

# ***Interculturality in Mandarin Teaching in China and in the UK***

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**Abstract:** The primary goal of the research is to compare and contrast the interculturality of Mandarin instruction in China and the United Kingdom. The qualitative research approach was used in this investigation. The majority of the information was obtained from the CNKI and Google scholar. It was conducted using the following keywords: interculturality, Mandarin teaching, cross-cultural teaching, differences, China, United Kingdom, and interculturality. There were 16 Chinese documents and 5 English papers recovered from the archives. The research relied on secondary sources and theme analysis to complete its objectives. Interculturality provides opportunities for individuals to have a better understanding of others' cultures in a tolerant manner. Interculturality has the potential to improve the accommodation of cultural differences. Mandarin instructors are acclimated to the foreign living if they have understanding of interculturality and are familiar with the traditions of the country they are teaching in. It is preferable for Mandarin instructors to get more quickly acclimated to the life of teaching so that they may devote more time to teaching students and less time to dealing with culture shock. Learning Mandarin allows students to synthesize distinctions between their own culture and the cultures of other nations, allowing them to appreciate the positive parts of other cultures. This is accomplished via the process of learning the cultures of other countries.

**Keywords:** Interculturality, Mandarin teaching.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Background**

Regarding the historical context of Mandarin teaching throughout the globe, the number of Mandarin learners has been increasing in recent years. Many students are eager to study Mandarin as a second language at a variety of colleges across a variety of different countries. There were 258 Confucius Colleges across the globe till 2012, and 500 Confucius courses were spread in 105 nations and locations, indicating that Mandarin instructors are in high demand in Confucius Colleges (Ge). As a result, the training and selection of Mandarin instructors becomes the most important issue to be covered in the discussion. Many academic sessions are devoted to the search for creative teaching approaches and the development of various teaching models. Mandarin instructors are no exception. They develop the translation teaching technique, which demonstrates

that Mandarin instructors have a good and sincere attitude toward Mandarin instruction, since the translation teaching method is useful for students in learning the Mandarin language. Furthermore, Chinese students who have lived in the United Kingdom may achieve superior results while learning Mandarin than non-Chinese students since they are subjected to greater expectations and pressure.

Mandarin is used all throughout the globe, particularly in China and the United Kingdom, to communicate. However, the backgrounds of Mandarin teachers in China and the United Kingdom are rather different. Mandarin instruction began in China in 1950, and the first Mandarin lessons for exchange students were offered at Tsinghua University in Beijing. Mandarin learners in the United Kingdom obtained their Mandarin instruction at weekend schools founded by Chinese immigrants who resided in the country decades ago, rather than in mainstream institutions. With the rise of China, however, the government and academics started to broaden the scope of Mandarin instruction. Nowadays, Mandarin learners have the option of choosing a Mandarin major at institutions, but in the United Kingdom, they are more likely to pick a Mandarin major that is paired with another topic. Additionally, Mandarin learners may participate in language examinations to determine their proficiency in Mandarin, such as the HSK and GCSE. Furthermore, A-level is reserved for Chinese students who reside in the United Kingdom since A-level is the most challenging Mandarin examination, and only Mandarin learners who are immersed in a Chinese cultural environment have an easier time passing the test. The importance of interculturality in Mandarin teaching cannot be overstated in any country. In order to fill the gap between prior articles published by others, it is required to do research. It is common to read suggestions on ways to enhance Mandarin teaching in the United Kingdom, such as outlining the qualities of Mandarin teaching in other parts of the world. However, it is uncommon to find a comparison between Mandarin teaching in China and the United Kingdom, as well as how interculturality affects Mandarin teaching in both China and the United Kingdom.

## 1.2. Research Questions

1. What are differences of interculturality applied in Mandarin teaching between the UK and China?
2. What are the advantages of interculturality in Mandarin teaching in the UK?
3. What is the effect of interculturality in the UK and in China?

## 2. Literature Review

The influence of interculturality on language acquisition is well documented. Using the example of Grimshaw, we can see that an interculturally oriented approach to language teaching and learning is always concerned with two important characteristics of language teaching practice [1]. There are several reasons for this, the first of which is that the classroom must be recognized as a cultural context in which a pedagogy of intercultural teaching and learning can be developed in which teachers' and learners' experiences and expectations are shaped by the linguistic and cultural backgrounds that each individual brings to the classroom. In an intercultural language pedagogy, the second crucial factor is the realization that there are always at least two languages in play at any given time: the target language and the first language(s) of the students [2].

Furthermore, interculturality has an impact on Mandarin instruction in both China and the United Kingdom. The changing relationship between Europe and China, particularly with regard to the relative intercultural influence and reach of each continent, according to Jin, has made it more important in recent years to place greater emphasis on understandings of interculturality from the perspective of learning Mandarin[2]. It also occurs as a result of the changing context of contemporary foreign language study in the United Kingdom, and as a reaction to that setting,

Examples include the huge growth in the number of Chinese inhabitants in the United Kingdom, as well as the number of Chinese tourists to the country in recent years, particularly students. Chinese National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, which sponsors the Confucius Institutes, is the primary sponsor. The Confucius Institutes' mission is to promote the Chinese language on a global scale and to assist Chinese language programs at educational institutions located outside of China. As part of his official state visit to China in September 2015, George Osborne, the then British Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced a £10 million investment to support the teaching of Mandarin in English schools, with the goal of having 5,000 additional Mandarin learners in English schools by 2020.

### **3. Methodology**

Interculturality cannot be measured with data, because the differences of interculturality in Mandarin teaching depends on how people apply the interculturality to Mandarin teaching. In order to save cost and time, this study chooses qualitative methods to obtain data from other researchers' articles and select the required information.

The study adopted secondary data and used thematic analysis, collecting 12 articles. Those review articles were examined by the researcher, both in China and in the United Kingdom, from a variety of authors with differing viewpoints. This study is organized and compared, and two themes are summarized.

#### **3.1. Data Collection**

The data was mainly retrieved from CNKI and Google scholar. The search was done with the following key words: interculturality, Mandarin teaching, cross-cultural teaching, differences, China and UK. 16 Chinese papers and 5 English papers were retrieved.

#### **3.2. Data analysis**

The study adopted secondary data and used thematic analysis. The following themes were retrieved.

Theme one: Interculturality exists in the whole process of Mandarin learning both in the UK and in China.

Theme two: Interculturality applied in Mandarin teaching in the UK is focused on the classes or activities in school days.

### **4. Findings and Discussion**

#### **4.1. The Differences of Interculturality Applied in Mandarin Teaching Between the UK and China**

As for the college students who study Mandarin in China, they receive a teaching method that combines the theory and practice [2]. In Gu study, it was concluded that the Chinese cultural theory classes in Xinjiang Normal University are divided into three categories: "Chinese Culture", "Studies of Chinese ancient civilization" and "One Thousand Character Primer" [3]. The first category -Chinese Culture is suitable for the beginners of Mandarin, which can help them to deepen the understanding Chinese culture from macrocosm and microcosm perspective because Mandarin learners can study further and find practical topics of textbooks to improve their basic understanding of Chinese culture. The second category-Studies of Chinese ancient civilization is suitable for the intermediate level of Mandarin learners. Some interesting stories in textbook can arouse learners' interest and improve the language skills. The third category-One Thousand Character Primer is provided for the advanced Mandarin learners. The context was taught by the

lecture and it includes many literary quotations which requires the Mandarin learners to have the related cultural context. These three modes are influenced by Confucian teaching in accordance with their aptitude. Each student can choose the most suitable level to learn.

Besides, Mandarin learners in Chinese Universities can enjoy the practical courses which is divided into the two parts. One is the in-class practice class, another is the extracurricular practice classes. As for the in-class practice class, students have the compulsory courses and the optional courses. Tea arts, paper cutting, Chinese-styled music and Tai Chi are provided in the required courses. Students can be immersed in the whole process of the cultural experiences. For example, teachers will explain the main knowledge of tea to students shaping the relaxing environment to teach them how to make a tea, which can deepen the understanding of the tea art. Then Chinese music courses can provide the platform of admiring the Chinese folk songs and dance music, opera music, Chinese modern music and national instrumental music [4]. Through these cultural practice classes, students can comprehend the Chinese folk activities and Chinese traditional customs. As for the extracurricular practice classes, students learn Mandarin as a team. Clubs are the paradise for students to mimic and study. Furthermore, they can learn the calligraphy, Chinese painting and handcraft in the club where teachers are the leading role to instruct students how to complete the cultural activities and students have opportunities to see a variety of finished products of other students broadening their horizon.

In China, Mandarin teaching classes are tailored in students of different levels and students can apply theories into the activities, which shows that Mandarin teaching in China focuses on the Mandarin practice. However, the courses offered by the Confucius Institute in the University of Hull in the UK are divided into three forms: teaching, communication and experience. Hu said that the Confucius Institute in the University of Hull launches the "Chinese Language & Culture Day" activities combining the situation of the region, which extends to the neighborhood and localize the Chinese cultural activities. During school days, clubs can be regarded as the interaction forms for communication and discussion [5].

#### **4.2. Interculturality Applied in Mandarin Teaching in the UK is Focused on Activities in Festivals**

In festivals, Mandarin learner who study in the university in China experience Chinese traditional customs in details. For example, students are normally invited to attend "Qingming Poetry" which is a reciting activity held at Confucian Temple in Qingming Festival and includes dragon boat races and making traditional Chinese rice-pudding. In the UK, the universities give students Open days to do Chinese cultural activities. The students are not confined to the universities outreaching to the community and neighborhood. In the open day, local UK residents attend Chinese traditional performance like Wushi in Dragon Boat Festival and making the moon cakes in mid-Autumn Festival. Thus, Mandarin learners in China can have a cultural experience in the local family and grand activities held by universities and communities knowing Chinese culture from different perspective. students who study Mandarin in the UK can only be immersed in the activities held by organizations and comprehend the Chinese culture by the technological means like listening the folk music online but they can combine the Chinese culture and own culture showing their strong individual consciousness.

Learning Mandarin in China can improve the communication ability with others especially for the competence of interculturality [6]. Therefore, the promotion degree of interculturality for children who study Mandarin in China is based on their local experience and the company of their Chinese friends. In festivals, children who learn Mandarin in the UK can dress some costumes to join in the activities and they can organize the festive activities in advance such as pasting couplets, doing paper cutting, having New Year greetings and holding dragon and lion dance.

### 4.3. The Advantages of Interculturality in Mandarin Teaching in the UK

Firstly, the interaction in classes of Mandarin teaching is more active in the UK. Song said that British primary and secondary school students have strong practical ability because each teacher has their own classroom and environment [7]. At the same time, the Chinese sections in the high schools in the UK are endowed with the Chinese culture environment with red lanterns hanging around the classroom, paper-cutting clinging to the wall and Chinese landscape paintings sticking to the wall, which make students to be immersed in the Chinese atmosphere. In the Mandarin classes of teaching Chinese landscape paintings, students can tap their imagination to combine theory taught by teachers to create their own painting [8]. Teachers can choose the paintings of students to show in the classroom so that many students can admire the various types of paintings. Besides, students in the Scottish primary and secondary school are extroverted and interact with teachers. In the UK, students are active to raise hands to answer questions of teachers and they are quite interested in playing games with other students, which shows that the students class participation are high and students are motivated to interact with teachers.

In the UK's primary and secondary school, teachers use the thematic and dramatic teaching methods because teachers can adopt the suitable teaching methods to the students who study Mandarin in the UK as the International Chinese teachers. teachers must find the innovative teaching methods in teaching Mandarin in the UK, so they can teach students in the most relaxed mood in order to have effective classes [9]. All early learning is through play and experiment. Furthermore, students can gain the strong ability of empathy by playing the role in the literature, which can make the virtual environment for students to boost their understanding.

Teachers can guide students to understand knowledge related to Mandarin and output in the way of drama performance, which can better promote the enthusiasm of students to learn Mandarin. The drama teaching methods can improve the oral ability of students to express Mandarin and strengthen the relationship between teachers and students. Class performances and the class interaction influence the attitude towards Mandarin teaching, for teachers who are concerned to be successful in teaching students Mandarin in the UK [10].

Students who learn Mandarin in the UK, use Mandarin to study Mandarin. Wang and Higgins posit that the motivation of students who study Mandarin in the UK is getting enriching knowledge [11]. China's vast territory, abundant resources, rich tourism resources and long history and culture are strong for the Chinese learners. The most practical use of learning Mandarin is for tourist communication. Besides, the majority of students who study Mandarin in the UK major in management and sociology so that Mandarin is the main communication language. Based on the major, students who learn Mandarin in the UK have exact purposes to find jobs, which can spur them to master Mandarin in efficient way. China is the great business market in the world to offer some jobs for students so that learning Mandarin can help them to gain more opportunities. For example, adults who get MBA are more desirous to speak Mandarin well because it is convenient for them to do their business although they have other things to do in daily routine.

In the Chinese cultural classes, some teachers are used to traditional and modern elements because Chinese culture not only includes the traditional elements but also some outstanding works in the modern times. Wang and Higgins noted that Mandarin learners watch some domestic films to learn splendid qualities of characters and teachers use some movie plots to design games for students to admire and interact each other even sometimes to make comparison. Wang and Higgins found that Mandarin learners are more confident in speaking Mandarin so that they have many chances to touch with Chinese exploring the speaking ways of Chinese [11]. where they are proficient in Mandarin, they tend to read some Chinese classic books like Journey to the west to admire Chinese culture in different angles.



The curiosity towards Chinese culture and customs can make Mandarin learners in the UK to study the different customs of China. Mandarin learners in the UK urge to join in the intercultural exchange program because they not only make Chinese friends but also enhance the cultural identity. In the exchange program, Mandarin learners accept Chinese culture gradually and they can achieve the goal of understanding China in deeper way [12]. As exchange students, they can participate in the local festive activities to shape their own judgement towards Chinese culture. If they have affection on Chinese culture, they are likely to be Chinese cultural ambassador. Mandarin learners who are engaged in the intercultural exchange programs follow a rule that is to interact equally, mutual learning and respect different culture.

Besides, the Internet adds the innovation into the Mandarin teaching context and methods because the technological image increase the enjoyment and attraction for Mandarin learners. In addition, some comments and interaction can enhance the depth of thoughts and promote the cultural interaction [1]. In the intercultural exchange program, Mandarin learners can gradually eliminate the ideological education barriers brought by differences and understand Chinese culture by themselves to reach the purposes of perceiving China comprehensively. Therefore, the intercultural exchange program can cultivate the intercultural consciousness of Mandarin learners due to the strong curiosity towards China.

#### **4.4. The Effect of Interculturality in the UK and in China**

The interculturality effectiveness level is divided into two parts: One is the motivation of students in Mandarin study, another is the Mandarin speaking fluency. In the UK, Mandarin learners are willing to study Mandarin and they are fond of studying Mandarin because they think it is compelling and intriguing to have Mandarin classes, which means the situation of learning Mandarin in the UK is optimistic. Jin expressed that students who study Mandarin are willing to learn Mandarin with a variety of teaching methods especially for the form of launching the Chinese culture activities because they can be attracted to gain the cultural knowledge [13].

In the UK, there are overseas Chinese students who settle down in the UK but grow up around Chinese cultural environment, and Chinese educational ways and do not have strong willingness to learn Mandarin from internal heart. Furthermore, they learn Mandarin from external stimulating factors unlike non-Chinese students who are more active to study Mandarin from their own heart in the class because they want to keep the consistency with their British classmates in speaking English due to the different skin colors leading to a result that they lose passion on studying Chinese culture in the school [14]. Therefore, most Mandarin learners in the UK have strong willingness to study Mandarin although a small number of overseas Chinese students do not have the same willingness as non-Chinese students. As for the situation of students who study Mandarin in China, Mandarin learners hope to strengthen the grammar, vocabulary and characters and have less cultural classes when their Chinese proficiency improves because they are under pressure of the examination that can check their Mandarin learning.

Many Mandarin learners can suit the teaching speed of Mandarin teachers so that they can seek the example when they speak Mandarin because they can pronounce clearly when they find the moderate speaking speed. Therefore, it is optimistic for Mandarin learners to have the accurate pronunciation in the UK due to the high quality of Mandarin teachers and their subjective feelings towards Mandarin [15]. In China, many Mandarin learners are keen on communicating with Chinese students. However, many Chinese students are likely to speak their own dialect. In class, Mandarin teachers pay attention to their dialect and control their accents when they teach new words [16]. Mandarin learners can get the timely correction when they do not pronounce correctly in class. After class, they may not notice their own dialect affected by their classmates when they talk in daily routines. However, Mandarin learners in China are in the environment filled with Mandarin

so that they can have more practices of speaking Mandarin to have fluent spoken Mandarin and local intonation. In China, Mandarin learners pursue the speaking speed of Mandarin and the normal communication with local students or local people, which leads a result that they may overlook the details of pronunciation and have the local dialect when they communicate with others.

## 5. Conclusion

Interculturality can only occur when two or more distinct cultures come together in one place. It is true that people have right attitudes toward discrepant and contradictory cultural phenomena and practices, but it is also true that individuals have differing viewpoints about the cultures of various ethnic groups and nations. Interculturality provides opportunities for individuals to have a better understanding of others' cultures in a tolerant manner. Furthermore, interculturality is vital in the teaching of Mandarin. Because they can understand Chinese culture and grasp certain Chinese practices in depth rapidly and from an equal standpoint, it is simpler for Mandarin learners to see other cultures from a fair perspective and avoid developing prejudices against Chinese culture. Second, interculturality has the potential to improve the accommodation of cultural differences. Mandarin instructors are acclimated to the foreign living if they have understanding of interculturality and are familiar with the traditions of the country they are teaching in. It is preferable for Mandarin instructors to get more quickly acclimated to the life of teaching so that they may devote more time to teaching students and less time to dealing with culture shock. Furthermore, interculturality assists individuals in absorbing the benefits of various cultures since they are able to comprehend the qualities of other cultures. Learning Mandarin allows students to synthesize distinctions between their own culture and the cultures of other nations, allowing them to appreciate the positive parts of other cultures. This is accomplished via the process of learning the cultures of other countries. Finally, interculturality has the potential to extend people's perspectives and increase their intercultural communication skills. For example, Mandarin learners may obtain an understanding of the local culture and have the opportunity to engage with local people from an intercultural viewpoint by studying the local language.

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