aspects of textbooks, such as textbook compilation concepts, teaching objectives, and evaluation methods on cultural presentation. Deeply dig into the deep connotations such as values and thinking modes behind cultural content, as well as the role of cultural presentation in cultivating students' intercultural communication ability and cultural literacy. Finally, diversified data collection methods can be adopted. Combine methods such as questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations to collect feedback and evaluations from students, teachers, and experts on the cultural content in textbooks to more comprehensively understand the actual application effect of textbooks. Use technical means such as big data analysis to conduct deeper excavation and analysis of the cultural content in textbooks to improve the accuracy and scientific nature of research.

In conclusion, although this research has conducted a comparative analysis of the presentation methods of Chinese and foreign cultural themes and cultural content in the 2012 and 2024 editions of FLTRP's English textbooks for grade seven, there are still some deficiencies. Future research can be further deepened in expanding the research scope, enriching analysis dimensions, and adopting diversified data collection methods to provide stronger support for the optimization of cultural presentation in junior high school English textbooks and the cultivation of students' intercultural communication ability.

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