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ENHANCING INTERCULTURAL  
COMMUNICATION IN TEACHING  
CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE –  
AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

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Ph.D

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

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The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

The Department of Chinese and Bilingual Studies

Enhancing Intercultural Communication in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign  
Language – An Action Research Study

Ip, Wei Hing

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

October, 2015

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\_\_\_\_\_ (Signed)

Ip, Wei Hing \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of student)

For the Ip and Rosenkvist Families.

## ABSTRACT

Enhancing Intercultural Communication in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language –

An Action Research Study

By Ip, Wei Hing

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy in Applied Linguistics

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 2015

Over the past few decades, the rapid development of information communication technology, internationalization and globalization worldwide have required a shift in the focus of Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) towards competence in intercultural communication in which the role of culture in the acquisition of CFL and in the pragmatic use of the language is emphasized and promoted. However, most of the current research in this academic area remains only on a theoretical level. Practical examples, particularly with regard to distance learning/teaching of the Chinese language, are very limited. This motivated the implementation of an action research study which aimed at exploring the possibilities and limitations of integrating Chinese culture and applying intercultural communication theory into a contemporary distance CFL course for beginners. By observing and comparing the performance of subjects in the control and experimental groups, this action research study focuses on exploring three basic areas. Firstly, it discloses the cultural elements which underlie effective daily communication. Secondly, it investigates how students acquire cultural knowledge and develop their ability to competently communicate in the target course. And thirdly, it evaluates how the modified course syllabus could enhance students' intercultural communicative competence. The findings of the research aim to serve as both a resource and reference for educators and researchers who are interested in carrying out reforms and research in this academic domain.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s, along with the growth of globalization and internationalization, the objectives of foreign language education have been changing from traditional functionalism to “intercultural competence”, in which learners’ cross-cultural communication skills are developed in order to match the growing need for intercultural understanding in the increasingly globalized world. In response to this challenge, linguists and other scholars have established new paradigms and conducted research regarding intercultural communication in foreign language education which is now regarded as an alternative to previous forms of foreign language teaching.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The role of culture has been discussed in all academic disciplines. For example, Gardiner and Kosmitzki (2002) use a wide range of case studies in their book to demonstrate how cross-cultural differences have shaped human development among nations. The important role of culture in language development has been elaborated by sociolinguistics (Borden, 1991; Fasold, 1990; Halliday, 1975; and Hymes, 1972). Robinson Pant (2005) suggests that as a response to the rapid growth of globalization and internationalization, cross-cultural differences in research should be taken into consideration in higher education. Castellotti and Moore (2002) draw the reader’s attention to the foreign language policies in Europe which go from linguistic diversity towards plurilingual education. Geogiou (2009) comments that foreign language learning is one of the political dimensions in a nation and suggests that the ultimate goal of foreign language learning is to educate global citizens. Ingram and his colleagues (Ingram et al, 2009) provide research in their book regarding the relationship between language education and cross-cultural attitudes, serving as an important reference in this academic field. Many scholars and educators endeavor to promote and emphasize the need of developing the learner’s intercultural communicative competence in second and foreign language education, such as Byram (1997), Byram and Morgan (1994), Byram, Gribkova and Starkey (2002), Crozet and Liddicoat (1999), Damen (1987), Hofstede (1986), Kramsch (1993), Met (1993), Ros i Sol’e (2003), Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006) and Van Ek (1976). A case study regarding how intercultural communicative competence could be enhanced through curriculum design was given by Gao and Huang (2010). O’Dowd (2000, 2005, 2007) has presented his experiences teaching intercultural competence through distance

## 1.1 THE ADVOCACY OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN TEACHING CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Similar to instruction in other foreign languages, the intercultural communication perspective in teaching Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) and its implementation are still quite a new trend under development. Prior to the 1980s, research related to CFL education in China mainly focused on the structure of the Chinese language and emphasized teaching the five language skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation (Li, Q., 2006). From the 1960s to the 1970s, the rise of sociolinguistics gradually changed scholars' attitudes towards the communicative approaches (i.e., functional-notional syllabus) of teaching foreign languages. In the 1980s, because of the bloom of cultural studies in the West, a controversial debate arose with regard to intercultural communication in teaching CFL in China.<sup>2</sup> The relationship between culture and language was widely discussed and the importance of promoting approaches which focused on intercultural communication in CFL education was highlighted (Bi, J. & Zhang, Z. 1991).

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education. Ruane (1999) and Sercu (1998, 2002, 2005) focus on teacher training in response to teaching both culture and intercultural communicative competence in foreign language education.

<sup>2</sup> Scholars, Hu, W. (1999), Jia, R. (1997), Lin, D. & Xie, C. (2005) and Zhang, Z. (1990, 1994), give an introduction to intercultural communication. Others, such as Bi, J. (2009), Chen, G. (1992), Chen, J. (1994), Chen, S. (2001), Li, R. (1993) and Peng, Z. (2007), endeavor to discuss the importance of introducing intercultural communicative competence in second and foreign language education. More specific discussions regarding teaching culture or intercultural communication in CFL education are presented by Bi, J. & Zhang, D. (1994), Chen, G. (1997), Li, X. (2006, 2007), Lü, B. (1992), Wu, W. (2006), Wu, W. (2008), Yuan, X. (2003), Zhang, Y. (1994), Zhou, J. (2000) and Zhou, S. (2009). Some scholars, such as Bi, J. & Zhang, Z. (1991), Li, Q. (2006), Lin, G. (1996), Lin, G. (1997), Liu, J. (2004), Lu, W. (1996), Wei, C., & Bian, J. (1992), Xu, J. (2000), Zhao, J. (2008), Zhao, X. (1989), Zhao, X. (1992) and Zhang, Y. (2004), have proposed different approaches, curricula, strategies and contents for teaching culture or intercultural communication in CFL education.

In the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it has come to a consensus that intercultural communicative theories should be a key feature of CFL education. This consensus has been reflected in official materials towards the end of the first decade, when in 2007, *Standards for Teachers of Chinese to Speakers of Other languages*<sup>3</sup> and *Chinese Language Proficiency Scales for Speakers of Other Languages*<sup>4</sup> were published by the Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban) in order to promote the professional quality and teaching level of international Chinese language teachers. The second of the Standards' five modules concerns "Cultures and Communications" and is further divided into two parts: "Chinese Cultures" and "Comparisons between Chinese Culture and Foreign Cultures, as well as its Cross-Cultural Communications". In 2008, the *International Curriculum for Chinese Language Education* was published, which serves as "a practical guidance in international Chinese education, elaborating in detail the different levels of linguistic skills, knowledge, strategies and cultural awareness required by curriculum and the learners"<sup>5</sup>. Yet while the official sanctioning of the emphasis on culture in the CFL education sets new principles and guidelines for academic and related professions, practical instructions regarding how exactly to teach

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<sup>3</sup> The Office of Chinese Language Council International (2007b), *Standards for Teachers of Chinese to Speakers of Other languages*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

<sup>4</sup> The Office of Chinese Language Council International (2007a), *Chinese Language Proficiency Scales for Speakers of Other Languages*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

<sup>5</sup> Please see p. I in the introduction chapter. The Office of Chinese Language Council International (2008), *International Curriculum for Chinese Language Education*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

the Chinese language in a new, cross-cultural way are left blank for educators to explore.

## 1.2 A NEW MODE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING CFL EDUCATION – THE ONGOING DISCUSSIONS

After the announcement of the Standards, concerns indeed emerged about how to implement the new intercultural communication perspective into viable CFL education. These concerns have not yet been answered. The opinion of scholars in the field is divided with regard to topics which are central to the debate. Among the questions which remain unanswered are: what is “culture” in relation to teaching CFL; what kind of culture should be taught (Li, X., 2006; Lü, B., 1992; Zhang, Z., 1990, 1994); how should the cultural elements be implemented into the curriculum; what objectives should be set with regard to intercultural communication in CFL education.

Although a consensus has slowly emerged on a theoretical academic level, the specifics of how and when to integrate intercultural communicative competence into CFL education remains a controversial subject. For instance, some scholars believe that “cultural studies” should be taught parallel to other language skills (Chen, G., 1992, 1997; Liu, X., 2007; Wei, C. & Bian, J., 1992; Zhao, X., 1989, 1992) while some argue that it should be integrated into the already existing language courses (Chen, J., 1994; Hu, M., 1993; Li, R., 1993; Peng, Z., 2007; Wang, K., 1994; Xu, J., 2000; Zhang, Y., 1994, 2004). Some educators believe that this kind of education should not start at the introductory level while others believe that it should (Lin, G., 1996, 1997; Zhao, H., 2005; Zhao, X., 1992). Unfortunately, these discussions are mainly on a theoretical level, while research related to the implementation and evaluation of the cross-cultural

perspective into the actual teaching process is still underdeveloped. Some scholars also criticize the currently prevailing model of CFL education and its old fashioned textbooks which place an emphasis on Chinese grammar and vocabulary, or language structure, and argue in favor of teaching with a focus on the pragmatic use of the language and its cultural dimensions (Wu, W., 2006, 2008; Xu, J., 2000; Zhang, Y., 2004; Zhou, J., 2000). Alternative materials for teaching CFL, however, have not yet been developed.

### 1.3 IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION THEORY INTO CFL EDUCATION AT DALARNA UNIVERSITY

In light of recent trends in foreign language education, there is a need to implement the cross-cultural dimension and intercultural communication theory into the actual courses of CFL. This has been one of my concerns while teaching CFL at Dalarna University, where I have been a Chinese language instructor since 2006.

In the last decade, the demand for learning CFL has been increasing both at the university (Genborg, 2011; Zhang, Z., 2012) and high school levels in Sweden (Jiang, L., 2011; Sahlberg Wu, 2015). Some even demand that the Chinese language should be taught in all Swedish schools (AFP, 2011). Dalarna University established its Chinese Department in 2006. The department has been offering Internet-based CFL courses since the spring semester of 2007. The number of students in Internet-based courses has been increasing steadily and from 2010 onward, the CFL courses are available only online, that is there are no Chinese language courses held in a physical classroom on campus.

The scope of the CFL courses offered by Dalarna University is comprehensive (Integrated Chinese, Chinese Characters, Speaking Chinese, Chinese Culture and Business Chinese, etc.). Most of the courses use textbooks with supplemental materials that are prepared by the teachers. They utilize a functional approach and emphasize language structure training, but the cultural context and intercultural training are to a large extent missing. This results in culturally incorrect responses to written assignments and errors in role-play dialogues.

In order to enhance the intercultural communication skills of the Swedish students, an exploratory study was carried out in a beginning level Chinese course (Rosenkvist, 2013). After reviewing the syllabus and the course textbook, a special classroom activity was added to the regular schedule of the course – interviewing a native Chinese student online via the Adobe Connect video conferencing system. The activity provided an opportunity for students to practice Chinese with a native Chinese speaker. At the same time it allowed the researcher to evaluate the students' intercultural sensitivity and their level of intercultural communicative competence. In addition, the native Chinese students were invited to evaluate the Swedish students' ability to effectively communicate in Chinese after the activity and their comments were used as supplementary information for data analysis. The study received positive feedback from the students which suggested that these types of activities can increase the students' awareness regarding intercultural communication and thus should be integrated into current courses.



Inspired by the exploratory study, a more thorough and comprehensive action research study is proposed. The main contribution of this action research study is practical: it aims to implement the intercultural communication theory into an actual Internet-based CFL course for beginners (Chinese 1) and to investigate the effectiveness of this new mode of teaching CFL as compared to the traditional method of teaching Chinese. Specifically, the research will address the following key questions:

1. Is it possible to implement intercultural communication theory into an existing course without generating dramatic changes to the course contents and syllabus?
2. As compared to the traditional courses, did the revised intercultural communication syllabus result in beginning Chinese language learners achieving a higher level of proficiency with regard to the desired learning outcomes?
3. Did the students in beginning level Chinese courses who were placed in the experimental groups which followed the revised syllabus develop higher intercultural competence, as shown by their ability to handle intercultural interactions appropriately, as compared to the control group?

#### 1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Without much previous research conducted in relation to cultural studies and intercultural communicative competence in CFL education, this study is an action research study which endeavors to serve as an empirical investigation verifying whether it is possible to implement intercultural communication theory into present online

courses of CFL education at the beginning level. The primary data and analysis provided by this study will be a starting point for future studies regarding what, when and how to implement intercultural communication theory into CFL education. In addition, the revised course materials and the new approach of integrating culture and the intercultural communication theory tested in the research study could be a reference for designing more relevant teaching materials in the future. Last but not least, since this action research study was conducted at a Swedish University, its socio-cultural background and contents inevitably reflect a European perspective and can serve as a reference for comparative studies of CFL education in China and other countries around the world.

## 1.5 CHAPTERS OUTLINES

This study consists of six chapters. Chapter One introduces the background of this action research study and presents the research questions that will be investigated in this study. Chapter Two provides a literature review which covers the four main academic areas related to this research. Chapter Three introduces the selected and modified theoretical framework as well as the research hypotheses. In Chapter Four, research methodology is discussed and the research design is proposed. In the next chapter, Chapter Five, both quantitative and qualitative data analysis is presented. This is followed by a conclusion in Chapter Six in which the key research questions and their implications are discussed including recommendations for future research in Chinese intercultural communicative education.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

During the past six decades, research on second and foreign language education has expanded impressively in a variety of disciplines, such as linguistics, psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology and sociolinguistics. Each of these disciplines has its own focus investigating different aspects of second language acquisition and presenting different proposals for foreign language education. In retrospect, the development of all these approaches can be summarized in three significant stages (Usó-Juan & Martinez-Flor, 2006).

The first revolutionary change was the rise of the environmentalist approaches in the 1950's in which language acquisition was regarded as static and passive. It was assumed that the more stimuli to which a learner is exposed, the quicker the learner will be able to achieve mastery of a foreign language (Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Rivers, 1983; Skinner, 1957). However, the innatists argued that all human beings have an innate ability to possess language learning and thus they are active rather than passive participants in the language acquisition process (Chomsky, 1959, 1981; Juffs, 2010). Despite its popularity, the innatists' approach was then criticized by the interactionlists because the former failed to consider the external factors, such as the sociocultural background of the language, which are crucial in the language acquisition process (Halliday, 1975, Hymes, 1972; Pica, 2005; Tomasello, 2003; Toohey & Norton, 2010).

Approaches to teaching and learning of a second language have been changing along with different research findings presented by different schools of scholars as discussed above. Initially the emphasis was on language pattern drills designed by those who subscribed to the environmentalist school of pedagogical thought. This evolved into the mentalist and dynamic language learning model which was advocated by the innatists (Ellis, 1985). When interactionlists drew our attention to the learners' cognitive capacity in language learning, communication was regarded as the key phenomenon in language usage and developing communicative competence in the second language should be the primary concern of language teachers. Yet gradually it has become clear that linguistic, psychological and socio-cultural factors interact synergistically in the process of language learning. Due to the increasing demand for improved intercultural communication in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a new focus on second and foreign language education has been advocated. The consensus reached in the academic world is that the ability to competently communicate in an intercultural setting should be emphasized<sup>6</sup>.

This chapter endeavors to illustrate the relationships between culture, language and intercultural communication, and provide a depiction of different models for achieving

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<sup>6</sup> References regarding educational policies and the political dimensions of foreign language education in response to the growing need for promoting intercultural communicative competence include Castellotti and Moore (2002), Geogiou (2009) and Ingram et al. (2009). Scholars and educators who endeavor to promote foreign language intercultural communicative competence are Byram (1997), Byram and Morgan (1994), Byram, Gribkova and Starkey (2002), Crozet and Liddicoat (1999), Damen (1987), Hofstede (1986), Kramsch (1993), Met (1993), Ros i Sol'e (2003) and Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006) and Van Ek (1976). Some case studies are presented by Gao and Huang (2010) and O'Dowd (2000, 2005, 2007). Related teacher training is discussed by Ruane (1999) and Sercu (1998, 2002, 2005).

communicative competence. With a particular focus on CFL education, it will present the current controversies regarding the integration of cultural studies into contemporary CFL curricula and identify research areas that have not been adequately investigated.

## 2.1 LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Most educators would not deny the important role of culture in second and foreign language education. What hinders them from integrating culture into their teaching methods then? One fundamental source of controversy is the definition of “culture”, as well as its relationship with language and its sociocultural context. This is not surprising because the concept of culture is complex, pervasive, diverse and, most of all, difficult to define. These characteristics of culture were demonstrated clearly in an anthropology literature review which presented 164 definitions of the word “culture” by tracing the history of its use in important anthropological works (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952, p.181). The different definitions of “culture” inevitably lead to different approaches in foreign language education and thus it is essential that this study provides a clarification of the concept of “culture”.

### 2.1.1 CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

The relationship between culture and language is complex and multifaceted. In this section, this intertwined relationship will be described and both culture and language will be defined in the context of this investigation.

#### 2.1.1.1 Defining culture

One of the basic explanations of culture refers to a total summary of a society. For instance, Williams (1958) points out that the word “culture” changes along with human evolution and “culture” has been defined not only as the fine arts or as a collection of material artifacts, but rather as a “whole way of life”. Hall (1959) also concludes, “There is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture” (p.169). Some definitions of cultures, on the contrary, are more specific. As introduced by Moon (2008), some scholars refer to culture as a nation-state. This definition, however, is criticized by Streeck (2002) who comments “as soon as we take the convention by which nation-states are represented on maps as an equally valid representation of culture, we are deeply mired in stereotypical thinking” (p.301). This dissertation, which seeks to investigate the interconnectedness of culture and communication will adopt Chen and Starosta’s (2005) explicit definition of culture:

Culture can be a set of fundamental ideas, practices, and experiences of a group of people that are symbolically transmitted generation to generation through a learning process. Culture may as well refer to beliefs, norms, and attitudes that are used to guide our behaviors and to solve human problems. (p.25)

This definition of culture is similar to the one proposed by Samovar, Porter and McDaniel (2007, p.20), in which culture is a socially constructed set of shared objective and subjective elements – values, attitudes, beliefs, etc. - which guides the individual’s behavior in a specific social group or community.

“The software of human mind” (Chen & Starosta, 2005, p.26) and a “blueprint for all human activity” (Samovar et al., 2007, p.18) are metaphors used to demonstrate how culture constructs our behaviors. Culture provides a predictable world for each

individual where everything in one's surroundings is understandable and expected.

Despite the fact that there are people who choose to deviate from the cultural norms, even the deviants are cognizant of those norms.

The predictable world that is provided by culture contains the linguistic, physical and psychological aspects of human society (Borden, 1991). Physical aspects refer to the physical environment which allows human activities to be carried out in specific social contexts. Psychological aspects, on the other hand, are related to our mental activities, such as psychological security, social harmony, purpose of life and so on. Linguistic aspects concern the use of language to facilitate both intra and extra-group communication within a given society. These three aspects illustrate the different needs experienced by human beings. It can be argued that the development of culture provides a vehicle for satisfaction of these needs (Nanda, 1994, p.50).

#### **2.1.1.2 Language and its sociocultural context**

As Borden (1991) proposed, linguistics is one of the crucial elements of human society. However, the relationship between culture and language is difficult to define. One example of the controversies is the Sapir-Whorf's hypothesis proposed in the 1950's. It argues that, "1. Structural differences between language systems will, in general, be paralleled by nonlinguistic cognitive differences, of an unspecified sort, in the native speakers of the two languages. 2. The structure of one's native language strongly influences or fully determines the world-view he will acquire as he learns the language. 3. The semantic systems of different languages vary without constraint (Kay & Kempton, 1984, p.66)". Needless to say, these radical hypotheses of language have

drawn much criticism. Hudson (1996, p.103) clearly argues against such an extreme hypothesis. Fasold (1990, p.53) comments that the strong argument of the Sapir-Whorf's hypothesis is difficult to accept. After evaluating several empirical studies on language and color descriptions, Kay and Kempton (1984, p.75) argue that the third hypothesis is factually incorrect.

In the 1960's and 1970's, while the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis was still being debated, some researchers further developed the logic of language focusing on interactional sociolinguistics (Fasold, 1990; Gumperz & Hymes, 1986; Hymes, 1964, 1966, 1972, 1986). Among them, Hymes is the originator of the notion of the "ethnography of communication". As opposed to Chomskyan linguistics' universal grammar and its abstract concepts of "competence" and "performance" (Chomsky 1965), Hymes (1986) emphasizes how human beings utilize language in their social context. He then proposes to use ethnographic fieldwork to investigate the diversity of speech in different social groups, in which linguistic variation among individuals and relative linguistic coherence across social realms should be taken into account. He claims that "a formal analysis of speaking is a mean to the understanding of human purposes and needs, and their satisfaction" (Hymes, 1986, p.70). To follow Hymes' advocacy of exploring linguistic interaction, sociolinguists (Fasold, 1990; Hudson, 1996; Johnstone & Marcellino, 2011) regard "speech community" as a social unit in which people share common linguistic norms.

Crozet and Liddicoat (1999) try to portray the connection between culture and language at different levels. According to the authors, the context of culture represents meanings



and knowledge of the world. In a more specific sense, culture in its general text structure is presented by the spoken and written genres. Culture also guides the pragmatic norms of language usage, such as a choice of communication strategies, providing norms of interaction such as politeness and appropriateness. Once language is acted out verbally and/or non-verbally, it is the execution of culture in linguistic and paralinguistic structures. Yet one should be cognizant of the cross-cultural dimensions of communication between two interlocutors. Kaplan's (1966, 2005) article regarding culturally-based rhetorical patterns and styles of writing in English as a second language clearly elucidates how cultural factors affect languages in their presentation.

In order to increase the effectiveness of interactive communication, the speaker should understand the social and cultural context of the target language. Atkinson (2002, p.527) underscores the necessity of taking the social dimensions of language into account in language acquisition and summarizes eight dimensions of language as a social and cultural phenomenon which are worth considering for language learning and teaching, such as politeness, perspective taking and contextualization cueing, turn-taking, etc.. In response to Atkinson's dimensions, extensive research was conducted in order to articulate the fact that language and its sociocultural context is inseparable. Language is a part of its culture. When two persons with different cultural backgrounds try to communicate with each other, what they are exchanging is not only the language they are speaking, but also the culture they are representing. This exchange can be classified as an example of "intercultural communication" – a concept that is going to be discussed in the following section.

### *2.1.2 FROM COMMUNICATION TO INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION*

Intercultural communication, also referred to as cross-cultural communication, is a field of study that investigates the different strategies people with different cultural backgrounds use to communicate with each other (Samovar & Porter, 1995, 2008). It is a hybrid area which includes anthropology, cultural studies, psychology and communication. As Hall (1977) states, “Culture is communication and communication is culture” (p.14). We have discussed “culture” in the previous section and now we will move on to look into the process of “communication”.

#### **2.1.2.1 Defining communication**

So what is “communication”? According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, communication is derived from two Latin words, “communicare” and “communis” which mean to share or to exchange information between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs or behaviors. A process of communication involves four components: the sender (or the encoder), the message that the sender wants to transmit, the medium by which the message is sent, and the receiver (or the decoder). To consider the notion of “communication is culture”, Chen and Starosta’s (2005) define communication as:

an interdetermining process in which we develop a mutually dependent relationship by exchanging symbols. (p.21)

This definition highlights the function of communication as a process of developing a particular coding system in which we organize ourselves socially and culturally.

Communication, therefore, is also a dynamic process (Chen & Starosta, 2005; Samovar

& Porter, 2008; West & Turner, 2009). When one communicates with another, he or she will constantly affect and be affected by his or her interactant. Communication is an ongoing and unending process which is never absolutely complete or finished.

Even though human communication is constantly changing, it is not chaotic or unpredictable. Instead it is a systematic and orderly process which is governed by a set of consensual rules of interaction. These consensual rules come from one's cultural values, beliefs and perceptions. In other words, communication is also a holistic phenomenon of a society by which the social reality is reflected (Chen & Starosta, 2005, p.21-22). People in different social contexts engage in communication differently according to culturally governed social rules (Littlejohn, 1989; Samovar & Porter, 2008; Sitaram and Haapanen, 1979).

#### **2.1.2.2 Intercultural communication versus cross-cultural communication**

Since communication is culturally determined, it varies across cultures. When a person from one culture communicates with another person from another culture, it is a cross-cultural activity. Hall (1959) introduces the term “intercultural communication” to describe this kind of activity and encourages scientific study of this academic area. According to Weaver (1996), Gudykunst and Mody (2002), the distinction between cross-cultural and intercultural communication is based on how we study “culture”. Cross-cultural communication focuses on comparing and contrasting cultures, such as the differences in negotiation strategies between Chinese and Europeans cultures. Intercultural communication, on the other hand, deals with the actual interaction of

people from various cultures. For instance, analyzing how a European businessman negotiates with his Chinese counterpart is intercultural communication.

Weaver (1996, p.2) points out that these two terms are often used interchangeably.

Gudykunst and Mody (2002) comment further that “understanding cross-cultural communication is a prerequisite for understanding intercultural communication (p.ix).

This paper follows Gudykunst and Mody’s logic and utilizes the terms intercultural communication and cross-cultural communication interchangeably.

### **2.1.2.3 Studying Intercultural Communication in Foreign Language Education**

For decades, scholars of intercultural communication have investigated the cultural differences among nations. They study why people in some societies prefer particular foods, choose certain numbers for good luck or handle commercial activity in specific ways. These researchers believe that once people understand these social customs, they are better able to communicate. When the revolutionary idea of intercultural communication was introduced to foreign language education, it inspired educators and brought a new perspective for teaching languages which, today, has become dominant.

## **2.2 INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION**

Intercultural communication theory has been used in foreign language education since the 1980’s as an alternative to previous forms of foreign language teaching where language was considered merely as a code and repetitive mechanical training in grammatical rules and other aspects of the embedded social context was utilized in

order to translate one language into another.<sup>7</sup> Proponents of the intercultural communication perspective wanted to replace these obsolete teaching methods, based on structuralism and behaviorism, by placing culture and communication at the core of foreign language teaching. Kramsch (1993) even advocates the implementation of a “cultural approach” at the very beginning stages of language education:

Culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them. Therefore, to learn a foreign language is also to discover how the social norms associated with the target language allow learners to manipulate grammatical forms, sounds, and meanings (p.1).

In other words, the emphasis of foreign language learning should not be on content but rather on how to act in different situations in the target culture (Byram 1997, p.20, Geogiou, 2009). For instance, the appropriate use of politeness of a language can vary markedly among cultures. In the traditional language classroom, this aspect of language usage is usually reduced to some particular formulae. However, the politeness of language can be demonstrated explicitly only when it is applied to interaction which involves intercultural communication (Byram, 1997, p.4).

### *2.2.1 MODELS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION*

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<sup>7</sup> To check relevant reference, please see footnote no.6.

In response to the need for implementing intercultural communication theory into foreign language education, new theoretical frameworks and models have been designed and proposed by scholars from different academic disciplines. Based on various principles of communicative language teaching, such as a syllabus “threshold level” inventory produced by Van Ek (1976), Byram (1997) proposes a model for intercultural communicative competence which focuses on fostering one’s attitudes regarding intercultural communication, knowledge, skills and cultural awareness. According to Byram (1997, p.34), attitudes are crucial for effective intercultural communication and learning. Thus the learners’ willingness to suspend their own cultural judgment of differing norms and cultural behavior will greatly aid their ability to understand and communicate in the target language. The concept of knowledge in Byram’s model is not limited to the language and study of a target culture, but also includes analysis of the learner’s own society and culture, as well as the social and cultural process by which the learner’s identity is formed. With this intercultural knowledge, the learner will be able to identify problem areas in intercultural communication that are the results of cultural differences. There are two skills described by Byram (1997, p.61). The first skill refers to the learners’ ability to interpret and understand another culture, while at the same time seeing the relationship of these norms which differ from their own culture. The second skill is the ability to acquire new knowledge and to utilize this for real social communication and interaction. The last component of this model is awareness. Being critically aware of one’s own as well as the target group’s culture and language is an essential element for intercultural competence.

Byram's model has been influential and inspired many scholars in foreign language education. However, as Liddicoat et al. (2003, pp.15-16) comment, this model focuses mainly on the sociocultural component of the language without integrating other key skills, such as linguistic, sociolinguist and discourse competence. Based on this premise, more comprehensive models for intercultural communicative competence have been proposed. One commonly cited model is the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) which provides a standard theoretical framework for foreign language education in all European countries. Besides the sociocultural component of the language, it also includes linguistic and pragmatic competence. Another comprehensive model designed by Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006) is worth discussing. The blueprint for this model is a summary of six important methodologies which were proposed by Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983), Savignon (1983), Bachman (1990), Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) (and later Celce-Murcia, 2008), and Alcón (2000).

There are five components in this hybrid model, namely discourse, linguistic, pragmatic, intercultural and strategic competence.

Discourse competence is placed in the central position of the model and is surrounded and acted upon by the four other components. In Canale's (1983) and Savignon's (1983) models, discourse competence functions parallel to the other components. However, Bachman (1990) later identifies the explicit function of the four psychomotor skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) in the communicative competence model and this proposal has been accepted by scholars such as Alcón (2000), and

Celce-Murcia and Olhstain (2000). Similar to Bachman (1990), Alcón (2000), Celce-Murcia and Olhstain (2000), Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor propose placing the four skills within discourse competence. Discourse competence is a product generated by the above mentioned four components and is delivered through the four skills. Discourse competence, in turn, will shape the other four components through a successive process of communication. The central role of discourse competence in the model is best described by Celce-Murcia and Olhstain (2000) who emphasize that only through discourse could all the other competencies in the model be manifested for further observation and assessment. Different from the other models, Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor highlight the accomplishment of integrating the four skills into the realm of discourse competence. Only when the learners are able to interpret and produce spoken and written discourse understandable to each other, will the attempt at communication between the learners be considered successful.

Linguistic competence in Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor's model, which is similar to Canale and Swain (1980), Savignon (1983) and Bachman (1990) but is actually based on Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) and Alcón (2000), includes phonology, grammar, vocabulary, and all the other elements in the linguistic system.

Pragmatic competence in Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor's model is very close to Bachman's (1990) and two components of Celce-Murcia et al.'s (1995) model, including actional competence and part of the sociocultural competence. In other words, it involves the learner's own social contextual factors and his/her knowledge and ability



of performing language functions and illocutionary acts, as well as participating in a communication activity with appropriate manners.

A special discussion is devoted to the strategic component. According to the authors, even though all the communicative competence models introduce strategic competence as one of the major components, this competence has been presented to have different degrees of importance in the models of communicative competence. For instance, strategic competence in Canale and Swain's model (1980) as well as Savignon's model (1983) involve the knowledge of how to utilize verbal and nonverbal communication strategies in instances of breakdowns in communication. In Bachman's model, this competence refers to a set of metacognitive components that enable a language user to be involved in assessing communicative sources, goal setting and planning, and finally utilizing the language appropriately. Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor's view of strategic competence is similar to Alcón (2000), Cohen (2010) and Oxford's (2001) in which strategic competence does not simply function to restore a communication subsequent to a breakdown. It is also a language learning strategy which can be learned consciously and systematically.

The last and the most interesting component in this model is intercultural competence. It refers to the remaining parts of the Celce-Murcia et al.'s (1995) sociocultural competence, such as the cultural and non-verbal communication factors. Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor argue that the knowledge of the sociocultural background of the target language community, the degree of awareness of major dialectical/ regional and cross-cultural differences, as well as the appropriate use of body language, space and silence

are crucial factors which will affect the effectiveness of an intercultural communicative activity (Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2006). The reason for employing the term, “intercultural” instead of “sociocultural” is to shed light on the advocacy of including the intercultural communicative competence into a communicative approach for foreign language teaching. It echoes Byram’s (1997) proposed model of intercultural communicative competence which is devoted to integrating the teaching of intercultural communication skills into the field of foreign language education.

When analyzing the components of the models discussed in this section, it is apparent that there are variations presented by scholars from different academic disciplines. As shown in Figure 1, scholars endeavor to clarify the terminology and definitions of the components assigned to their models and argue how all the components function and interact in their theoretical framework. For instance, Savignon (1983) comments on Canale’s (1983) model that all components of the model should not be isolated, rather they should be interrelated. Later models proposed by scholars have introduced additional components in order to identify more components of language learning, such as pragmatic competence in the models proposed by Bachman (1987, 1990) and CEFR (2001), as well as actional, interactional and formulaic competence in Celce-Murcia’s models (1995, 2008). Nonetheless, after a few decades of constructing the framework of communicative competence, several universal but essential components have been identified and elaborated by the researchers, for instance, linguistic, pragmatic, strategic and discourse competence (see Figure 1, p.26). A crucial step forward was the introduction of intercultural competence in Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor’s (2006) model, which draws their readers’ attention to the increasing demand for promoting

intercultural communicative competence in foreign language education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a time when information technology successfully brings people together from all over the world.

Figure 1: Models of Communicative Competence for L2 Language Education

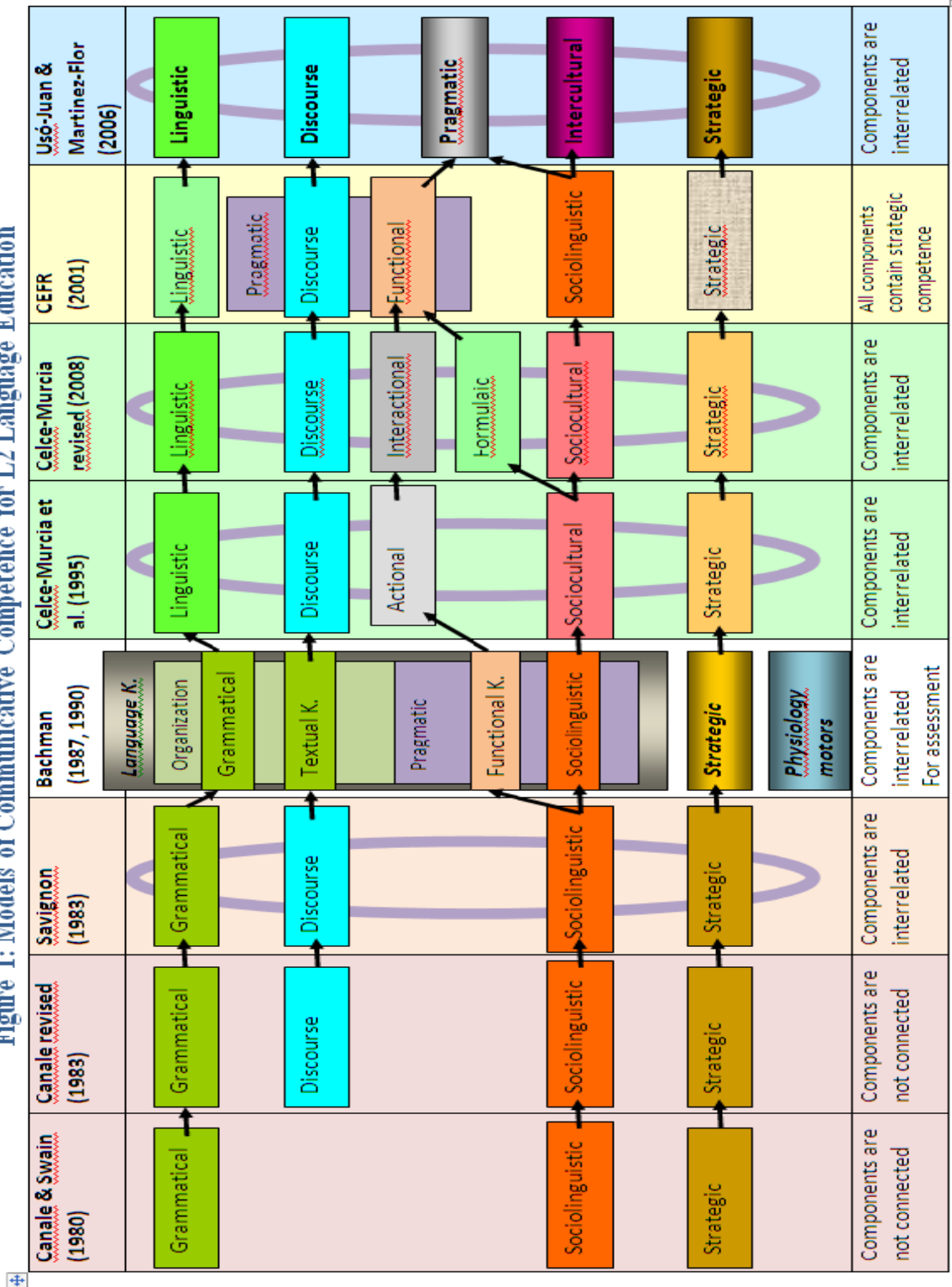


FIGURE 1. MODELS OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE FOR L2 LANGUAGE EDUCATION

### *2.2.2 ACQUIRING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE*

Even though there is a consensus that intercultural communicative competence should be emphasized in foreign language education, the research related to the acquisition of intercultural competence is insufficient. This may be due to the fact that the crucial question regarding how intercultural communicative competence develops remains a controversy among scholars (Chen and Starosta, 1996, 1998, 2000).

One influential model describing the process of developing one's intercultural competence is the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 2004) - a model utilized for intercultural training. According to Bennett (2004), many language learners may need to undergo a major change in their attitudes towards cultural differences in order to acquire intercultural competence. They often begin with an "ethnocentric" outlook and later progress to an "ethnorelative" stage. Bennett explains that "ethnocentrism" encompasses regarding one's own culture as superior and can even lead one to deny the existence of other cultures. There are three stages of development within "ethnocentrism". In the first stage, people deny the existence of cultural differences as they have no experience with persons from different cultures. They believe that they are better than the others and at this stage, they are completely ethnocentric. In the next stage, people have contacted other cultures and recognize that there are cross-cultural differences. However, they feel threatened by the new culture. To defend themselves, they tend to interact only with members of their culture and avoid contacting people from other cultures. The last stage of ethnocentrism is minimization. People at this stage still feel threatened by other cultures and try to minimize the existence of other cultures. They believe that people from other cultures

are basically similar to them since they lack a developed cultural self-awareness at this stage.

Once people have progressed beyond ethnocentrism, they would enter the next stage which is “ethnorelativism”. There are also three levels within this model. At the first stage, people begin to recognize cross-cultural differences and have learned to accept and respect other cultures. In this phase, people are “culturally-neutral” and they regard all cultural differences as a matter of fact. When people are able to shift their cultural perspective towards other cultures, adapting their behavior to different cultural norms, they are then in the second stage of ethnorelativism, namely adaptation. In the final stage which is integration, a person’s own identity is no longer limited to a single culture. With the integration of two or more cultures, people can shift from one cultural environment to another and become “multicultural” (Bennett, 2004, p.72).

Before elaborating their model of intercultural competence, Chen and Starosta (1996, 1998, 2000) argue that it is essential to clarify errors caused by the misperception of three related but separate concepts, namely, intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity and intercultural communicative competence. Unlike Bennett (2004) who views intercultural competence as a single concept, Chen and Starosta (2000) clarify that the concept of intercultural competence is multi-faceted and comprised of the cognitive, affective and behavioral ability of the learners in the process of intercultural communication. The cognitive ability refers to the intercultural awareness in which learners understand the different national cultural conventions that govern social behavior. The authors illustrate that there are two components in this dimension of

intercultural competence: self-awareness and cultural awareness (Chen & Starosta 1996, 1999). Based on this analysis, they propose an Intercultural Awareness Scale to assess this dimension of intercultural competence (Chen, 2000). This second aspect of intercultural communicative competence is the affective ability or intercultural sensitivity. It is the learners' personal desire or motivation in learning, understanding, appreciating and accepting cultural differences. According to Chen and Starosta (1997), this dimension includes six components: self-esteem, self-monitoring, empathy, open-mindedness, non-judgment and social relaxation. The authors have developed an Intercultural Sensitivity Scale to assess this dimension of intercultural competence. Up until now this has been the only scientific survey that has been empirically validated to assess the effective ability of intercultural learners. (Fritz & Möllenberg, 1999; Fritz, Möllenberg, & Chen, 2002, 2004). The behavioral ability of intercultural competence enables learners to communicate appropriately in an intercultural context. This ability is also known as intercultural adroitness and can be illustrated through five components: message skills, interaction management, behavioral flexibility, identity management and relationship cultivation. To assess this ability, an Intercultural Effectiveness scale has also been developed (Chen, 2002; Portalla & Chen, 2010).

Although the models discussed above were designed for professional development, scholars have attempted to adapt them to the educational domain. For instance, Bennett et al. (2003, pp.252-253) believe this model would be a good reference for foreign language education and in particular for curriculum design. They thus endeavor to adapt this model to language education and to map the levels of cultural sensitivity to proficiency levels in a foreign language. For example, they separate language education

into three stages. The first stage corresponds to the novice level of study and it is comprised of both the denial and defense stages of ethnocentrism. The second stage refers to the intermediate level where learners first become aware of cross-cultural differences. This is the minimization and acceptance stages of Bennett's model. The third stage is the advanced level where learners can not only master the use of the language but can also complete the adaptation and integration stage of ethnorelativism and become multicultural. Chen and Starosta (1996) also believe that the cognitive ability of intercultural competence can be developed through didactic and experiential learning, such as applying both general and specific cultural approaches in teaching.

Liddicoat et al. (2003, p.19) summarize three characteristics of the model proposed by Bennett et al. (2003). Firstly, the model is linear in nature which implies that the development of intercultural sensitivity is both progressive and measurable. Secondly, the model is presented at a high level of abstraction and thirdly, it is very extensive as it covers all levels of developing intercultural competence in foreign language education. These characteristics, however, may not fit the complex reality of foreign language education in which the development of intercultural sensitivity may not be linear and the length of language courses are generally short. Besides this mode, Liddicoat et al. (2003) also argue that the three scales developed by Chen and Starosta (1996) for intercultural awareness, sensitivity and effectiveness are attitudinal and have no direct connection to language usage. Despite their limitations, these models can help illustrate how intercultural communicative competence can be developed. They can be applied to the development of intercultural competence in foreign language education, and serve as a valuable reference for designing teaching materials and assessments in this



academic field. For example, the general and specific cultural approaches suggested by Chen and Starosta (1996) can aid in the integration of intercultural components into the foreign language curriculum.

### *2.2.3 ASSESSING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE*

Assessment is an important tool for education. From the learners' perspective, it illustrates whether students have made progress in their studies and achieved their learning objectives. From the educators' perspective, it allows teachers to assess whether their students' needs have been met by, as well as the effectiveness of their teaching. Furthermore, many teachers may even modify their teaching methods based on the results of the assessment. In the 1960's, language tests in foreign language education were designed to assess learners' linguistic competence, such as knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and so on (River, 1983). This tradition was challenged when the innatists endeavored to measure the cognitive skills of the learners (Ellis, 1985). Along with the rise of the interactionists, the main focus of foreign language assessment has shifted to integrative tests which are utilized to assess both the learners' knowledge and their ability to utilize the foreign language appropriately in various communicative contexts (Usó-Juan & Martinez-Flor, 2006). These types of tests are also known as communicative tests.

Despite the existence of varied methods for assessing the linguistic and cultural progress of foreign language students, assessment methods for intercultural communicative competence remain to be developed. This is not surprising though since the acquisition of intercultural competence is not limited to how a learner acquires a

particular set of knowledge and skills in the target language, but also requires the learner to react appropriately in different intercultural communication scenarios. Scarino (2007) summarizes three factors that generate difficulty in developing a systematic framework for assessing intercultural competence in foreign language education. First of all, diverse views regarding how intercultural competence should be taught inevitably lead to the development of varied assessments. Secondly, it is difficult to create a holistic assessment which can take into account the many variables of linguistic and sociocultural contexts. Last but not least, the conventional view of language assessment hinders scholar and educators from breaking new ground. For example, Byram (1997, pp.89-90) argues that many aspects of the five dimensions introduced in his model cannot be observed or evaluated by traditional assessments since “competence (or *saviors* in Byram’s work)” should be interpreted as the underlying understanding, metacognition and the ability to reflect on one’s own thinking and responses to experience. Due to the complex nature of intercultural competence, Scarino (2007) reminds scholars to consider several points when assessing intercultural language learning. Firstly, intercultural competence is multi-dimensional but it is demonstrated as a holistic capability. Secondly, the competence is developed through the experience of interaction in various social contexts. Thirdly, it is important to direct learners to be both active participants and observers in intercultural interactions. Fourthly, it is necessary to assess the students’ communicative performance in the target language and how they explain these intercultural experiences. Fifthly, feedback from peers and student self-assessments should be included as a part of the development of intercultural competence. In practice, Scarino

suggests that the proposed assessment should be diverse, including interviews, conferences, journals, observations, story-telling, as well the use of a portfolio to record the learners' learning progress (Scarino, 2007, p.5). In Sercu's (2004) article, she proposes a framework of assessment tests for intercultural competence. By extending Byram's (1997) model, she provides a list of criteria that determine the quality of the tests. The first part focuses on the test content in which "validity" and "authenticity" should be considered. The second part comments on the reliability of test scores. The third part takes into account of test-taking characteristics of the testees. The fourth aspect should focus on the purpose and impact the assessment may have on the testees. Last but not least, the "practicality" in the administration of the assessment must be evaluated (Sercu, 2004, p.79). To summarize, both Scarino (2007) and Seru (2004) have provided some practical guidance on how to effectively assess intercultural language learning.

### 2.3 INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN CFL EDUCATION

In China, the concept of intercultural communication with regard to teaching foreign languages did not draw too much attention until the 1980s. Nevertheless, Chinese scholars have been catching up rapidly to this new trend. In the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a consensus was reached, proclaiming the importance in implementing intercultural communication theory into the present CFL education in China. This message is elucidated explicitly in the newly issued official documents, *Standards for*

*Teachers of Chinese to Speakers of Other languages*<sup>8</sup> (the Standards) and *Chinese Language Proficiency Scales for Speakers of Other Languages*<sup>9</sup> (the Scales). According to the documents, CFL education should not only focus on language structure training but also to promote the intercultural communicative competence of the learners.

### **2.3.1 INTERCULTURAL LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN CFL EDUCATION**

In recent years the debates regarding what, when and how intercultural communication theory should be implemented into CFL education have continued. This discussion provides an essential framework for developing the needed tools and approaches for successfully teaching intercultural communication.

#### **2.3.1.1 What is “culture” in relation to teaching CFL?**

When defining “culture” in CFL education, Chinese scholars faced similar challenges as those faced by their counterparts in the West. Nonetheless they generally accepted a practical concept of “communicative culture” proposed by Zhang, Z. (1990, 1994) for the teaching of CFL. Zhang separates the term “culture” into “intellectual culture” and “communicative culture”. While “intellectual culture” covers knowledge of a language and its culture which will not directly result in miscommunication of a non-native speaker, “communicative culture” means knowledge of a language and its culture which may cause communication problems for a non-native speaker. The concept of

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<sup>8</sup> The Office of Chinese Language Council International (2007b).

<sup>9</sup> The Office of Chinese Language Council International (2007a).

“communicative culture” was then further elaborated and dichotomized by Lü, B. (1992) as “verbal” and “nonverbal” communicative culture. Many approaches for teaching intercultural communication in CFL in China are based on this definition (Li, X., 2006).

### **2.3.1.2 Approaches for Teaching Intercultural Communication in CFL**

As Chen, S. (2001) emphasizes, different definitions of “culture” will inevitably lead to different approaches to teaching “culture” in CFL education. The most discussed approaches in China, according to Lu, W. (1996, p.41), are the introductory approach and the disclosure approach.

Zhao, X. (1989) proposes the introductory approach for cultural studies in CFL education. He separates the term “culture” into 12 categories and argues that the selected cultural knowledge should be “introduced” in the present CFL education through systematic standardization in different stages and degrees in the entire CFL education system. Wei, C. and Bian, J. (1992) also advocate the implementation of the introductory approach and they provide some principles and guidelines for their readers when analyzing and categorizing “culture” for the elementary level of CFL. Chen, G. (1992, 1997) divides language-related “culture” into three parts, namely, syntactic culture, semantic culture and pragmatic culture. Chen (1992) also suggests four methods to introduce these three aspects of culture in CFL, such as “direct elucidation”, “integration”, “practical communication” and “comparison”.

Some scholars criticize the introductory approach of culture as it implies that culture and language are two separate objects (Zhang, Y., 1994; Li, R., 1993). They argue that

culture is naturally inherent in language and the main task for the teacher is to “disclose” the cultural connotations during teaching. Hu, M. (1993) believes that the hidden cultural meanings of the vocabulary must be “revealed” in order to enhance the students’ intercultural communicative competence. Therefore, he endeavors to incorporate the connotative meanings of the Chinese vocabulary which is imbued with cultural, economic, demographic and social implications. From the sociolinguistic perspective, Chen, J.’s (1994) research looks into the connotative meanings of the Chinese language based on Chinese customs, ways of thinking, values and ethics, etc. Wang, K. (1994) tries to reveal the cultural elements in Chinese phonetics, semantics, syntax and other linguistic units when teaching intercultural communication in CFL.

Some scholars (e.g. Wang, D., 1993) advocate the use of linguistic culturology, a scholarly field integrating studies of linguistics and cultural studies which was originally developed in Russia and imported into China in the mid-1980s. The focus of this theory is to explain the cultural meanings in vocabulary, phrases, proverbs and other linguistic units to language learners. The promotion of linguistic culturology in CFL education resulted in the compilation of a Chinese linguistic culturology dictionary (Bi, J. & Zhang, D., 1994, p.43). Nonetheless, research or study related to Chinese linguistic culturology is not well developed and is less influential in this academic area (Lu, W., 1996).

Wang, J. (1995) has scrutinized different approaches used to categorize “culture” and comments that these approaches lack support from relevant theoretical frameworks. Due to this phenomenon in CFL education, Liu, J. (2004) encourages teachers to study

approaches used in foreign countries which have adapted different teaching modes for foreign language education. Apparently, how to define culture and the acquisition of intercultural competence are still on-going discussions.

### **2.3.1.3 Structuring Teaching of Intercultural Communication in CFL**

Although Chinese scholars agree that promoting intercultural communicative competence is crucial in CFL education, when and how “culture” should be taught in CFL education is still a controversial subject.

When discussing when to implement an intercultural communicative approach into CFL education, some scholars simply deny the necessity of teaching “culture” at the elementary level by arguing that the main task for beginners is to master the basic forms of the language, and, in particular, correct pronunciation and basic grammar. According to this point of view, “cultural studies” are not considered important during the first stage of learning a foreign language as the vocabulary and texts taught at this stage are simple and short. Not until students move on to upper levels should the amount of cultural materials be systematically increased in the course syllabi (Xu, J., 2000). Xu criticizes this approach as an oversimplification or a misunderstanding of “cultural studies” in the context of intercultural communication in foreign language acquisition. Since language is an expression of culture, teaching “culture” in CFL can and should be included at all levels (Xu, J., 2000; Peng, Z., 2007). The content, according to Lin, G. (1996), should be the hidden cultural elements permeating the language itself, such as the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic use of the language. Categorizing topics such as the Chinese family, marriage, philosophy, customs and traditions, etc., might be a

practical way to integrate the teaching of intercultural communication in CFL education. This point of view actually matches what Kramersch (1993) advocated. Zhang, Y.'s (1994) proposal is even more specific. He suggests that the ratio between teaching language and culture at the elementary level should be 5:1, 4:1 for the intermediate level and 3:1 for the advanced level.

Additionally, some scholars advocate that “culture” should be taught in separate courses in parallel to teaching the five basic language skills. Others believe that it should be integrated into the language courses. As Lin, G. (1997) comments, this disagreement is caused by confusion in separating “cultural studies” as an independent subject (or as a separate cultural course) from teaching the “cultural” elements that permeate the Chinese language (a culturally integrated course). Therefore, Zhang, Y. (2004) and Zhao, H. (2005) argue that it is necessary to clearly differentiate between these courses. As Zhao, X. (1992) suggests, these two types of cultural courses should be complimentary during all stages of CFL education. Under the introductory approach, Zhao, X. (1992) proposes that culturally integrated courses should be taught at the elementary level. Separate cultural courses should then be added systematically at the upper levels.

In summary, what the scholars suggested above reflects certain phenomena in the academic world. Firstly, most of the academic research emphasizes the important role of educators, linguists, researchers, examiners and teachers in changing the focus of CFL education. This is a top-down approach in which student participation in revising the curriculum design and evaluating intercultural effectiveness is seldom addressed.



Furthermore, even though various approaches for teaching intercultural communicative competence have been proposed, so far no theoretical frameworks have been developed. The very first theoretical framework for intercultural communication was officially proposed by Hanban in 2008 and it will be discussed in the next section.

### *2.3.2 INTERNATIONAL CURRICULUM FOR CHINESE LANGUAGE EDUCATION*

Besides the continuing discussions and debates regarding theories and approaches for intercultural communicative competence in CFL education, some Chinese scholars (Xu, J., 2000; Wu, W., 2006, 2008; Zhang, Y., 2004; Zhou, J., 2000) concern the quality of the contemporary published teaching materials and a great variety of courses for CFL education offered worldwide. In response to the demand for clarification regarding what, when and how “culture” should be taught in CFL education, Hanban issued the *International Curriculum for Chinese Language Education (ICCLE)* in 2008.

A significant aspect of the ICCLE is its proposal for a framework for contemporary CFL education worldwide (ICCLE, 2008, p. II-III). With reference to a few world-renowned standards of foreign language education, for instance, Chinese Language Proficiency Scales for Speakers of Other Languages and CEFR (2001), the ICCLE has re-organized the Chinese linguistic and cultural knowledge in which cross-cultural perspectives have been taken into consideration. In the ICCLE framework, “linguistic competencies” are placed at the center since the ultimate goal of the ICCLE is to help students learn the Chinese language. Linguistic competencies are to be developed by means of linguistic knowledge, skills, strategies and cultural awareness – the four interrelated components of this framework. Linguistic knowledge is analogous to

linguistic competence in CEFR (2001) which includes the Chinese phonology, characters and words, grammar and functions, theme and discourse. Language skills in this model refer to the “Big Four”, namely reading, listening, speaking and writing. This model also provides a list of strategic components, such as affective, learning, communicative, resource and interdisciplinary strategies. The last component of this model is cultural awareness which is comprised of cultural knowledge, cultural understanding, cross-cultural awareness and global awareness. The designation of cultural awareness in the ICCLE highlights an important message to educators – it is essential to include cross-cultural knowledge in current syllabi for CFL programs and to foster cross-cultural awareness in Chinese language learners.

It is clear that the publication of the ICCLE is a significant step forward in the development of CFL education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Since it indicates that cultural awareness is one of the key elements at all levels of language education, it actually settled the argument regarding when cultural studies should be integrated into CFL education. In other words, as suggested in the West, cultural knowledge and cross-cultural understanding should be included in the syllabi even at the beginners’ level.

However, this ICCLE is not a comprehensive handbook for the teachers. As a curriculum, it simply standardizes the educational goals and provides principles and guidance for professionals to design their school-based curricula and programs. The specific contents of the courses, such as what cultural knowledge should be included and how this knowledge should be conveyed to learners, are practical issues which remain an open field for scholars and teachers to explore.

### *2.3.3 IDENTIFYING CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN CFL EDUCATION*

Since contemporary CFL education endeavors to increase student cross-cultural awareness, identifying the cross-cultural differences between the West and China is thus an essential first step in this educational process. A general guideline is given by the ICCLE (2008) in which the component of cultural awareness incorporates cultural knowledge and understanding, as well as cross-cultural and global awareness.

Following this curriculum, Chinese language teachers are expected “to expand both the content and scope of Chinese culture as well as the horizons of the learners, especially its importance, contribution and function in a multitude of cultures” (ICCLE, 2008, p. IV).

In the past few decades, many Chinese scholars (Cao, R., 2012; Hu, W., 1999; Jia, Y., 2004; Liu, L., 2011; Ma, D., 2007; Ma, W., 2011; Wang, N., 2011; Zhang, J., 2012) have compared the Western and the Chinese cultures by reviewing their histories, geographies, demographics, religions and philosophies. Their findings are important resources for developing student intercultural awareness and intercultural communicative competence in CFL education. Since this action research study is conducted in Sweden and the research subjects are Swedish beginners of CFL, the Swedish culture is included in the following discussion.

#### **2.3.3.1 Collective Chinese Culture versus Individualistic Western Culture**

After analyzing these research findings, a consensus can be reached that Chinese culture is collectivist while Western culture is individualistic. The importance of this crucial cultural dimension is described in Hofstede's (1986, 2008) models.

Individualism has long been rooted in the Western culture which also emphasizes individual rights. As described by Chinese scholars (such as Hu, W., 1999; Liu, L., 2011), people in the West emphasize developing one's talent, achieving one's goals and pursuing one's interests. When checking the index of individualism in the Hofstede's model of national culture (2008), Sweden has a relatively high score of 71, suggesting that Sweden is a typical individualist society. On the other hand, Chinese culture is focused on social harmony and emphasizes a life in a world of obligations. Chinese society is often viewed as collectivist and hierarchical with an authoritarian orientation. This characteristic is also demonstrated in the Hofstede's model as China has got only a score of 20 in this cultural dimension. Since Chinese people are interdependent to each other, they spend time cultivating interpersonal relationships in their group. This kind of social behavior is the basic driving force for the formation of a "Guanxi" culture and the importance of "saving face" in Chinese society.

### **2.3.3.2 Holistic vs. Analytic Style Cognition System**

By questioning one's existence as in Descartes' "cogito ergo sum", people in the West tend to equate identity with the rational mind, thus Westerners tend to create a division between the mind and the body. This notion is the root of the Western analytic academic disciplines in which the formation of analytic cognition is based on a formal system of rules and categories, formal logic and avoidance of contradictions (Ji, Zhang & Nisbett, 2004; Nisbett, Choi, Peng & Norenzayan, 2001). Being one of the northern European countries, Swedish cognitive system falls naturally in this analytic category. This can be revealed when going through the history of Swedish language development in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century in which the major structural transition of this language to its

modern analytical stage had largely been completed (Bandle, et al. 2002, p.5). The importance of promoting analytic thinking is still crucial in Swedish education nowadays. For instance, one of the objectives of education offered by Lund University, as published on the university webpage<sup>10</sup>, is to focus on developing student ability to engaging in critical and analytic thinking skills. On the other hand, the Chinese cognitive system is described not as analytic but as holistic (Nisbett et al., 2001; Masuda & Nisbett, 2001). The cognitive differences between holistic and analytic approaches in reasoning can be well demonstrated by the principles of medical science held by the Chinese and the West. In the West, people believed that some part of the body could be malfunctioning and could be cured separately by surgery. In contrast, surgery was considered taboo in traditional Chinese medical science; because it would inevitably destroy the balance inside the body (Hadingham, 1994, p.77).

### **2.3.3.3 Cyclical vs. Linear Concept of Time**

According to Hall's (1977) model, Chinese culture is defined as a polychromic culture where time is regarded as cyclical and an understanding of the past is required in order to prepare for the future. The Chinese polychromic culture can be manifested by the Taoist notion of Yin and Yang - a rotating symmetry generating continuous cyclical movement. In the West, time is viewed as linear and is not regarded as importantly as it is in traditional Chinese culture (Ma, D., 2007; Ma, W., 2011). As compared to the Chinese, Swedish time concept is linear. By applying the index of long-term orientation

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.lunduniversity.lu.se/international-admissions/why-study-at-lund-university/the-learning-environment-and-teaching-style>

- the fifth dimension of Hofstede's model - this study investigate further into the cultural difference of the concept of time between Chinese and Swedish. This dimension sheds light on how every society dealing with its own past, present and future. With a very high score of 87, Chinese society fosters pragmatic virtues oriented towards future rewards. Sweden, however, has a score of 51. This illustrates that Sweden is not a long-term oriented society and the Swedes would most likely prefer to maintain time-honored tradition.

#### **2.3.3.4 The Importance of Understanding Cultural Values in Intercultural Communication**

After comparing some cross-cultural differences between Western and Chinese culture, in particularly the discussion with regard to the Swedish culture, it is obvious that this kind of cultural knowledge are crucial for both teaching and studying intercultural communication in CFL education. Authentic examples can be found in Gao and Ting-Toomey's (1998) book which demonstrates how cultural values affect intercultural communication. For instance, by analyzing interpersonal and the "self to others" relationships underlying Chinese culture and then comparing it to North American values, Gao and Ting-Toomey (1998) illustrate the characteristics of Chinese communication and explain how miscommunication between Chinese and North Americans often occurs. In order to communicate successfully with Chinese people, as suggested by the authors, the Western learners of Chinese have to understand the cultural values behind the conversation, such as the concepts of "人情 rénqíng – human feeling", "[回]报 [huí]bào – reciprocity" and "面子 miànzi – face".

Since Swedish culture, as elucidated in the previous sections, is similar to the American, and since there is very limited reference comparing Swedish and Chinese culture, many specifications that have been highlighted in the Gao and Ting-Toomey's (1998) would still be valid to this research study for comparing and investigating these two cultures.

#### *2.3.4 REVEALING HIDDEN CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN THE TARGET LANGUAGES*

Many educators believe that culture and language are not two separate objects. Language is one of the products of culture and thus culture is embedded in the language. Due to this cultural integration within language, in addition to teaching grammar and other linguistic components, there are two crucial tasks that must be emphasized in foreign language education: the introduction of the differences of cross-cultural values between the target culture and the students' culture as well as the disclosure of the hidden cultural differences permeating the target language.

The cross-cultural differences between China and the West, in particularly the Swedish culture, have been identified in the previous section. The next task should focus on disclosing the cultural elements that are integrated in the Chinese language. Research regarding how language reflects the perceptions, beliefs and value systems of a culture has been presented over the course of the past few decades (e.g. Chen, J., 1994; Hu, M., 1993; Li, R., 1993; Peng, Z., 2007; Wang, K., 1994 and Zhang, Y., 1994). Among them, Chen, G. (1992, 1997) proposes a systematic method to divide language-related "culture" into three linguistic perspectives: semantics, syntax and pragmatics. This study follows Chen's proposal when analyzing the cultural differences between the

Chinese and English languages. Since the research subjects in this study are Swedish beginner learners of Chinese, the Swedish language is also included in the following discussion whenever it is different from the English language.

There are several reasons why this research study did not compare the Chinese and Swedish languages directly from scratch. Firstly, even though the subjects in this study are Swedish beginner learners of Chinese, the instruction languages in the target course, Chinese 1, are Chinese and English. Moreover, all the teaching and learning materials are written in both English and Chinese. Secondly, there are very limited resources or reference comparing the Swedish and Chinese languages. Thirdly, due to the fact that English and Swedish are both Germanic languages, they share many similarities (Andersson, 2001). Taking these factors into consideration, this study thus mainly compares the Chinese and English languages but complementing some unique Swedish language features in this section. In order to increase the validity and reliability of the comparisons conducted in the following section, the researcher consulted two language teachers in Sweden with regard to the cultural differences between the Chinese, English and Swedish languages. One of them is a university lecturer in Dalarna University who teaches Swedish as a foreign language. Another one is a former Swedish high school teacher who taught English as a second language for more than 10 years. Their experience and expertise of these two languages have been utilized to justify the discussion below.

#### **2.3.4.1 Cultural Differences in Chinese and English Semantics**



Two significant aspects of language that reflect cultural elements are vocabulary and aphorisms (Chang, J.-Y., 1995; Hu, W., 1999; Ma, D., 2007; Yang, Y., 2005). Because of the awareness of harmony and unity in Chinese culture, Chinese people tend to add a suffix or synonym to change a mono-syllabic word into a disyllable. For instance, the suffix “子 (zi)” is added to “桌 (zhuō)” forming the word “桌子 (zhuō zi)” – desk/table.

Furthermore, the emphasis on relativism and dialectics in Chinese philosophy are manifested by linking two symmetrical concepts to form an idiom in the Chinese language. The idiom, “水深火热 (shuǐshēn huǒrè)” can illustrate this point<sup>11</sup>.

According to Chang, J.-Y. (1995, p.9), more than 95% of the idioms in Chinese are formed by four characters based on a 2 + 2 pattern<sup>12</sup>. English does not express “harmony” in this way. Usually the development of synonyms in English reflects the progressive and curious nature of Western culture.

Chang, J.-Y. (1995) categorizes some vocabulary as “culturally-loaded” words since they directly or indirectly reflect Chinese culture. We can classify them into five categories, based on their same or different denotations and connotations:

A. Neither the denotation nor connotation of a word is the same or similar in Chinese and English. There is a lexical gap for those culturally specific words between the

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<sup>11</sup> “水深火热 (shuǐ shēn huǒ rè)” - Direct translation: Water is deep, fire is hot. Figurative meaning: be in extreme misery. Cultural background: Water and fire are two opposite forces in the theory of five elements.

<sup>12</sup> A disyllabic Chinese word is formed by combining two morphemes or two monosyllabic words which are both presented by two characters. 2 + 2 here refers to one two-character combination + another two-character combination.

two languages and they cannot be translated directly from one language to another (Ma, D., 2007), for instance, “阴阳 yīn yáng - Yin and Yang” and “太极拳 tàijí quán - tai chi chuan”.

- B. Both the denotation and connotation of a word are the same or similar in Chinese and English. However, as commented by Hu, W. (1999), there is not as much vocabulary that shares the same denotative and connotative meanings in both languages. One of the few examples is “fox” which refers to the same animal with similar connotations – sly, cunning and crafty while “bee” represents hardworking (Du, S., 2011).
- C. The denotation of a word is the same or similar in Chinese and English but the connotation is different. One example is “intellectual”. In English, “intellectual” refers to a well-educated person capable of critical thinking and scholarly activity. However, “intellectual” in Chinese covers a much broader scope of occupations.<sup>13</sup>
- D. The denotation of a word is the same or similar in Chinese and English while it only has a connotative meaning in Chinese but not in English or vice versa. A typical example can be found in the Chinese concept of number “four”.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> There are a lot of examples found in this category. For example, the interpretation of time by using the morphemes, “上 shang-up” and “下 xia -down” and other concepts of time in Chinese language have been discussed (Du, S., 2011; Lan, C., 1999). Other examples are related to colors (Chang, Y., 1995; Du, S., 2011; Hu, W., 1999; Tang, Z., 1996; Yang, Y., 2005; and Zhao, C., 2007) and animals (Chang, J.-Y., 1995; Hu, W., 1999; Wang, W., 2006; Wang, N., 2011; Wu, L. & Xie, J., 2006).

<sup>14</sup> Typical examples can be found in the Chinese concepts of numbers (Bai, R., 2011; Chang, Y., 1995; Du, S., 2011; Engelhard, 2012; Hu, W., 1999; Roach, 2011; Su, L.-M. & Wu, F., 2012) and idioms and proverbs (Bai, R., 2011; Gao, G., 2012; Liu, H., 2007; Liu, L., 2011; Wang, N., 2011; Xu, J., 2009; Yu, Z., 2009).

E. The denotation of a word is the same or similar in Chinese and English but its concept can be further classified in detail in Chinese but not in English or vice versa. Hu, W. (1999) elaborates this point by comparing the complex kinship appellation system of the Han people in China to English. For example, there are five appellation titles in Chinese for which English simply uses the word “uncle”.<sup>15</sup> Different from English but similar to Chinese, the Swedish language has three words describing uncle: “farbror – father’s brother”, “morbror – mother’s brother” and “onkel – either father’s or mother’s brother”.

#### **2.3.4.2 Cultural Differences in Chinese and English Syntax**

In the past decades, linguists have made great efforts to compare the syntax of Chinese and English. In the 1940s, the preeminent linguist Wang Li introduced the concepts of “parataxis” and “hypotaxis” to represent the syntactic characteristics of Chinese and English. His categorization is generally accepted by scholars in China (Ma, D., 2007) and has inspired many followers (Tse, Y., 2010).

##### *Parataxis vs. Hypotaxis*

As a paratactic language, Chinese syntax is semantically distinctive with the absence of complex positional variations, declensions and inflections. Li, J. (2011) describes the Chinese syntactic construction as a 'meaning-oriented message-transfer mechanism' which is comparatively loose. Message-segments are logically strung together one after

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<sup>15</sup> The five appellative titles refer to the father's elder brother, the father's younger brother, both the mother's elder and younger brothers, the husband of the father's elder and younger sisters and the husband of the mother's elder and younger sisters.

one, just like the sections of a bamboo stem (p. 194). In other words, the syntactic rules of Chinese are not based on an explicit grammar but rather on implicit semantics.

Because of the minimal natural of syntax in the Chinese language, words can only be understood in the context of the sentence (Freeman and Habermann, 1996).

This paratactic quality of the Chinese language contrasts significantly to hypotactic English in which the later places emphasis on formal structures rather than the individual units of the sentences. Li, J. (2012) refers to English as a “form-oriented message-transfer mechanism” and its syntactic construction is based on the subject-predicate structure from which it extends with various phrases and subordinate clauses, just like a tree (p.192). Swedish syntax is less analytical than English (Andersson, 2001) but is also form oriented. For example, the verb must always be the second element of the sentence.

### *Impersonal vs. Personal*

According to Logan (1986, p.55), the Western alphabet is more atomistic and analytic by nature making it a perfect tool for classifying and establishing codified laws, advancing scientific investigations and so on. A typical example is a preference for using the impersonal noun “it” as a subject or object with the passive voice in English. The use of the impersonal noun “it” permits the narrator to remain objective. This use of the passive voice allows the narrator to conceal or omit the agent in order to avoid any unnecessary personal judgments. . This passive construction is also widely used in Swedish to the same end, using the Swedish pronoun “det - it” as the subject.

When comparing Chinese to English, Hansen (1983, p.vii) argues that Chinese is essentially pictographic and encourages viewing the world as continuous and interdependent, as well as a part-whole synthesis. This belief is a reflection of collectivism in Chinese culture. The preference for using personal nouns as a subject and the avoidance of the passive form in Chinese sentences are good examples to demonstrate this point. Ma, D. (2007) elaborates that using a personal noun as a subject manifests the humanity of the Chinese language in which people communicate who the agent is and its relationship to the whole context. Therefore, Chinese people often avoid using passive voice by making the recipient of the action the topic of the sentence and by using verbs that implicitly refer to a passive action. Most English learners of Chinese find this practice confusing as they are not familiar with the implicit cultural elements that permeate the syntactic structure of the passive voice in Chinese.

#### *Concrete vs. Abstract*

The syntactic differences between Chinese and English are a reflection of the “high” or “low context” culture as suggested by Hall (1977). As a high context culture, Chinese people advocate the notion that “man is an integrated part of nature”. Under this belief, Shen, X. (2011) argues that language and environment are intertwined so that people must understand their language through its social contexts. The practice of empiricism helps people to understand reality from specific experiences rather than from abstract concepts. Therefore, Chinese people prefer to use verbs and category words as a substitute for actions nouns, using concrete or figurative terms to make explicit any abstract meanings or ideas. The extensive number of measure words in the Chinese language is a good example of this phenomenon.

### *Static vs. Dynamic*

Since verbs in English are governed by syntactic rules and each sentence usually has a principal verb, there is a tendency for people to use nouns, including abstract nouns, adjectives, adverbs and prepositional phrases to enrich a sentence. Ma, D. (2007) describes English as a static language due to this characteristic. On the contrary, Chinese verbs are free from inflection and this allows Chinese people to use a large numbers of verbs in V-O constructions, serial verb constructions and concurrent action constructions when making sentences. Moreover, Chinese verbs can be used as different parts of speech, such as the subject, object, attributive, etc. The flexibility in utilizing verbs in the Chinese language encourages dynamic descriptions (Shen, X., 2011).

### *No Definitive Dichotomy*

It is important to note that these dichotomies of syntactic characteristics discussed above are not absolute. Li, J. (2012) argues that the Chinese language is not solely paratactic since it also has hypotactic resources. However, to understand the syntactic culture of a language does indeed enhance our knowledge of the target language's logic.

#### **2.3.4.3 Cultural Differences in Chinese and English Pragmatics**

Understanding the cultural differences between Chinese and English pragmatics is a crucial milestone toward successful intercultural communication for English-speaking learners of Chinese. Therefore, in the most recent *Standards for Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages* (Hanban, 2007b), a thorough knowledge of pragmatics is

required for CFL teachers to enhance their students' communicative competence. The basic concepts included in the Standards are: pragmatics, conversational structures, the cooperative and politeness principle, Grice's maxims, the tact maxim, the speech act theory and its classification (Hanban, 2007b, p.28).

Among the concepts listed in the Standards, Bi, J. (2009) argues that the politeness principle is the most relevant topic for CFL education since many failures involving intercultural communication are due to cross-cultural differences regarding the politeness principles which is inherent in the target language. Given this premise, it is important to fully understand the principle of politeness as reflected in both the Chinese and English languages.

#### *Principle of Politeness in the West*

In the West, Brown and Levinson (1978) propose a theory of "face-threatening acts" in communication and place their central discussion about "face" – the public self-image that every member wants for himself in a society (p.66). "Face", according to Brown and Levinson, consists of two related but antonymous aspects – positive face and negative face. The former refers to a positive self-image and personal desire to have the appreciation and approval of other members of society. The latter defines the right to freedom of action without being impeded by others. In human communication, both verbal and non-verbal, the positive and negative face of the interlocutors are often threatened. In order to maintain both kinds of "face" and to minimize the damage caused by possible face-threatening acts, politeness strategies are employed in the conversation.

Gricean maxims and the cooperative principle (GCP) are designed to describe how interlocutors should communicate with each other in a common social situation in order to achieve effective communication. However, these maxims have been criticized for neglecting the intercultural differences among languages and can be misinterpreted as a guideline for etiquette or moral considerations. To compensate for the shortcomings of these maxims, Leech's (1983, p.104) politeness principle argues that “politeness is an important missing link between the GCP (Gricean Cooperative Principle) and the problem of how to relate sense to force”. Leech examines the absolute sense of politeness and regards it as a set of scales which is dichotomized into positive and negative poles. Therefore, all six maxims of Leech's politeness principle are based on two antonymous concepts - to “minimize a cost” or to “maximize benefit” (Leech, 1983, p.132)<sup>16</sup>.

After reviewing these three influential pragmatic theories as Hanban recommended in *Standards for Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages* (Hanban, 2007b), it is high time to scrutinize research on Chinese pragmatics and Chinese principle of politeness.

### *Principle of Politeness in China*

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<sup>16</sup> The six Leech maxim are: 1. Tact Maxim: a) minimize cost to others; b) maximize benefit to others; 2. Generosity Maxim: a) minimize benefit to self; b) maximize cost to self; 3. Approbation Maxim: a) minimize dispraise of other; b) maximize praise of others; 4. Modesty Maxim: a) minimize praise to self; b) maximize dispraise of self; 5. Agreement Maxim: a) minimize disagreement between self and others; b) maximize agreement between self and others; 6. Sympathy Maxim: a) minimize antipathy between self and others; b) maximize sympathy between self and others.



In China, the pragmatic use of language and politeness gradually drew the attention of scholars in the early 1980s (Huang, Y., 2008). Gu, Y. (1990, 1992) argues that Chinese pragmatic culture has distinctive characteristics which cannot fit into Western models since different cultures have diverse perceptions of politeness. Gu, Y. traces the origin of politeness in China and suggests that the Chinese word “礼貌 lǐ mào” is not equivalent to the word “politeness” in English. As recorded in the opening of “礼记 Lǐ Jì – Book of Rites”, “humble yourself but show respect to others” is the basic principle of politeness in ancient China and it still remains in the core conception of “礼貌 lǐ mào” today. Using Leech's principle of politeness as a blueprint, Gu, Y. (1992) designed five maxims of politeness in the Chinese language. These maxims of politeness are regarded as a representative theory for analyzing Chinese politeness in contemporary Chinese pragmatic field and it provides a theoretical framework for latter research studies (such as the work conducted by Huang, Y., 2008 and Zhu, J. & Bao, Y., 2010). In the following, the five maxims are introduced while related research studies are summarized and discussed.

**Self-Denigration Maxim**, the first politeness maxim proposed by Gu, Y. (1992), is the self-denigration maxim which promotes denigrating oneself and elevating others. This maxim is based in Confucianism and thus cannot be found in the Western models of politeness. Some scholars (Cheng, D., 2011; Huang, Y., 2008; Li, J., 2011; Sun, B., 2011; Tang, C. & Zhang, G.Q., 2009; Yao, J., 2011; Yu, M., 2011; Zhu, J. & Bao, Y., 2010) have compared the pragmatic use of Chinese and English compliments and their findings consistently reveal that in Chinese society, the cultural function of complimentary behavior is used to demonstrate the speaker's concern or appreciation

for the hearer. It is not used to offer personal solidarity. Because of this nature, compliments are socially restricted and morally governed. Even though people in the West also have a modesty maxim in politeness, people will not debase themselves to show their modesty. Within a strategy of maximizing praise to others and avoiding threats to the positive face of the speaker, Western people generally accept compliments with pleasure.

**Address-Term Maxim**, the second Chinese politeness maxim proposed by Gu, Y. (1992), is the address-term maxim which governs the use of appropriate address terms in communication. To show one's respect to seniors, people will address them by adding an "age-identifier, or, in order to bridge the gap between two people, one can address the other by "surname/occupation + social kinship term". One crucial aspect of the address-term maxim in the Chinese language is also the use of one's surname in the public domain. In the West, however, people often address each other by their first name regardless of their age or social relation. Their surname, on the other hand, is private and cannot be used as an address term unless it is combined with another title (Gu, Y., 1990, p.250). This phenomenon demonstrates the advocacy of individualism in Western culture (Wang, S., 2010).

**Refinement Maxim** emphasizes the use of refined language, which includes the use of euphemisms and indirect expression while discouraging the use of foul language. In both Chinese and English, some topics such as death, disease and excretion are taboo. Some topics related to sex and the human body functions are regarded as foul and vulgar and thus should not be discussed directly (Huang, Y., 2012; Gu, Y., 1992; Guo, Q., 2010;

Ren, F., 2012). For religious reasons, the names of gods and devils are often taboo. Moreover, people are inclined to avoid using the words “old” or “aged” to describe people since such words can imply a “uselessness” (Ren, F., 2012, p.149). Unlike the West, Chinese people have been taught to respect for the elderly for thousands of years and the word “old” has a positive connotation. Thus there is no euphemism in Chinese for the words “old” and “aged” (Liu, H., 2007, p.136).

**Agreement Maxim** is the fourth maxim which aims to maximize agreement and harmony between interlocutors or to minimize any disagreements which may arise. As Gu, Y. (1992) commented, this maxim is similar to Leech's approbation maxim and the agreement maxim in which the interlocutors' face is taken into consideration in both languages. The difference is that Brown and Levinson's face theory is individualistically oriented while in Chinese “face” is more collectively oriented. Under the agreement maxim, the positive face described by Western scholars is analogous to the Chinese concept of face, whereas the negative face is not. Bu, J.'s (2011) research about suggestion-making and Lee-Wang's (1994) research regarding request strategies can be used to clarify this point. When making a suggestion or a request, the English-speaking participants tend to use indirect strategies as any unsolicited suggestion can be considered as an invasion of the hearer's negative face and thus be regarded as impolite or offensive. On the contrary, the Chinese participants prefer to use either direct or hedged suggestion strategies. Bu, J. (2011, p.33) explains that suggestion-making is a kind of rapport-building strategy for solidarity in Chinese culture and it is regarded as a valued behavior that can help maintain the harmony of interpersonal relationships in a group.

**Virtues-Words-Deeds Maxim** is the last maxim proposed by Gu, Y. (1992) which intends to minimize cost and maximize benefits to others at the motivational level, as well as maximizing the benefit received and minimizing the cost to oneself at the conversational level. This maxim is analogous to Leech's tact and generosity maxims but is governed by the principle of Chinese politeness (Gu, Y., 1992, p.252). An invitation is a typical speech act which can illustrate this point. In the West, an invitation can be a linear three-step conversation (Zhu, J. & Bao, Y., 2010). Chinese invitation, however, will normally involve a series of negotiations because of the need of demonstrating one's politeness in this communication. The length of the negotiations is based on the nature and scale of the invitation and the degree of intimacy between the inviter and invitee (Tseng, M., 1999).

#### **2.3.4.4 The Dynamic Nature of Culture and Language – keep the language up-to-date**

The pragmatic use of language also reflects the contemporary culture. The research conducted by Chen, R. and Yang, D. (2010) shows contrast greatly with previous studies conducted by Chen, R. (1993) and other scholars (Cheng, D., 2011; Huang, Y., 2008; Li, J., 2011; Sun, D., 2011; Yao, J., 2011; Yu, M., 2011; Zhu, J. & Bao, J., 2010) regarding strategies for compliments in Chinese. Chen, R. and Yang, D.'s research finds that the Xi'an participants accept compliments as often as English and German native speakers. They argue that this change in attitude is due to the increased influence of Western culture since the 1990s. The increased intercultural communication between nations also stimulates language exchanges and gives rise to an increase in the number of borrowed words, the use of code-switching between languages and even changes in

grammatical structures. Scholars (Guo, H., 2007; He, Y., 2006, 2008; Wei, H., 2006) have illustrated the phenomenon of Chinese Europeanization in modern Chinese in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. One example is the wider syntactic use of “bèi” sentences in Chinese today (Wei, H., 2006). By keeping in mind the dynamic nature of culture and language, the English-speaking learner of Chinese can avoid inaccurate stereotypes and generalizations about these two languages. It is also important for the teachers to integrate contemporary culture and language in their CFL classes.

### *2.3.5 ENCOMPASSING CULTURE IN CFL EDUCATION – TOWARDS INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE*

Since the 1980s, Chinese scholars have devoted much time to exploring and debating the scope, contents and approaches needed for successful CFL education. When the ICCLE was published in 2008, some controversial issues were resolved, such as when to implement intercultural communication into CFL education. Nonetheless, the ICCLE is only a curriculum guideline for educators; the concrete contents have to be designed by the institutions or by teachers themselves. Given this premise, it is necessary for teachers to identify the cross-cultural differences with the target language, such as the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic use of the language, and then to include them in present-day syllabi. This is not an easy task since there are limited practical examples in these areas of CFL education.

## **2.4 DISTANCE LEARNING OF CFL EDUCATION**

The proposed investigation is an action research study which aims to implement the intercultural communication theory in an actual Internet-based beginning level CFL

course. This discipline can be categorized as distance foreign language education. As compared to traditional CFL education, distance learning of CFL education has its own specifications and limitations which must be considered.

#### *2.4.1 DISTANCE LEARNING AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION*

Due to the rapid development of new information technologies, there has been a dramatic expansion of distance education in the last decade. Before the 1970s, distance learners had to deal with the first generation of print-based courses. Second generation courses models were developed in the 1970s and, first utilized broadcast technologies and later audio- and video-based multimedia language courses. According to White (2000), the use of multimedia in the second generation courses opened important areas of investigation into students' perceptions and preferences regarding different learning sources, such as print, audio, video and broadcasting. The third generation distance-learning resources were comprised of CD-ROM, Web presentations of course materials, asynchronous CMC and the computer assisted language learning (CALL) approach. Scholars focused on the effectiveness of distributing content and using technology for communication, such as email and video conferencing in distance/online language courses, as well as related pedagogy in this education and evaluation of the language learning experience (Chapelle, 2005). Along with the asynchronous third generation course models, Wang, Y. P. and Sun, C. Z. (2001) developed the fourth generation of distance language learning which offers interactive synchronous learning opportunities, such as the use of video-conferencing tools online.

However, these four periods do not have clear delineations. Currently, different “generation” course designs remain in use around the world in various forms, such as correspondence courses, multimedia courses, ICT-based interactive multimedia courses, as well as combinations of the above.

The role of communication technology seems to be crucial. The techno-deterministic perspective in media studies (McLuhan and his followers) claims that it is the medium itself that determines the nature of the communication process. Different media engage different senses with different limitations and different capacities. Applied to second-language learning, this suggests that using different means of communication (e.g. , campus based courses, self-study textbooks, audio-visual courses, Internet-based interactive courses, etc.) provide learners with different means for learning the language, which then affects the speed and nature of language learning since some communication channels are simply more effective for developing specific communicative skills.

#### *2.4.2 THE 4<sup>TH</sup> GENERATION OF DISTANCE FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION – A CONCERN OF CULTURAL STUDIES*

Research in distance language education has changed its focus from production and distribution of learning materials to communication and learning as a social process (Warschauer, 2002), supported by CMC and ICT. In this new digital era, Internet-based courses provide learners with immediate feedback from the teacher and/or from virtual classmates. Garrison (2000) describes it as the “postindustrial era of distance education” in which new directions for research have emerged regarding how to encourage the learners’ progress and persistence, reducing their isolation and providing

them with support. Other scholars have also produced, evaluated and improved course designs, investigating the teacher's role in online language instruction (Hampel & Stickler, 2005), online tutoring via audio conferencing systems (Hampel & Hauck, 2004), learners' responses to new learning spaces (White, 2003) and their sense of isolation in a virtual community (Pasfield-Neofitou, 2011). Some of them (Lin, Lee & Chen, 2004) also highlight the importance of providing adequate computing facilities and ICT training courses for both teachers and learners in distance courses.

Due to the increased concern for developing intercultural competence in foreign language education, scholars have been exploring different aspects of evaluating intercultural competence progress among distance language students and the extent to which materials and pedagogy in distance language courses can facilitate this process. For instance, Rogers and Wang (2009) produced a list of questions for future research into cross-cultural issues in online learning, including the range of research tools, methods and approaches appropriate to the new paradigm of distance foreign language education. Ros I Solé (2003) suggests that research is needed to examine and refine approaches for tracking how intercultural competence can be introduced to distance foreign language learners, particularly at the adult beginner's level.

The development of the fourth generation of ICT technology, such as the introduction of video-conferencing tools, creates a better learning environment for foreign language education in which the implementation of intercultural communication theories has become possible in distance language courses. O'Dowd (2000) carried out a pilot study which attempted to integrate video-conferencing technology into a task based cross-



cultural exchange project for learners of the Spanish and English languages. His research reveals the positive aspects of using this medium, such as enabling the learners to interact with native speakers “face to face” synchronously, allowing them to share multiple sources of information simultaneously in the virtual spaces and enhancing their cultural awareness of their own and the target culture. Yet he also presents the limitations of using this medium and suggests the use of “telecollaborative models” – a combination of communication technologies, such as email, web-based message boards and video-conferencing – for online intercultural exchange between the learners and their native target language partners (O’Dowd, 2005, 2007, 2009).

#### *2.4.3 DISTANCE CFL EDUCATION – AN INTERNET-BASED COURSE IN SWEDEN*

In this newly developed academic field, research about teaching CFL in distance mode is extremely limited. Wang, Y. P. (2004a, b) provides an empirical study of videoconferencing with eight distance language learners of Chinese and explores the capabilities of the video-conferencing tool NetMeeting and the participants’ perceptions of this new learning environment. According to Wang, the new generation video-conferencing tools, such as NetMeeting, allow better audiovisual interaction between the teacher and students, greatly enriching the learning environment for language learners in virtual spaces. However, Wang, Y. P.’s research did not examine the language learning results based on this specific learning environment. Inspired by Wang, Y. P., Xiao, M.’s (2007) empirical study was conducted in order to investigate the potential use of video-conferencing with native speakers of English to improve the English language skills of Chinese students. By examining the results of these activities in term of fluency, accuracy and complexity, Xiao, M.’s study demonstrated the

positive effects of using this tool to improve the learners' language proficiency and cross-cultural awareness.

As one of the pioneer universities in Sweden to offer distance education to students, Dalarna University was the first university to offer Internet-based CFL courses. These courses offer several channels for communication between teachers and students, such as asynchronous document exchange, email, text chat on Fronter (the main online communication platform), and online lectures utilizing synchronous video-conferencing (Marratech and later on, Adobe Connect).

Despite technical problems which generate limitations in using all the asynchronous and synchronous tools online (Cunningham, Beers Fägersten & Holmsten, 2010), most of the teaching pedagogies, such as role-play, discussions, writing exercises, etc., could be carried out with synchronous videoconferencing, even though students are physically located in countries all around the world (Rosenquist, 2008). This finding confirmed Wang, Y. P. (2004a, b) and Xiao, M.'s (2007) research and suggests that video-conferencing and the distance learning environment still could be successful tools in increasing the learner's confidence and the acquisition of intercultural communicative competence.

## 2.5 SUMMARY

In the past few decades, our world has experienced enormous changes due to the rapid development of information communication technology, internationalization and globalization. In response to these changes, intercultural communication has become the central focus of foreign language education. Following these trends, the intercultural

perspective of communication has gradually become an important issue in the teaching of CFL. Linguists and intercultural communication scholars have contributed the theoretical frameworks for intercultural language education, as well as cultural value orientation models which aim to investigate cross-cultural differences among nations. The differences between cultural studies and intercultural communication also became an important topic for clarification. Even though the publication of the ICCLE and the Standards have settled some debates regarding when and which cultural elements should be taught, most of the present research in this area is still on a theoretical level. The practical implementation of the intercultural perspective of communication remains an open field for scholars and teachers to explore.

The rapid development of information communication technology also facilitates the substantial growth of distance CFL education worldwide. A new generation of distance education, supported by fast maturing video-conferencing software and Internet-based learning tools in general, has generated new alternatives and possibilities for both CFL teaching and learning. It is already clear that this virtual learning environment can also support the implementation of intercultural communication theory into distance CFL education. Nonetheless, the ICCLE and research conducted on CFL education so far have focused mainly on traditional campus-based courses, leaving this newly established educational domain untouched. Under this premise, the ICCLE cannot be completely applied to the distance model of CFL education since distance education has its own specific requirements. Consequently, existing research related to distance teaching and learning of CFL is limited and not adequately theorized.

The main goal of this study is to contribute to this newly developed academic arena and to investigate how intercultural communication theory can best be implemented in a distance beginning level CFL course, and examine the process of students' acquisition of intercultural competence in a modified course.

## CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As discussed in Chapter Two, Byram's (1997) model of Intercultural communicative competence is one of the well-developed models that has been proposed for foreign language education. Some scholars, however, find it unsatisfactory as it solely focuses on the sociocultural component of the language and lacks connection to other competencies, such as linguistic and discourse competence. Due to this reason, many scholars endeavored to propose models of intercultural communicative competence for L2 language education. According to the discussion in section 2.2.1, most of the proposed models agree that linguistic competence is one of the fundamental components in L2 language education. However, scholars have different opinions when distinguishing other components, such as pragmatics and sociolinguistics. In addition, the role of strategic competence varies among the models.

In 2008, Hanban published the ICCLE model for teaching intercultural communication in CFL education. Different from Byram's model, the ICCLE model is comprehensive for foreign language education. It includes four components - linguistic knowledge, skills, strategies and cultural awareness and the ultimate outcome is linguistic competencies. Since this action research study is an investigation of distance CFL education, the ICCLE model is not completely compatible with this study. First of all, the model is proposed to campus-based face to face education, it does not cover all specifications of the newly developed teaching and learning methods that are utilized in distance education. Moreover, the understanding of intercultural competence in this

study is not only with regard to cultural awareness; rather, it is an umbrella concept which comprises intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity and intercultural adroitness (Chen & Starosta 1996, 1999).

After reviewing the similarities and differences among the models, this research study agrees with the categorization and definition of components in Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor's (2006) proposed theoretical framework and supports its hypotheses in allocating the components in the model. In the following section, a detailed introduction of each component and the characteristics of this model will be presented.

### 3.1 THE FIVE COMPONENTS OF USÓ-JUAN AND MARTÍNEZ-FLOR'S (2006) MODEL

As introduced in Chapter 2, this theoretical framework consists of five components, namely discourse competence, linguistic competence, pragmatic competence, strategic competence and intercultural competence (Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor, 2006, p. 17-18).

Linguistic competence here includes all the elements in the linguistic system, such as morphological inflections, phonological and orthographic system, grammar, vocabulary, sentence patterns, formulaic constructions, collocations and lexical resources.

Pragmatic competence consists of two types of knowledge. One is illocutionary competence, the ability to perform acceptable language functions and speech-act sets under the pragmatic conventions. The other component involves sociolinguistic

knowledge, such as sociopragmatic factors, which refers to the ability to adjust speech-act strategies according to the situational context or social variables.

Strategic competence in this model has two functions. First, it is the ability to utilize verbal and nonverbal communication strategies to successfully restore communication. Second, it is the knowledge of communication strategies that can be learned.

The innovative component in intercultural competence also consists of two parts. The first element refers to sociocultural knowledge of the target language community, dialects and cross-cultural awareness. The second component consists of nonverbal communication skills such as body language, the use of space, touching or silence. In short, this competence refers to the interlocutor's ability to behave appropriately in a flexible manner when communicating with others from a different culture. Intercultural competence is different from pragmatic competence as it reflects knowledge of the cultural aspects of the target language.

As suggested by the authors, discourse competence is placed at the center of this model and is the outcome of the language learning. In other words, discourse competence refers to the interlocutors' ability to select and sequence their utterance or sentence to achieve a cohesive and coherent spoken and written text based on the conventions of the culture of the interlocutors and the given purpose and situational context of the discourse.

As compared to other models, Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor's (2006) model explicitly demonstrates how the components – linguistic, pragmatic, strategic and intercultural

communication - interact with each other and their relation to discourse competence, the central constituent and the ultimate outcome of the learning process. This arrangement differs from the CEFR (2001) and the ICCLE (2008). By addressing the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in discourse competence, this framework logically elucidates how discourse is manifested through the four language channels. As clarified by Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006), the four skills should not be treated separately. Instead they should be integrated into discourse competence. This research study agrees with the authors' proposal and supports this arrangement.

The use of pragmatic competence, a broad concept as proposed in Bachman's (1990) model, makes the model simple and easy to apply as compared to the model proposed by Celce-Murcia (2008).

To address strategic competence parallel to the other components, this model is different from the models designed by Celce-Murcia (2008) and the CEFR (2008). It emphasizes that strategic competence, which is not only the metacognitive strategies but also the language learning strategies, can be learned just as the other components in the model.

More importantly, this model innovatively introduces a new component - intercultural competence. Even though the ICCLE (2008) has a similar component which is called "cultural awareness", it focuses mostly on fostering the learner's cross-cultural and global awareness. In Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor's (2006) model, this competence highlights not only the crucial role of fostering the learner's cross-cultural awareness but also the learner's intercultural communicational skills with regard to cross-cultural



communication. In other words, intercultural competence in this model corresponds to the umbrella concept as suggested by Chen & Starosta (1996, 1999) which is comprised of intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity and intercultural adroitness.

Furthermore, since this component is similar to Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence, the terms intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence are utilized interchangeably in this dissertation.

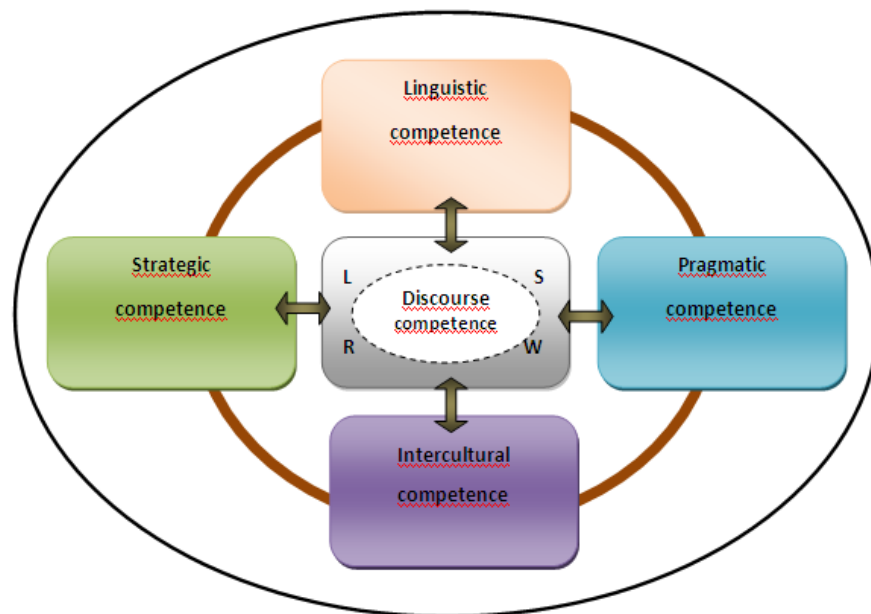
### 3.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REVISED FRAMEWORK

In order to make this model more compatible with the purpose of this action research study, a few modifications have been made. As Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006) assumed, the components in the model interact with one another and an improvement in one competence will enhance the rest of the competencies. With the purpose of explicitly demonstrating the interactive and dynamic force of this model, a circular line is added to connect all the components surrounding the core constituent.

The outer circle in the theoretical framework represents the physical and cultural environment of the communicative competence, including the teaching and learning characteristics of distance education. Within this defined academic arena, "culture" is thus "course-oriented" in which the contents and scope of culture should correspond to the syllabus of the target CFL course. With a purpose of enhancing student intercultural competence, the notion of culture in this research study represents the "communicative culture" as proposed by Zhang, Z. (1990, 1994) - the knowledge of a language and its culture which may cause communication problems for a non-native speaker. The contents of the "communicative culture" in this research study can be identified in two

categories. The first one refers to the cross-cultural differences between Chinese and Western cultures, and in particular the Swedish culture. The second one is the integrated cultural elements which permeate the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic cultures of the target languages.

The model is illustrated in Figure 2.



**FIGURE 2. A MODIFIED FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION**

This model is originally proposed by Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor's (2006, p.16). The four capital letters inside the discourse competence represent the four skills: L = Listening; S = Speaking; R = Reading; W = Writing.

### 3.3 THE HYPOTHESES

There are two hypotheses implied in this action research study when Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor's modified framework is applied.

Firstly, it assumes that the component of intercultural competence should be integrated into foreign language education at all levels. As suggested by Kramersch (1993), culture in foreign language learning is not an expendable fifth skill, it is always in the background, starting from the very beginning of the language course. Under this premise, intercultural competence should be included in CFL education together with other components of the model even at the beginning level.

Secondly, since all the components are interactive, it assumes that the enhancement of the learners' intercultural communicative competence in a foreign language will gradually enhance the other learning components and ultimately increase the communicative competence of the students.

### 3.4 INTEGRATING IC INTO CFL EDUCATION – A DEMONSTRATION

Learning a foreign language, as argued by Kramersch (1993), is discovering social norms associated with the target language. The emphasis on foreign language learning should thus be on how to act in different situations in the target culture in culturally appropriate manners (Byram 1997, Geogiou, 2009). For example, when saying goodbye “再见 Zài jiàn - Goodbye”, Chinese people usually add “好走 hǎo zǒu - walk well, take care/ 慢走 màn zǒu - walk slowly, take it easy” to show their concern for their guests. Quite often they will try to accompany their guests out, while the guests will try to dissuade them and say “请回吧 Qǐng huí ba - Please go home/ 请留步 Qǐng liú bù - Please don't bother to come any further/ 别出来了 Biè chū lái le - Please don't go out”. To follow the traditional mode of learning, Western learners are usually assigned to learn every Chinese word's pronunciation, the meaning of each phrase and then to memorize them.

Although Western learners might be able to understand every word and the meanings of the phrases, they might find it difficult to understand why the Chinese need to prolong the process of saying goodbye and thus it may be difficult for them to incorporate these phrases into their own communication strategies.

In order to enhance student intercultural competence regarding saying goodbye in Chinese, educators should first apply the Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor's modified framework when analyzing the topic of "goodbye" in the five components. Learning vocabulary related to saying goodbye belongs to linguistic competence in the framework. The use of expressions such as "好走 hǎo zǒu - walk well, take care/ 慢走 màn zǒu - walk slowly, take it easy" are subject to pragmatic competence. With the purpose of developing the learner's intercultural competence as suggested in this theoretical framework, educators should provide information regarding the cross-cultural differences of saying goodbye between Chinese people and Westerners by comparing Chinese and Western etiquette. A further discussion regarding Swedish culture might be proposed in this study since the students in this research study are Swedish. In addition, the educators should demonstrate the verbal and nonverbal communication strategies in this particular context. For example, how should a Westerner respond to this intercultural communication scenario in a culturally appropriate manner?

As suggested by the theoretical framework, when the intercultural competence is enhanced, such as by adding information regarding the cross-cultural difference of this pragmatic language usage between the source and the target languages and revealing

the semantic meanings of specific words, the learner's intercultural awareness and sensitivity will be enriched. They will then better understand the motivation behind the conversation, the selections and sequencing of the chosen words and phrases, the pragmatic usage and the related strategies that would apply in this particular social context. Consequently, the learners will have a better ability to behave in an appropriate manner when saying goodbye in both spoken and written Chinese – the enhancement of discourse competence.

Based on the hypotheses, this study will revise some contents of a current Internet-based CFL course for beginners (Chinese 1) with a focus on promoting and enhancing intercultural communicative competence.

## CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

The best approach to address the mentioned issues seems to be action research. Action research is a strategy working also with “soft data” (compared to “hard data”, produced by objective methods), and to reflect upon those soft data theoretically in further stages of the same research. Even more than in “grounded theory”, this approach allows the researcher to move back and forward between theories and data, and to add new theories and new data in the course of conducting the research.

### 4.1 ACTION RESEARCH

Since the late 1940s, action research has been employed by social scientists seeking closer tie between social theories and solutions to immediate social problems. It has been used in a variety of settings within the social sciences with growing popularity in academic areas such as organizational development, education, healthcare and social care.

#### *4.1.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF ACTION RESEARCH*

Denscombe (2010) summarizes the four defining characteristics of action research. Firstly, the objective of action research is dealing with practical issues or problems which have arisen as a routine part of activity “in the real world”, typically at work and in organizational settings. Secondly, change is regarded as an integral part of research both as a way of dealing with practical problems and as a way of discovering more about phenomena. Change is also involved on the level of professional self-

development and improvement which is based on practice. Thirdly, action research is a cyclical process. Research involves a feedback loop in which initial findings generate possibilities for change which are then implemented and evaluated as a prelude to further investigation. Susman (1983) elaborates the process and distinguishes five phases conducted within each research cycle: diagnosing, action planning, action taking, evaluating and, specifying learning. This process continues until the problem is resolved. The last characteristic of action research is participation. Practitioners are the crucial people in the research process as they are active, not passive (Denscombe, 2010, p.126). Winter (1987) shows that participants in the action research project are considered, at least, co-researchers. The principle of collaboration in action research assumes that each practitioner is equally significant as a potential source of data and ideas for future analysis.

Action research as a research methodology can be used in almost any settings whenever there are problems involving people, tasks and procedures for which a more desirable change is sought. When discussing the scope of action research that has previously been conducted, O'Brien (2001) argues that action research can even be applied in a Net-based environment<sup>17</sup>. In this new digital era, O'Brien suggests that future action research is needed to explore the potential for developing computer-mediated communications in a way that will enhance human interactions (O'Brien, 2001, p.12).

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<sup>17</sup> O'Brien (2001) gives two cases to illustrate this point: one case deals with managers of corporate networks employing action research techniques to facilitate large-scale changes to their information system. The other is a community-based action research project making use of computer communications to broaden participation.

#### *4.1.2 ACTION RESEARCH IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION*

According to Nasrollahi, Krish and Noor (2012), action research has been advocated as a legitimate educational research methodology since the 1970s and is regarded as a form of professional development for teachers. Wallace (2000) comments that since action research is usually conducted on a small scale and with the objective of solving existing problems, it is particularly applicable and beneficial for teachers carrying out research in foreign and second language classrooms. In “Curriculum Action Research”, McKernan (1996: 1) argues that the curriculum can be improved through action research, and that teachers and other practitioners are best placed to conduct such an inquiry. The idea of the teacher as a researcher is, to McKernan, of crucial importance regarding both development of the profession and the curriculum in general. In fact, being a teacher is - or should be - a reflective profession, and teachers/researchers should be insiders and observers of the present curriculum, willing to break free from the old system and to establish a better and more progressive learning environment.

The advocacy of implementing action research in foreign and second language education has been increasingly promoted worldwide. In the past few decades, many scholars in Southeast Asia have carried out action research in their teaching. In China, Throne and Qiang (1996) advocate introducing the idea of action research into a teacher training program and encourage reflective teaching and classroom research among trainee teachers. Lin's (2006) doctoral dissertation is an exploratory study which aims to understand what action research may mean to English teachers in Taiwan. Akai (2007), a Japanese teacher, has tested some strategies to teach Japanese speech acts and examined the effectiveness of the strategies through action research. A group of



scholars from Japan and Korea (Suzuki, Watanabe, Yoshihara, Jung & Chang, 2009) has adopted an action research approach in order to maximize the benefits of using Internet-based interactive learning for process-oriented writing classes for Japanese and Korean learners of English. Despite the fact that the researchers experienced different difficulties and had limitations in their research, they all have demonstrated the positive effects of applying action research to their projects.

#### *4.1.3 EMPLOYING ACTION RESEARCH IN THIS STUDY*

In our context, action research seems to be especially well-suited both for analysis and improvement of existing and possible ways of teaching CFL in the distance mode.

The criticism of action research tends to be similar to the criticism levied against other interpretative methods that have been employed in the social sciences. From the traditional positivist perspective, the research procedure does not seem to be scientifically sound, allowing for individual bias. Notwithstanding its shortcoming, action research has been proven to be a strong methodology that can be used to capture certain kinds of data which can only be collected through reflective means, such as evaluations by teachers of their own research experiences. In order to deal with the danger of bias present in reflection-based action research, the optimal solution seems to be to complement the reflective part of the research by traditional objective methods, such as distributing and analyzing questionnaires, documentary data collections, interviews, etc. At best, all kinds of data should be utilized to draw a clear picture of the way intercultural communication perspectives can be applied to language courses.

## 4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

There is an argument that educators should place intercultural communicative competence at the center of foreign language education at the beginning of a student's language studies (Kramsh, 1993; Byram, 1997). This study shares this perspective and attempts to implement the intercultural communicative approach into the Internet-based Chinese integrated language course for beginning-level students at Dalarna University in Sweden (the Chinese 1 course).

#### *4.2.1 RESEARCH SETTINGS – THE CHINESE 1 COURSE*

The Chinese 1 course is a 50% part-time course accredited with 15 European university credit-points. This is a comprehensive language course that consists of two modules aiming to help students build a strong basis of Chinese proficiency in four language skills. Utilized within the speaking and listening module are text recordings, video clips, dictations, pronunciation drills, as well as sentence pattern drills within and outside the classroom with the purpose of preparing the students to understand sentences, questions and commands in Chinese, and ultimately to be able to respond in Chinese. In the reading and writing module, Chinese characters are introduced within the classroom and in written assignments which help the students build a solid foundation for reading and writing sentences and paragraphs in Chinese. More specifically, upon the successful completion of the course, students will be able to express themselves clearly in Chinese at a basic level, engage in conversations about various topics covered in the lessons, understand approximately 400 Chinese characters and 500 character-compounds, handle simple grammatical structures, as well as read and understand sentences and short passages with the aid of the Pinyin Romanization system.

The contents of the Chinese 1 course are based on a selected textbook which is called Chinese 1 textbook in this research study. The textbook is an important resource for designing teaching materials, assignments and the final written and oral examinations.

Since Chinese 1 is a structured course, teachers are required to follow the published syllabus. While teachers enjoy autonomy in teaching at Swedish institutions, any violations of the published course syllabus would not be tolerated. Because of this, permission must be granted before any research or reform can take place.

Due to the large number of students enrolled in the course each semester, two teachers are usually assigned to co-teach the course and share the workload equally.

Despite the fact that most of the students are Swedish, the teaching languages in this course are English and Chinese as this course is open to applicants from around the world.

As part of the Swedish educational system, the course has one two-hour lecture per week and a total of sixteen lectures in the entire course. In addition, students need to plan and study on their own under the teachers' guidance, such as preparing for the lecture prior to class and completing their assignments following the class. Student self-discipline is thus crucial for their learning.

The Chinese 1 course is different from traditional CFL courses as it is Internet-based. Utilizing fourth generation distance foreign language learning tools, the interactions and communication between the teachers and students in the Chinese 1 course are performed through asynchronous and synchronous online programs. For example, all

the lectures are presented via the Adobe Connect synchronous video-conferencing system. Besides the online lectures, students are expected to submit weekly assignments which focus on the four key training skills after each lecture. Email and the “Fronter” information exchange program are asynchronous tools used for communication. At the end of the course, students are required to complete oral and written examinations which are also conducted using Adobe Connect.

There are several important characteristics of this Chinese language course. First of all, the Internet-based format allows students to participate no matter where they may reside. Each semester there are students living outside Sweden who take the course. Secondly, the synchronous Adobe Connect video-conferencing enables teachers to utilize a wide range of pedagogies just as in a traditional learning environment, such as role-play and small group discussions. Yet it is crucial to note that the absence of physical interactions (personal face-to-face contact) between teachers and students, as well as among the peer students, can directly affect the course. Some learners, for example, may feel detached and alone in the virtual learning environment and eventually drop the course. In addition, since non-verbal communication is limited in the virtual classroom, it is more demanding for teachers to create online class activities. A final and often decisive factor is the technical aspect of distance education. Students need to have the right equipment and Internet connectivity in order to participate in the class. This crucial factor, nonetheless, is beyond the control of the teacher.

#### *4.2.2 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS*

Participants in this action research study include the teacher (who is also the researcher) and the Swedish Beginning-level students of Chinese. The researcher has been teaching the Internet-based Chinese 1 course since 2007. The researcher acts as the insider as well as the observer in this study.

The composition of students enrolled in this course is complex and varies in each semester. There are usually around 90 students when the course begins but only about 60 will complete the entire course. Since the Swedish educational system allows students from around the world to study in this course as long as they fulfil the qualification requirements, students vary in age, educational qualifications, professions and nationalities. Under this premise, even though it is a course for beginning-level students, the students' backgrounds are diverse. The students can be categorized as follows: 1) Swedish beginning-level students of Chinese; 2) Swedish advanced-level students of Chinese; 3) native Chinese students; 4) non-Swedish European students and students from other countries.

Swedish beginning-level students of Chinese are Swedish students who have no previous experience learning the Chinese language or who have studied Chinese for no more than 6 months. They comprise approximately 60% of the participants in this course and are the demographic upon which this study shall focus. Since they have very limited knowledge of the Chinese language, they have the highest drop-out rate as compared to the other groups in the course.

Swedish advanced-level students of Chinese refer to the Swedish students who have already studied Chinese for more than 6 months. Typically, this group comprises

roughly 15% of the students in the course. Since this action research study focuses on how the Swedish beginning-level students of Chinese develop the ability to engage in competent intercultural communication, this group is not the target of this study.

Native Chinese students who joined this course can be further divided into two small groups – the native Chinese students who came from China or other Chinese societies and the Chinese students who were born or raised in Sweden. They are about 15% of the total student population. Since they already know or have been exposed to Chinese culture, they are not included in this study.

There are about 10% of students who come from other countries. Since there are cultural differences due to their backgrounds which cannot be covered in this study, those students are also excluded.

In order to investigate how Swedish beginning-level students of Chinese develop their intercultural communication skills, one control group and two experimental groups were established in order to make a comparison between the development of students who received traditional and students who received enhanced instruction. The traditional instruction refers to the grammar-oriented teaching of CFL in which most effort and time are devoted to developing student linguistic competence, such as pattern drills of grammatical structures. The enhanced instruction focused on promoting student intercultural competence so that the learners can communicate in a culturally appropriate manner. In practice, the pilot group and control group simply followed the original course curriculum while the experimental groups were taught with the reworked syllabus based on the intercultural communication approach. The

arrangement and implementation of the groups were based on the action research cycles.

#### *4.2.3 ACTION RESEARCH CYCLES*

As discussed earlier, action research is a cyclical process which emphasizes feedback and continuous evaluations for future improvements. In each action research cycle, researchers must engage in five specific phases, such as diagnosing, action planning, action taking, evaluating and, specifying learning (Susman, 1983).

Due to administrative considerations and the technical limitations of Fronter, it is not possible to teach both the control and target groups at the same time. Due to this limitation, the first research cycle was assigned to a pilot group (hereafter referred to as the VT13 pilot group) in the spring semester, 2013. The main objective for setting up the pilot group was to investigate how students developed their intercultural competence in the original Chinese 1 course and the feasibility and effectiveness of the methodology designed for this study. In this research cycle, the researcher first reviewed the present contents of the course, the course textbook and the teaching materials. Special attention was focused on the textbook's approach and methodology for teaching Chinese culture. In order to shed light on the hidden cultural elements in the Chinese language, the textbook was examined from the perspectives of the modified theoretical framework. After analyzing the contents of both the textbook and the entire course, a numbers of cultural questions were created and integrated into the students' assignments and final written exam with the purpose of assessing the level of intercultural competence the students acquired from the course. In order to assess how

interculturally sensitive the students were, the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale<sup>18</sup> was utilized at the start of the course. Furthermore, interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data at the end of the course. When the spring semester was completed, the researcher analyzed and evaluated the data collected from the pilot group.

The second research cycle began in the autumn semester of 2013. The researcher revised several problematic cultural questions in the pilot study. In addition, since a new edition of the textbook was introduced during that semester, reviewing the contents of the new textbook thus became a crucial task for the researcher. After modifying the cultural questions, the researcher began teaching the control group (hereafter referred to as the HT13 control group). The Intercultural Sensitivity Scale was utilized and interviews were conducted just as with the pilot group.

The implementation of two experimental groups in 2014 was the third research cycle in this study. These were called VT14 Experimental Group 1 which began in the spring semester and HT14 Experimental Group 2 which started in the autumn. The purpose of having two experimental groups was to collect data from enough subjects for adequate data analysis. At the beginning of this cycle, the researcher analyzed the performance of the VT13 pilot group and the HT13 control group. Based on their results, the researcher then made changes to the teaching plan, such as revising the course materials regarding intercultural competence and evaluating the intercultural differences in all the components of the theoretical framework. The integration of cultural elements, such as

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<sup>18</sup> The Intercultural Sensitivity Scale is introduced in the next section of this chapter, p.109.



semantic, syntactic and pragmatic culture, into the present Chinese 1 course was the next crucial task in this study. The integration faced two challenges. Firstly, since this course has already been developed, any large or radical modification of the course content was not allowed since it would violate the original course syllabus. Secondly, integrating a new intercultural communication component into the present Chinese 1 course would inevitably increase the contents of the course. Keeping the course workload at the right level for both teaching and learning thus became a great challenge. To overcome these limitations, a flipped classroom approach was implemented and a new set of materials – scalable tasks – was designed to integrate the explicit and implicit components of intercultural competence into the course and the textbook. Since the subjects were mainly English-speaking Swedish students, the differences between Swedish/English and Swedish/Chinese cultures and languages were also emphasized. By completing the tasks, students would be able to increase their intercultural awareness and eventually improve their intercultural competence. Last but not least, similar to the control group, the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale was utilized and interviews were conducted at the end of the course. The three research cycles were summarized in Table 1 below.

**TABLE 1. THE THREE ACTION RESEARCH CYCLES**

Cycle	Period	Research Group	Data Collection
The 1 <sup>st</sup> cycle	Spring semester, 2013	The VT13 pilot group	1. ISS 2. Cultural questions
The 2 <sup>nd</sup> cycle	Autumn semester, 2013	The HT13 control group	1. ISS 2. Modified cultural questions
The 3 <sup>rd</sup> cycle	Year 2014	VT14 experimental group 1 HT14 experimental group 2	1. ISS 2. Modified cultural questions 3. Scalable tasks

By the end of 2014, the third research cycle was completed. The findings of this research cycle will be the basis for future action research planning.

### 4.3 DATA COLLECTION

Action research is one of the qualitative research paradigms and its data gathering methods can be varied. Based on the principle of triangulation, the research data in this study was collected in different ways in order to increase its validity and reliability.

#### *4.3.1 DOCUMENTARY DATA COLLECTION*

Due to limited resources, the teacher has only one two-hour lecture per week and a total of sixteen lectures for the entire course. The remainder of the time, the students are required to work independently with the course materials and assignments. This course structure forces the researcher to rely on documentary data collection. Consequently, documentary data is the largest component of the entire data base, including the official documents and syllabus of the Chinese 1 course, the teaching materials, as well as the cultural questions that were integrated into student assignments and the examination.

##### **4.3.1.1 Official documentary data for the Chinese 1 course**

In order to apply the framework of intercultural communicative competence into the current Chinese 1 course, the researcher first studied the official documents of the course. These documents included the existing course syllabus, the teaching materials, the lesson plans, the textbook, the assignments designed for students and the examinations. After the revision of the documents, the researcher could then propose new teaching and learning activities that could stimulate and enhance the students'

awareness of intercultural communication. In order to increase the validity of the data collected from the Chinese I course, the researcher compared the Chinese 1 course's textbook to two different textbooks used at other universities in Sweden.

#### **4.3.1.2 Cultural questions**

In order to collect information that can reflect the intercultural communication skills which the students obtained at different stages of the course, a total of 41 cultural questions were designed and implemented in the pilot study. The first 30 cultural questions were integrated into 10 written assignments (out of 15) and one spoken assignment (out of three). The other 11 questions were included in the final exam in order to retest how consistently the students were able to answer the additional questions regarding Chinese culture.

Among these 41 cultural questions, 17 of them were multiple choices and 24 were open-ended questions. All the open-ended questions were designed utilizing a task-based approach with the purpose of illustrating the level of sensitivity demonstrated by the students with regard to cultural differences and intercultural communication. For example, students were asked to compose a telephone dialogue between a student and a teacher based on a specific social situation. In this task, students had to demonstrate whether they could make a phone call according to Chinese etiquette, such as politely addressing their teacher on the phone, making use of “您 nín – the second person formal personal pronoun” appropriately and consistently, composing the dialogue utilizing the correct turn-taking sequence and so on. In order to increase the “reliability”

of the questions, all topics were tested at least two times in the assignments or included on the exam.

After the pilot study, the cultural questions were reviewed and modified. The purpose of the modifications was not only to enhance the quality of the questions, but also to take into account the new edition of the textbook which had been introduced that semester. As a result of these adjustments, the 41 questions were reduced to 34. The first 25 questions were integrated into four written assignments (out of 15) and one spoken assignment (out of three). The other nine questions that were included on the final exam were unchanged so that they could be used to compare the performances of the control group and experimental groups that would be launched later. After this modification, all of the questions used in the study were open-ended (see Appendix Four). Table 2 illustrates the difference between the first version of the cultural questions and the modified version.

**TABLE 2. DESIGN OF CULTURAL QUESTIONS**

Cultural Questions	1st Version (The VT13 Pilot Group)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Version (All other groups)
<b>Total no. of cultural questions</b>	41	34
<b>No. and types of cultural questions integrated in assignments</b>	15 – Multiple choices 15 – Open-ended questions	25 – Open-ended questions
<b>Distribution of cultural questions in assignments</b>	10 – written assignments 1 – spoken assignment	4 – written assignments 1 – spoken assignment
<b>No. and types of cultural questions integrated in final exam</b>	2 – Multiple choices 9 – Open-ended questions	9 – Open-ended questions

In the Chinese 1 course, both assignments and the exam were open-book tests. In other words, students were allowed to check their course book, course materials and dictionary, etc., when doing the tasks. Nevertheless, students were given three hours to

finish their exam while they had a week to finish one assignment. This factor should be taken into consideration in the data analysis.

#### *4.3.2 QUESTIONNAIRE - INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY SCALE (ISS)*

This action research study utilized a questionnaire, Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.88$ ) which was developed by G. M. Chen and Starosta (2000) to investigate the subjects' intercultural sensitivity.

As Chen and Starosta (1996, 1998, 2000) argued, the concept of intercultural communicative competence is comprised of the cognitive, affective and behavioral ability of the learners in the process of intercultural communication. According to the authors, the affective ability is the learners' personal desire or motivations in learning, understanding, appreciating and accepting cultural differences. This aspect of intercultural communicative competence is represented by intercultural sensitivity.

After identifying the concept, Chen and Starosta (2000) propose a 24 item "Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS)" that can assess intercultural sensitivity. This scale is different from another instrument - the Intercultural Developmental Inventory (IDI) developed by Hammer & Bennett (1988). According to the authors, the difference between these two tools is that the ISS focuses purely on the affective dimension of intercultural communicative competence while the IDI treats intercultural sensitivity as the overall ability of the learners to develop, from the first stage of denial to the sixth stage of integration, the competence required to successfully communicate interculturally. In other words, it covers not only the affective aspect of the intercultural communicative competence but also the cognitive and behavioral abilities.

Both the ISS and IDI instruments have been proved as effective devices to measure one's level of intercultural sensitivity. While the IDI is widely used internationally (Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003; Hernandez & Kose, 2011; Paige, Jacobs-Casuuto, Yershova & DeJaeghere, 2003), the ISS has been verified by scholars in different academic fields with satisfactory results and was translated into various languages (Frita, Mollenberg & Chen, 2000; Hou, 2010; Peng, 2006; Staffon, 2003). In this study, the ISS was chosen in order to allow the research to investigate the subjects' intercultural sensitivity. Since this action research study aims to investigate how the implementation of the refocused course materials enhances students' intercultural communicative competence, students' intercultural sensitivity is one of the essential factors that could influence the results of the experiment. The ISS allows this study to reveal the affective ability of the students separately and thus is a more suitable instrument as compared to the IDI. Moreover, it is available without cost. The application of the IDI demands professional training which costs time and money beyond the scope of this study.

#### **4.3.2.1 Intercultural Sensitivity Scale – Contents**

To be interculturally sensitive, Chen and Starosta (2000) suggest that the learners have to possess six affective elements: self-esteem, self-monitoring, open-mindedness, empathy, interaction involvement and suspending judgment. When designing the ISS, the authors use other instruments to investigate the validity and reliability of the scales. All the results show that the students who received high scores in ISS are interculturally sensitive persons who tend to have more positive attitudes towards intercultural communications and to be more effective when handling these kinds of social

interactions. They are more attentive, empathic and tend to have high self-esteem and self-monitoring during the process of intercultural communication.

Based on their understanding of intercultural sensitivity, the ISS consists of 24 items (see Appendix One) that are categorized into five dimensions: interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment and interaction attentiveness.

The first dimension - interaction engagement – investigates the feelings of the participants when engaging in intercultural communications.

The second dimension - respect for cultural differences – refers to how much participants understand, orient to or tolerate cultural differences during the process of intercultural communication.

The third dimension - interaction confidence – investigates how confident participants are in an intercultural setting.

The fourth dimension - interaction enjoyment – focuses on revealing the participants' reactions towards intercultural communications. Are they positive or negative in their attitudes when communicating with people from other cultures?

The last dimension is interaction attentiveness. It concerns the attentiveness of the participants during intercultural interactions.

#### **4.3.2.2 Application of the ISS**

The action research study planned to investigate students' intercultural sensitivity at the beginning of the course when they had not yet been exposed to most of the contents of the course. Due to the fact that the first three weeks were the registration period and the numbers of enrolled students would not be finalized until the fourth week, the ISS was distributed to students during the fourth week.

In order to simplify the collection procedure, the ISS was attached to the end of the fourth written assignment, a task that students had to complete in Fronter, the online platform for the course.

The Swedish version of the ISS 24 items was provided after the original English version to assist the Swedish students in grasping the main concerns of the questions. As described in the ISS, students should give their first impression for each item and should not spend more than 10 minutes when completing the scale.

#### *4.3.3 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION*

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of certain social processes, participant observation is used by researchers as a central qualitative data collection technique (Punch, 1998, p.188). By using the 'self' as the main instrument for research (Spradley, 1980; Denscombe, 2010; Punch, 1998), the participant observer comes to a social situation with two purposes: to engage in activities in an intimate way and to observe activities thoroughly with an open mind. By participating in such events and situations, a researcher can approach social life with a wide-angle lens, taking in a much broader spectrum of information and observing hidden events.



In this study, since the researcher was the teacher of the target groups, participant observation was also employed as a way of understanding how the students acquired intercultural competence, as well as a way of understanding the difficulty of implementing an intercultural communicative approach in the present Chinese 1 curriculum. To facilitate this, the researcher recorded each of the online lectures held via Adobe Connect, the synchronous video-conference meeting software, since the researcher could not take notes while she was teaching. The writing of field notes, self-reflections and observations afterwards were thus essential for recording participant observations. In this analysis, the researcher assessed whether the students had developed the cognitive, affective and behavioral aspects of intercultural competence throughout the course. For instance, when observing their cognitive ability, it was necessary to evaluate how much cross-cultural knowledge the students had acquired from the course materials and the textbook and how well they could apply this knowledge to practical social situations. When evaluating their affective ability, the researcher observed student attitudes with regard to learning the new cross-cultural knowledge and how they participated in the class role-play activities. As for their behavioral ability, it was important to assess how the students responded to cross-cultural differences in the social situations presented in the course, such as introducing a classmate to a Chinese teacher. Special attention was focused on finding the common factors that would cause a breakdown in intercultural communication when the students were performing simulated role-play activities in class.

Nevertheless, participant observation was restricted by technical issues and the size of the online classes. Sometimes it was very problematic for the researcher to observe

students when the students had Internet connectivity problems. When the class size was large, for example with 30 students in the evening, it was difficult for the researcher to observe everyone, especially the students who did not actively participate.

#### *4.3.4 INTERVIEWS*

Interviews are one of the most common methodological tools used by social science researchers in collecting data. According to Denscombe (2010, p.192), interviews are particularly good at producing detailed data and the researcher is more likely to gain valuable insights based on the depth of the information and the views of ‘key informants’.

In this action research study, interviews were utilized to collect the qualitative data that was hidden or left out in the quantitative data. Due to this goal, the interviews were semi-structured in which the interviewees were given open-ended questions and encouraged to elaborate on their points of views as much as possible. The interviews were conducted approximately one month after the course ended. All the interviewees were randomly selected subjects from all the target groups. They were arranged as one-to-one interviews on Adobe Connect – a synchronized virtual meeting room and they were conducted by the researcher. All the interviews were recorded as for reference.

When conducting the interviews, the researcher utilized participant observation as a methodology for capturing important information. The observation was focused on the three aspects of intercultural competence proposed by Chen and Starosta (1996, 2000), namely, intercultural awareness, sensitivity and adroitness. During the interviews, the researcher observed how competent the interviewees were when coping with the

assigned intercultural communication situations. From the perspective of intercultural awareness, the researcher tried to determine the number of cultural differences in the dialogues that would be identified by the interviewees. In regard to intercultural sensitivity, the researcher paid attention to the interviewees' attitudes towards the cultural questions and their explanations for their answers in the scenarios. Special consideration was placed on the ability of the interviewees to shift their identities from a Swedish to a Chinese point of view when discussing the case study. In effect, the researcher tried to evaluate the students' understanding of the correct reasons why a particular response would be appropriate in another culture. Finally, when the interviewees described how the dialogues could be further culturally enhanced or improved, the researcher assessed how well the students were able to perform in these intercultural communication situations.

Since intercultural competence is a complex and holistic ability and its development involves many factors both inside and outside the classroom, the contents of the interview were separated into four parts (see Appendix Six). They are introduced in the following section.

### **Part 1 - Personal and External Factors**

In the first part, a series of questions was designed to determine both personal and external factors that might affect the development of the interviewee's intercultural communication skills in the course. Firstly, two questions were asked to ascertain whether the interviewees had previous personal experiences in learning the Chinese language and other subjects related to Chinese culture, economics, medicine, etc., prior

to studying this course. The questions allowed the researcher to investigate whether the interviewees with previous Chinese language experiences and relevant knowledge have an advantage over the others when acquiring intercultural communicative competence. Besides Chinese, the students were asked whether they had studied other foreign languages before joining this course. Secondly, the interviewees were encouraged to describe their motivation for learning this language. For example, possible motivations were a personal interest in the Chinese language and culture, a need to prepare for future studies and/or career development or a desire to improve their communication skills with Chinese family members. Furthermore, the researcher hoped to find out to what degree their motivation could influence their study results. As for the external factors, the interview would like to find out whether the interviewee's experience of visiting/staying in China would facilitate their learning of intercultural communication. Last but not least, the interview could help assess the possible influence of Chinese persons (family, friends and colleagues) who were in contact with the interviewees.

## **Part 2 - Major Concerns regarding Language Studies**

In the second part, the interviewees were encouraged to compare the differences between the Chinese and English/Swedish languages. They were then asked to comment on which parts of the course they found the most interesting and which types of assignments were difficult for them. These questions attempted to determine the main concerns of the interviewees during the course. In addition, the researcher tried to evaluate the students' level of awareness with regard to cultural differences in the languages and whether those differences were an important factor in their decision to study the Chinese language.

### **Part 3 - Integrated Cultural Questions**

The third part drew the interviewees' attention to the cultural questions that were integrated into the students' assignments and the written exam. Since the control group followed the original course and the experimental groups were engaged in the revised course, the questions utilized in this part varied somewhat among the groups. For the control group, the questions focused on what they thought about the integrated cultural questions included in their assignments and on the exam. For example, they were asked if they found these questions useful with regard to learning Chinese, how difficult the questions were and how they found the answers to these questions. The experimental group interviewees were asked whether the scalable tasks and the cultural questions included in their assignments and on the exam were useful. The researcher also asked the experimental group students whether the tasks were difficult for them and encouraged the interviewees to give suggestions to improve the scalable tasks.

### **Part 4 - Scenarios and Case Study**

The last part was the largest component of the interview. The interviewees were given three dialogues composed by the students in the course and one case study at the end. These dialogues were chosen as they represented some common errors made by the students. In practice, the interviewees first had to read through the dialogues and discuss them with the interviewer. They had to decide whether the dialogues were written in an appropriate and polite manner. Then they were asked to explain their decisions. This part of the interview would help determine the degree of intercultural awareness and intercultural sensitivity of the interviewees in response to the scenarios and the case study.

The first dialogue (scenario A) was about first time greetings and introducing each other in Chinese. In order to introduce oneself properly in Chinese, the students had to master the Chinese address system, such as the correct way to address a Chinese name, using phrases such as “贵姓 guìxìng – honorific surname” or “你叫什么名字? Nǐ jiào shén me míngzì? – What is your name?” and the correct turn-taking procedure. The dialogue provided in the interview was based on the responses from a number of students in the pilot group. Similar dialogues were recorded in the later control and experimental groups. The dialogue illustrated some common errors made by the students. The dialogue was quoted below:

1. 陈美丽 Chén Měilì: 你好! Nǐ hǎo! Hello!
2. 大卫·卡森 Dàwèi·Kǎsēn: 你好! 我姓卡森, 叫大卫, 你叫什么名字? Nǐ hǎo! Wǒ xìng Kǎsēn, jiào Dà-wèi, nǐ jiào shén me míngzì? Hello! My surname is Karlsson, my name is David. What is your name?
3. 陈美丽 Chén Měilì: 我叫陈美丽, 我二十二岁, 你呢? Wǒ jiào Chén Měi-lì. Wǒ èrshíèr suì. Nǐ ne? I am Chen Meili, I am 22 years old. How about you?
4. 大卫·卡森 Dàwèi·Kǎsēn: 我二十三岁。Wǒ èr shí sān suì. I am 23 years old.

When analyzing the dialogue, it can be seen that the writer knew the culturally appropriate manner of vocalizing a Chinese name. Instead of using the formal phrase, “贵姓 guìxìng”, the informal question, “你叫什么名字? Nǐ jiào shén me míngzì?” is used. The main problem in this dialogue would be the turn-taking mechanism in which the second speaker introduced himself immediately after the first speaker’s greeting and

asked for the first speaker's name. The first speaker followed the thread and answered. In addition, the first speaker initiated a rather unexpected topic by presenting her age and asked the second speaker's age afterwards. Would the interviewees be able to point out some of the intercultural errors, such as the implicit turn-taking mechanism in this dialogue?

The second dialogue (scenario B) was an example of introducing a third person in a less formal social situation. In this scenario, a student introduced his Chinese teacher to his Chinese friend at school. In order to show respect to the teacher, the order of introduction should be taken into consideration. Moreover, adding the profession before the teacher's surname and the proper title for the Chinese friend was essential in this dialogue. Last but not least, “您 nín” – the second person formal personal pronoun – should be utilized as the second person pronoun for the teacher. The dialogue utilized in the interview was similar to conversations written by the students:

1. 大卫·卡森 Dàwèi· Kǎsēn: 美丽, 这位是我的中文老师, 何月清。Měi-lì, zhè wèi shì wǒ de Zhōng wén lǎoshī, Hé yuè qīng. *Meili, this is my Chinese teacher, He Yueqing.*

2. 何月清 Hé Yuèqīng: 你好, 美丽, 很高兴认识你。Nǐ hǎo, Měi-lì, hěn gāo xìng rèn shí nǐ. *Hello, Meili, nice to meet you.*

3. 陈美丽 Chén Měili: 你好, 何老师, 我也很高兴认识你。Nǐ hǎo, Hé lǎo shī, wǒ yě hěn gāo xìng rèn shí nǐ. *Hello, teacher He, nice to meet you too.*

In this example, the writer did remember to include the profession before the name of the Chinese teacher. In addition, it would have been more appropriate if the order of introduction was reversed. Furthermore, the introduction of “美丽 Měili” was improper since her surname should be utilized in this introduction. Even though the use of “你 nǐ - you” is acceptable, the use of “您 nín – the second person formal personal pronoun” was encouraged and promoted particularly for the experimental groups. Would the interviewees be able to determine the correct order for the introductions in this scenario?

The third dialogue (scenario C) was a telephone conversation. There are cultural difference between a telephone call conducted in Chinese and a telephone call conducted in a Western language. The students should demonstrate their understanding of the etiquette of speaking on the telephone in Chinese when composing this conversation, such as applying expressions, “喂! Wèi! – Hello!” and “有事儿吗? Yǒu shìr ma? - What’s the matter?”. In addition, the conversation should be developed according to the Chinese turn-taking mechanism. The example utilized in the interview illustrated some mistakes made by the students:

1. 大卫·卡森 Dàwèi· Kǎsēn: 喂。老师，您好！我是大卫。Wèi. Lǎoshī, nín hǎo!  
Wǒ shì Dà-wèi. *Hello. Teacher, hello! I am David.*
2. 何月清 Hé Yuèqīng: 大卫，你好。你有什么问题？ Dà-wèi, nǐ hǎo. Nǐ yǒu shén  
me wèntí? *David, hello! What is your problem/question?*



3. 大卫·卡森 Dàwèi· Kǎsēn: 我有几个问题想问老师 ... Wǒ yǒu jǐ gè wèn tí xiǎng wèn lǎo shī ... *I want to ask you (teacher) a few questions ...*

Obviously, this was a Western style telephone conversation in which the first speaker introduced himself at the very first utterance. This turn-taking mechanism is different from the Chinese turn-taking style. Even though the profession, “老师 lǎoshī - teacher” was used, it would be clearer if the speaker could add the surname of the teacher, such as “何老师 Hé lǎoshī – teacher He” in the beginning of the dialogue. The consistent use of “您 nín – the second person formal personal pronoun” was also encouraged in this situation since the speaker was talking to his teacher.

At the end of the interview, a case study related to Chinese modesty and the “请客 qǐngkè –my treat” culture were discussed. Please see below:

Your Chinese friend wanted to thank you for helping her buying an air ticket and said:

Your friend: 谢谢你帮助我买机票。我请你吃美国饭，怎么样？ Xiè xie nǐ bāng zhù wǒ mǎi jī piào。 Wǒ qǐng nǐ chī Měi guó fàn, zěn me yàng?

You reply:

a) 谢谢，我明天有空。 Xièxie, wǒ míngtiān yǒu kōng. *Thank you, I'm free tomorrow.*

b) 太好了，我喜欢吃美国饭。 Tài hǎo le, wǒ xǐhuān chī Měiguó fàn. *Great, I like US food.*

c) 不客气。 Bù kèqi. *Not at all/You are welcome!*

d) Others

There were four possible answers that the interviewees could choose from. The first two were Western responses to an invitation while the third one was a polite refusal that is often utilized in Chinese. If needed, the interviewees were allowed to give their own answers. The interviewer asked the interviewees to pick one of the options listed above and then to give an explanation for their choice. Afterwards, the interviewer asked the interviewees to “imagine” which answer a Chinese person would choose. Once again, they needed to provide an explanation for their choice.

After each interview, the researcher recorded her observations and comments on each interviewee. This information was crucial for the data analysis.

#### *4.3.5 DATA COLLECTION IN OTHER UNIVERSITIES*

With the goal of increasing the validity and reliability of the data collected from Dalarna University, the researcher endeavored to collect data from other universities in Sweden. The main question was whether, after taking a similar comprehensive basic-level Chinese course, students at other universities would have results on the ISS and the cultural questions similar to the students in the Dalarna Chinese 1 HT13 control group.

In early 2014, the researcher successfully contacted University X and was allowed to collect data from a beginning-level Chinese course. However, only 20 students were present on the day when the data collection took place. Due to the low number of samples, the researcher attempted to contact University Y where more students were

generally enrolled in the beginning-level Chinese courses. After permission was granted at the end of 2014, the researcher was allowed to arrange data collection from a University Y class. Since the beginning-level Chinese courses offered by the three universities were different in mode, study duration and the number of university credits, the researcher carefully selected similar comprehensive courses at these two universities as the research targets. Even though the duration and number of university credits were not the same in the two selected courses, the researcher chose two suitable periods for data collection in which the students from the two universities had already reached a similar level as in the Dalarna Chinese 1 course. To collect the data, the researcher distributed three documents to the participating students: the ISS questionnaire, a short questionnaire regarding their Chinese language learning history and the nine cultural questions included on the exam for the Dalarna Chinese 1 course.

Unfortunately, the data collection in the two universities was not effective due to the low numbers of samples collected. As mentioned earlier, in the research trip to University X, only 20 samples were collected. However, after reviewing the documents, only five students completed all the cultural questions, more than half the students completed only 50% of the questions and the rest did not respond to any of the questions. A few students commented that the cultural questions were too difficult for them. At University Y, the Chinese language teacher took responsibility for distribution of the documents. At the end of 2014, the researcher received 13 samples from the teacher. After reviewing the documents, the researcher discovered that only three of the 13 samples had been completed. Due to these results, the researcher discontinued attempts to collect data at other universities.

#### *4.3.6 DATA COLLECTION – DIVERSITY AND VALIDITY*

Since a diversity of data would help increase the validity and reliability of the research, various data collection methods were utilized, including the documentary data originally from the Chinese 1 course, the course textbook and two other textbooks used in other two universities in Sweden, the research based cultural questions, the verified Intercultural Sensitivity Scale, as well as participant observation and interviews. Two attempts were also made to obtain data from other universities in Sweden but this endeavor was not successful due to the low number of samples collected.

#### 4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

One of the features of action research is its dynamic and evolving nature in which researchers identify the problems in their work and apply changes to improve or solve those problems whenever the need arises. Therefore, there is no clear cut time framework for data collection and analysis in an action research study. It is not until the end of the planned research period that a comprehensive analysis can take place.

Due to this characteristic, data analysis for this action research study basically followed the three proposed action research cycles. The first data analysis was conducted in the summer of 2013 when the first research cycle was completed. Based on these results and a full evaluation of the course, the researcher then initiated the second cycle and implemented the control group in the autumn. A comprehensive data analysis was conducted at the end of 2013 and the revised syllabus for the experimental groups was prepared. At the end of 2014, when the second experimental group completed the

course, the third research cycle also ended. By that time, all the data collection was completed and the data was carefully reviewed in a detailed analysis.

#### *4.4.1 DOCUMENTARY DATA ANALYSIS*

In analyzing this distance course, documentary data is the most fundamental information that was utilized by the researcher. In this action research study, documentary data includes the official documents and the syllabus of the Chinese 1 course, the teaching materials, as well as the cultural questions that were integrated into student assignments and the final examination.

After three action research cycles, the researcher began analyzing the data. As suggested by Burns (1999, 2010) and McKernan (1996), there are several techniques that can be used for data analysis and it usually goes through several stages. Once the data is collected, the researcher must categorize or code the data into different concepts, themes or areas for further analysis. After the data is coded or categorized, it is possible for the researcher to compare the data patterns, mapping frequencies of occurrences, behaviors or responses and creating tables for data presentations. Thereafter, the researcher is obliged to connect the data to the theories or hypotheses cited in the study, articulate underlying concepts and interpret why certain patterns of behaviors, interactions or attitudes occurred.

##### **4.4.1.1 Course Textbook and Course Materials**

In order to obtain a comprehensive picture of the entire Chinese 1 course, the course syllabus, the textbook and the course materials were analysed by the modified Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor's (2006) theoretical framework in which the researcher organized the

course content and materials into four main components, namely linguistic, pragmatics, strategic and intercultural competence. In practice, since the contents of each chapter of the course book was generally structured as “1. Dialogues, 2. Language Notes, 3. Vocabulary, 4. Grammar and 5. Language practice” (see Appendix Two), the researcher simply utilized the first four components as categories and counted how many pages were devoted to each component. By assessing these four categories, it was possible to evaluate the main objectives and results of the course. A similar procedure was utilized in the analysis of the other two textbooks used by two other universities in Sweden. The comparison of the three textbooks would suggest some similarities and differences among the beginning-level Chinese courses offered by the three universities.

#### **4.4.1.2 Cultural Questions**

Cultural questions were the main tool utilized in the collection of information regarding the reactions of the students to different social communications. They formed the largest part of the database. As explained earlier, there were 41 cultural questions that were incorporated into the pilot study. After modification, 34 questions were retained. In order to determine the level of accuracy at which the subjects in each of the research group answered the cultural questions, the data was analysed by both quantitative and qualitative methods. First of all, the researcher decoded the 34 questions into 66 units of cultural knowledge for further analysis. Among these 66 units, 46 were from student assignments while 20 were from the final written exam (Please see Table 2 on p. 90). Since the researcher needed to compare student performance, these units were marked as either correct (1) or incorrect (0). Once the coded data base was ready, the statistical software program SPSS/PC 12.0 for Windows was utilized for statistical analysis. A

series of tests were then computed in the SPSS program to determine whether different scores were obtained by the VT13 pilot group, the HT13 control group, VT14 experimental group 1 and HT14 experimental group 2.

In addition to learning which students best answered the questions, the researcher also wanted to know which answers were provided by the students for each cultural question. To do so, the researcher sorted the answers into categories and used the SPSS statistical program to generate statistical descriptions of the data. By comparing the data among the groups, the researcher attempted to further analyze the characteristics of the student answers and their relationship to acquiring intercultural competence. Along with these statistics, the researcher also made use of the data collected by participant observation (described in 4.3 below) during the analysis of the data from the cultural questions. These efforts endeavored to create an accurate and comprehensive evaluation regarding the intercultural competence of the students enrolled in the Chinese 1 course.

#### *4.4.2 DATA ANALYSIS – THE ISS QUESTIONNAIRE*

After the students completed the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale questionnaire, the researcher input all of the data into the SPSS (SPSS/PC 12.0 for Windows) program for data analysis. This ISS scale applies a five-point Likert scale: 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = uncertain, 2 = disagree and 1 = strongly disagree, to measure the 24 items. According to Chen and Starosta (2000), when computing the data, nine items must be reverse-coded before further analysis. The researcher followed authors' instructions and conducted a series of tests to check the intercultural sensitivity of the students in all of the research groups.

#### *4.4.3 DATA ANALYSIS – PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION*

At the end of the third research cycle, the researcher collected all the field notes and observations for analysis. Firstly, the researcher encoded the information into units based on the three aspects – cognitive, affective and behavioral - of intercultural competence. Once this information was coded into units, it was possible for the researcher to further conceptualize the information, providing a basis for a more in-depth analysis. In this study, observation of the participants was crucial for understanding the complex intercultural communicative behaviors in the cultural questions and in the interviews.

#### *4.4.4 DATA ANALYSIS – INTERVIEWS*

Data collected from the interviews was the second largest part of the database. To analyze the interviews, the researcher made use of context codes to categorize important information for further data conceptualizations and analysis. In the next step, the researcher first implemented the quantitative mean to develop statistical data for the first three parts of the interview. Based on these statistics, qualitative analysis was conducted to link the data, interpreting its characteristics and explaining its interrelationship with the students' levels of intercultural competence.

As for the last part of the interview, after encoding the context into related units, the researcher recorded the data from her observations regarding the three different student abilities of intercultural competence. In order to compare the performance of student intercultural communicative competence when analyzing the data from the interviews, a five-level Likert scale was applied. In the five ascending response levels, level 1



referred to the lowest level of intercultural communicative competence where the interviewee could neither identify or understand the cultural differences in the scenarios nor make the dialogues more polite and appropriate. The highest level – level 5 – referred to the most developed intercultural communicative competence where the interviewee could explain most of the cultural differences in the scenarios, showing a correct understanding of the answers they selected and demonstrating how the dialogues could be corrected in a more polite and appropriate manner.

#### *4.4.5 DATA ANALYSIS – USE OF TRIANGULATION*

When analyzing data, the use of “triangulation” is recommended in order to enhance the trustworthiness of the research (Burns, 1999, 2010; McKernan, 1996). In this study, both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed during the data analysis.

When the results of different data analyses, such as documentary data analysis, cultural questions, questionnaires, participant observations and interviews were produced, the data was then applied to a more in-depth analysis in order to provide a comprehensive assessment of student acquisition of intercultural competence. For instance, the results of participant observation were utilized in the data analysis of the interviews and the cultural questions. The application of various data analyses in the research endeavored to produce a richer and less subjective evaluation.

#### **4.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Unlike other scientific inquiry, researchers are usually participants in an action research study. In addition, ethical consideration should not be neglected since the study involves working with human subjects (Spradley, 1979; Punch, 1998; Denscombe,

2010; McKernan, 1996; Zeni, 1998). Zeni (1998) provides a detailed checklist of ethical issues for researchers who endeavor to carry out action research. Zeni urges the researchers to carefully scrutinize their research questions, methodology and settings, and to verify if the research will cause any risk or harm to the participants. They should also observe the copyright laws and be responsible for the proper use of the data collected as well as its storage (McKernan, 1996).

Due to ethical considerations, researchers should handle the informed consent with caution. Before the research takes place, students' consent to the pooling of material should be obtained. The consent must explicitly inform the participants of the purpose of the research, their roles as a participants and how the research will affect them. They should have the right to withhold consent at any stage during the research. Because of the issue of confidentiality, all the materials, work or assignments produced by the participants should be anonymous with all personal details removed. Special attention should be given to minimize any potential identification of the participants. Moreover, they should be informed regarding persons or entities that will have the right to access and use the data, how long the data will be kept and when the data will be destroyed.

Regarding this study, data collection began in the spring semester of 2013 and was completed at the end of 2014. During these two years, four target groups (the VT13 pilot group, the HT13 control group, VT14 experimental group 1 and HT14 experimental group 2) were constituted in Chinese 1 courses. In the first few weeks of the course, an invitation letter and an informed consent form regarding this study were sent to the students, encouraging them to take part in this activity. It is important to note

that all the subjects agreed in writing to participate in this action research study. The consent forms and all of the data are kept in Dalarna University's database. After the required storage period for this PhD dissertation, all the data will be destroyed.

#### 4.6 SUMMARY

This chapter has elaborated the strengths of applying action research as the primary method for this study. It also describes the triangulation of methods used to collect and analyze the data, such as questionnaires, interviews, participant observations and documentary data collection. In the next chapter, research findings are presented.

## CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH FINDINGS

The application of triangulation of data collection allows this action research study to collect a wide range of data from documents, questionnaires, participant observations and interviews. The results of the data analysis are presented in the following sections.

### 5.1 FINDINGS BASED ON THE DOCUMENTARY DATA

In order to follow the five phases of an action research cycle, documentary data, such as the present syllabus of the Chinese 1 course, the course textbook and the teaching materials were first to be reviewed and analyzed.

#### *5.1.1 ILLUSTRATING THE COMPONENTS OF THE CHINESE 1 TEXTBOOK*

The Chinese 1 course is a beginning level course of CFL for first year university students. Similar to many foreign language courses, its structure is based on a selected textbook<sup>19</sup> (hereafter referred to as the DU textbook) and is complemented by the teaching notes. Student assignments and assessments are mainly based on the textbook and its workbook, together with some complementary materials prepared by the teachers. Since it is an integrated language course, the main objectives of the course are to develop the students' four key language skills and their capacity to participate in conversations about topics which are covered in the lessons. The objectives are in

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<sup>19</sup> The textbook used for Chinese 1 is: Yao, T. & Yue, Y. (2008). *Integrated Chinese, Level 1 Part 1 Textbook. Expanded 3rd Edition (Simplified Characters)*. Boston: Cheng & Tsui.

concert with the approaches implemented in the textbook. According to the authors of the textbook, the book applies integrated teaching approaches which combine the communicative approach, traditional methods such as grammar-translation and other direct teaching methods. In other words, the main objective of the textbook is not only to provide grammatical instruction but also to prepare students to utilize the Chinese language in real life. Based on this belief, the authors emphasize the learning of dialogues in different social situations. In order to help motivate the students, the textbook features dialogues and narratives about a diverse group of students studying in the United States of America. Last but not least, it should be noted that this is one of the most popular textbooks utilized by many universities in the United States.

#### **5.1.1.1 The DU Textbook**

Since the contents of this course are based on the textbook, the analysis of the textbook illustrates the structure of the entire course. The Chinese 1 course utilized the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the textbook before the autumn of 2013 and thereafter changed to the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. However, students who were enrolled in the course were allowed to use either edition of the textbook. Due to this arrangement, the researcher utilized the modified Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor's framework to review, analyze and compare the contents of the two editions of the textbook.

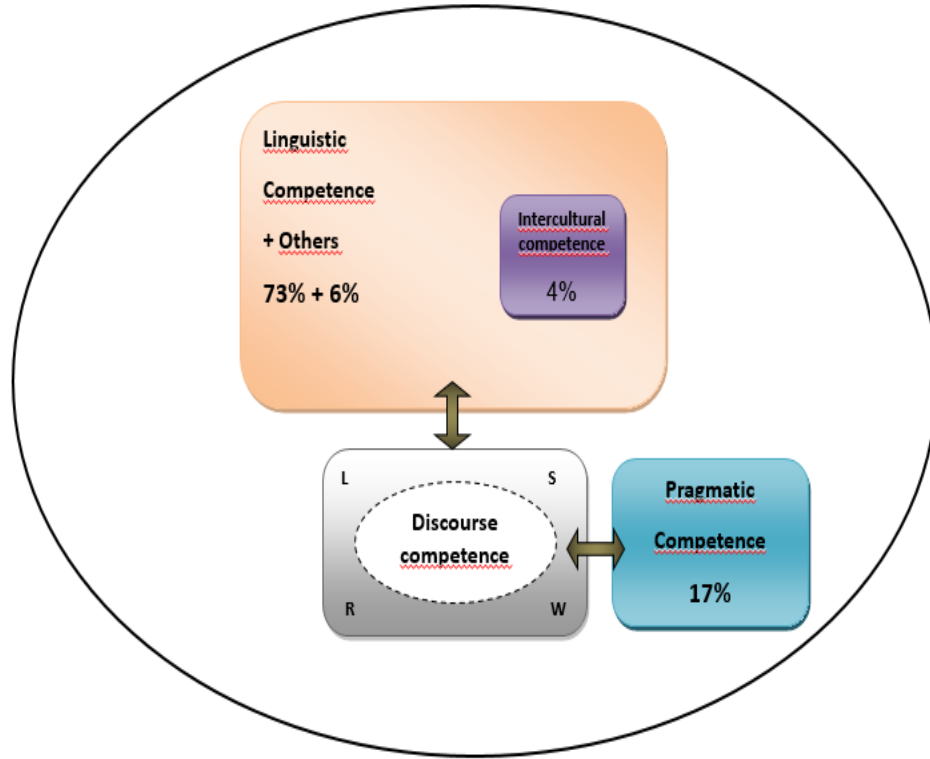


FIGURE 3. AN ANALYSIS OF THE COMPONENTS IDENTIFIED IN THE 2ND EDITION DU TEXTBOOK

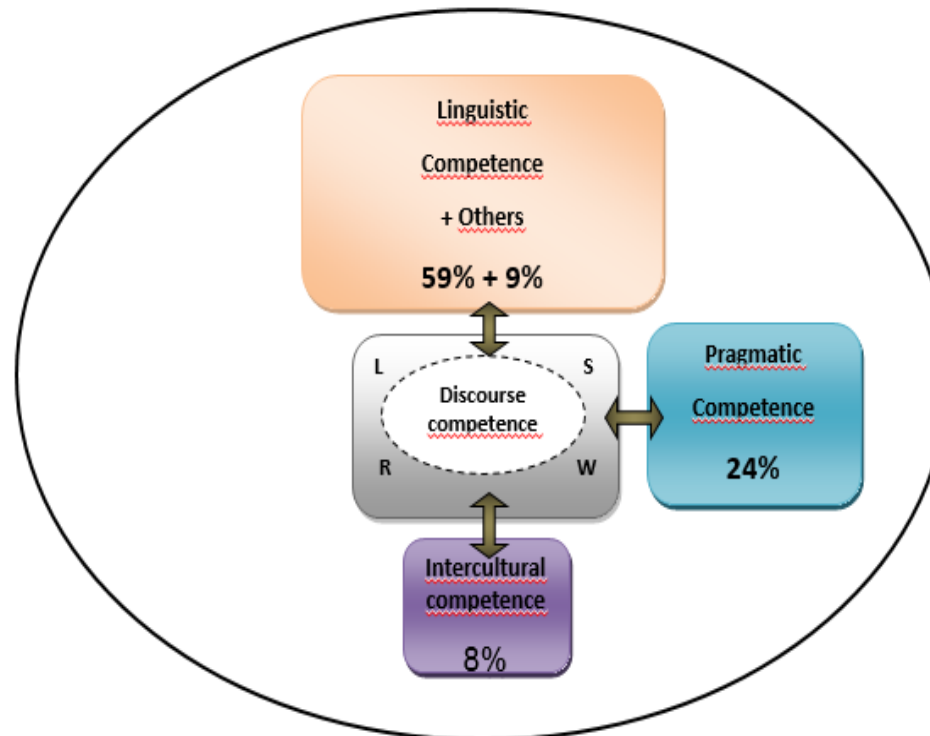


FIGURE 4. AN ANALYSIS OF THE COMPONENTS IDENTIFIED IN THE 3RD EDITION DU TEXTBOOK

When analyzing the contents of the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition textbook<sup>20</sup> (see Figure 3), there are only three components identified in the theoretical framework – linguistic, pragmatic and discourse competence.

The majority of the textbook is focused on linguistic competence in which about 73% of each lesson is comprised of language notes, grammatical explanations and language pattern drills. At the end of each lesson, there is additional information (around 6% of the total contents), such as extra vocabulary, exercises, the English translation of the dialogues or the texts, etc. This kind of information is thus also included in the category of linguistic competence. The third and the smallest component that is integrated into linguistic competence is intercultural competence. As shown in Figure 3, the textbook does include brief cultural notes (about 4% of the total content of the book) to enrich cross-cultural knowledge, such as the explanation of the honorific pronoun, “您 nín - you”, and the polite expression, “贵姓 guìxìng – honorific surname” in lesson one.

Additional information related to Chinese culture and society is introduced under the subtitle, “Cultural Notes”. The component of pragmatic competence is comparatively small but essential. It is roughly 17% of the entire book. The main texts of each lesson – two dialogues – provide examples of Chinese language usage in daily life.

Supplemental expressions derived from the dialogues may also be included in some lessons. The last component of the textbook is student discourse competence, the learning outcome developed by the four skills.

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<sup>20</sup> Yao, T. & Yue, Y. (2005). *Integrated Chinese, Level 1 Part 1 Textbook. Expanded 2nd Edition (Simplified Characters)*. Boston: Cheng & Tsui.

In comparison with the earlier edition (see Figure 4), even though linguistic competence is still dominant in the theoretical framework (about 68% of materials in the textbook falls under this category), there was, on average, an increase in the amount of material in each lesson that is directly related to pragmatic competence (roughly up to 24%). A significant improvement in the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition textbook is the creation of “Cultural Highlights” which separates the cultural information from the linguistic components as an independent section in each lesson. As stated by the authors, more cultural information was included in the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (about 8% more than in the previous editions) for the purpose of promoting cultural studies and increasing the learning effectiveness through more authentic language usage. The authors also emphasize this point by suggesting at the beginning of each lesson that students shall consider the cross-cultural differences between their own cultural traditions and the Chinese traditions, in addition to listing the learning objectives of the lesson. The ultimate goal is discourse competence in which all of the language skills are illustrated.

The comparison of the two editions (Figure 3 and Figure 4) shows that the earlier textbook is more grammar oriented. The later edition places a greater emphasis on cultural studies by separating cultural information from linguistic competence. This modification has made the course book more compatible with new trends in foreign language education. Apparently, the authors apply the introductory approach and place the cultural information, “Cultural Highlights” at the end of each lesson which functions as additional comments or reference for the readers.



Despite the increased concern regarding inclusion of cultural studies in the curriculum, adding the cultural information at the end of the lesson, as argued by some scholars (Chen, J., 1994; Hu, M., 1993; Li, R., 1993; Peng, Z., 2007; Wang, K., 1994; Xu, J., 2000; Zhang, Y., 1994, 2004), may imply that culture and language are two separate subjects. In addition, there is no connection between the cultural information and the texts and exercises in some lessons. This characteristic of the course book has highlighted notable limitations in developing students' intercultural competence as defined in the applied theoretical framework which advocates integrating intercultural competence into the curriculum and places equal emphasis on this competence just as the other components in the model at all levels. Moreover, the last component, strategic competence, is not identified as such in either edition. The textbook might contain a metacognitive strategy but it is not explained or illustrated. To overcome these insufficiencies, proper and careful curriculum revisions are essential and necessary.

#### **5.1.1.2 Other Textbooks – Comparing Chinese courses in Sweden**

As described in Chapter Four, the researcher attempted to collect data from two universities in Sweden. The purpose of this was to investigate the differences of the Chinese 1 course at Dalarna University compared to other integrated Chinese courses offered by other universities in Sweden. Due to the fact that the Chinese language courses taught by the other universities are textbook-based, the researcher analyzed the contents of the textbooks and compared them to the Chinese 1 course at DU.

*The textbook used in University Y*

The textbook used in the University Y (hereafter referred to as UY textbook) is a popular textbook for CFL education worldwide. The textbook was first published in 2002. Due to its popularity, the textbook was annotated in nine languages in 2009 and it is recommended by Hanban for teaching beginning-level Chinese courses. In other words, this textbook is, currently, widely used in this academic field. According to the author, the textbook focuses on teaching the language structure and its functions, cultural knowledge and the four language skills. With a wide range of topics covered in the textbook, it aims to foster the learner's ability to communicate in the Chinese language. To provide texts and dialogues that are similar to real-life situations, the textbook uses stories about a group of foreign students living in China in which Chinese customs and cultural traditions expressed by the Chinese language are introduced during their interactions with Chinese friends and teachers.

In 2010, the second edition of the textbook was published with updated materials. Although the framework of the textbook was not revised, the author emphasized that the contents were based on real-life situations and designed to develop the students' cross-cultural communication skills.

From the standpoint of intercultural competence in CFL education, the contents of the two editions of the UY textbook were examined and analyzed according to the modified Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor's framework (see Figure 5 and 6).

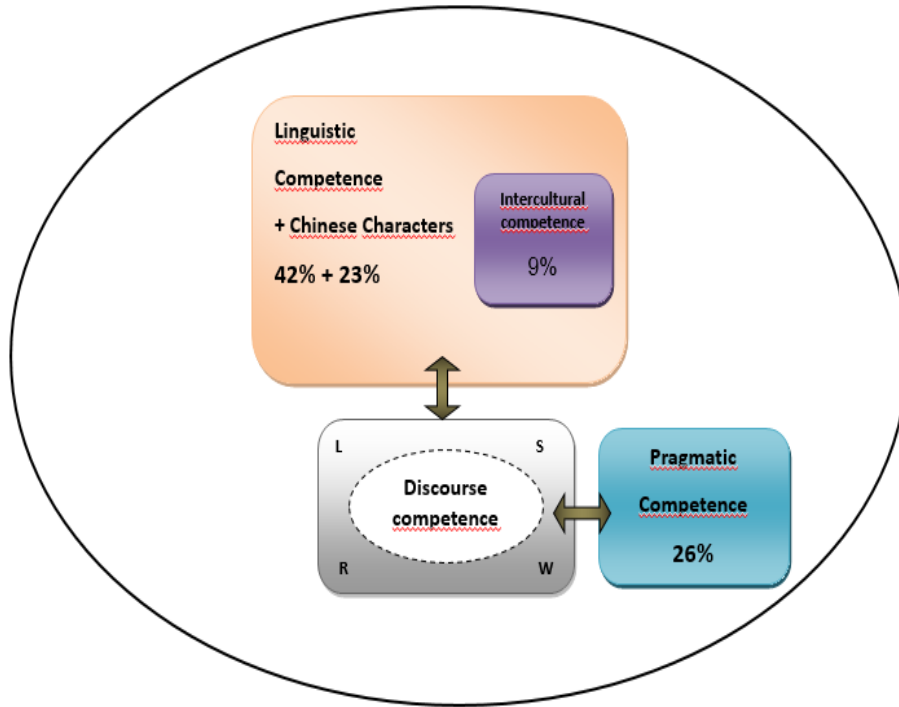


FIGURE 5. AN ANALYSIS OF THE COMPONENTS IDENTIFIED IN THE 1ST EDITION UY TEXTBOOK

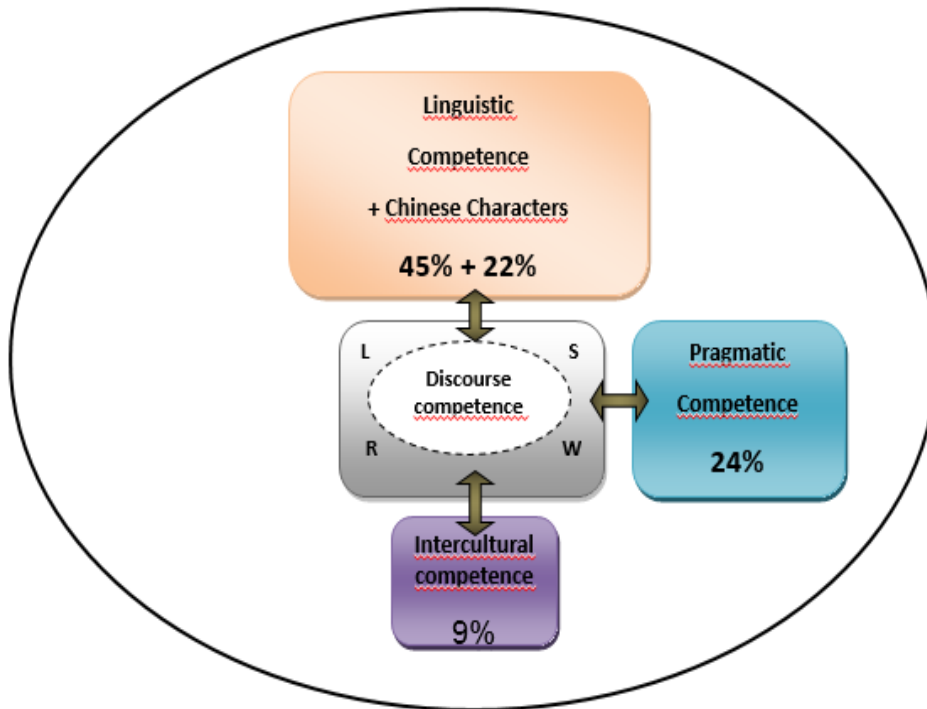


FIGURE 6. AN ANALYSIS OF THE COMPONENTS IDENTIFIED IN THE 2ND EDITION UY TEXTBOOK

In reality there are many similarities between the DU and the UY textbooks. When comparing the earlier edition of the DU and UY textbooks (see Figure 3 and 5), they both have only three framework components, namely linguistic, pragmatic and discourse competence. The largest component in each lesson of the UY textbook is linguistic competence (42%), including pronunciation drills, phonetics and grammar. Similar to the DU textbook, the material which focuses on linguistic competence in the UY textbook also includes material that relates to intercultural competence (about 9%), such as language notes which encompass the cross-cultural knowledge integrated in the Chinese language. The second component of the framework is pragmatic competence which is about 26% of the total contents, slightly larger than the DU textbook component. The entire learning outcome is displayed as discourse competence through the applications of the four language skills.

As illustrated in Figure 6, the contents of each component in the latest edition of the UY textbook do not include any dramatic changes. Nonetheless the new edition separates the integrated cross-cultural knowledge from the linguistic competence and makes it a new component of the theoretical framework – intercultural competence. This shift of the focus to cross-cultural knowledge emphasizes to a certain extent the important role of culture in language education. This revision is also similar to the modification of the DU textbook and thus the structure of both textbooks is similar (see Figure 4 and 6 in pp.116 and 121), including both strengths and insufficiencies, for instance, the introductory approach of inserting cultural elements at the end of each lesson,

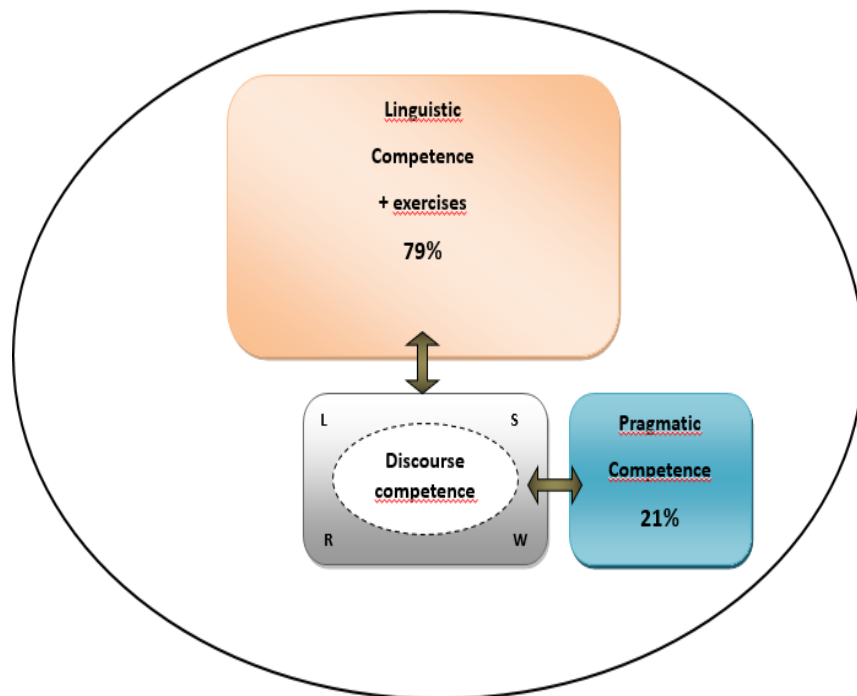
the lack of connection between the “Cultural Notes” and the other components, as well as the unidentified strategic competence in the UY textbook’s theoretical framework. All these characteristics indicate that the UY textbook also has some limitations with regard to integrating intercultural competence in to the contemporary CFL curriculum.

The major difference between these two textbooks is related to Chinese characters. In the DU textbook, a brief introduction to Chinese characters is provided in the introductory chapter. No specific information on individual Chinese characters, such as stroke order, is given in the lessons. With a special focus on Chinese characters, about 22% of UY textbook contents are comprised of information on the elaboration of character components, stroke orders, rules for constructing and writing characters, etc. This information forms the second largest component of linguistic competence for each lesson of the UY textbook.

Despite this important difference in teaching Chinese characters, the structure of the latest editions of the UY and the DU textbooks, as discussed above, is similar. In addition, when analyzing the topics taught in the two textbooks, more than 70% of them are analogue. In summary, the analysis of the contents of the UY textbooks suggests that the Chinese 1 course offered by DU is not unique in Sweden; instead it shares many similarities with the comprehensive Chinese beginning-level course offered by University Y.

*The textbook used in University X*

The textbook used in University X (hereafter referred to as UX textbook) is quite different from the DU and UY textbooks. First of all, all Chinese texts in the UX textbook are written in Pinyin together with English annotations and explanations. To learn Chinese characters, the students must use the supplementary companion book that accompanies the main textbook. The contents of this textbook have been analysed by the modified Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor’s framework (see Figure 7).



**FIGURE 7. AN ANALYSIS OF THE COMPONENTS OF THE UX TEXTBOOK**

Although the Chinese in the UX textbook is written only in Pinyin, the structure of this textbook is quite similar to the earlier edition of the DU and UY textbooks. One characteristic of the UX textbook is its dominant linguistic component in the theoretical framework in which grammatical explanations and

pattern drills occupy 79% of the contents of the entire book. About 21% of the contents focus on the pragmatic component which includes dialogues and their extensions in each lesson. When analyzing the topics taught in the lessons, only around 47% of the topics covered in the UX textbook are similar to the topics covered in the DU and UY textbooks. This is not surprising since the UX textbook was published in 1982 and the dialogues are based on daily conversations reflecting life in China in the early 1980's. For example, there are dialogues using communist terms, such as comrade and people's commune. The book does explain some cross-cultural knowledge in different linguistic aspects, such as introducing Chinese surnames and proper names, the use of the profession title before a Chinese surname and the order of introducing family members. Yet there is no separate acknowledgement of cross-cultural knowledge as distinct from grammatical explanations, nor are they any independent "cultural notes". As compared to the DU and UY textbooks, the UX textbook is more grammar oriented in presenting the structure of the Chinese language. However, in regards to intercultural and strategic competence, it is insufficient and can be compared to earlier DU and UY textbooks. Since some topics and terminologies utilized in the UX textbook are outdated, a more extensive revision is needed to provide a focus on intercultural communication in 21<sup>st</sup> century CFL education.

### **5.1.1.3 Beginning-level Chinese Courses in Sweden**

After examining and analysing the DU, UY and UX textbooks, the researcher found that there are many similarities in the earlier edition of these textbooks.

For example, they are grammar oriented and focus mainly on language structure, pattern drills and so on. They also emphasize the pragmatic use of the language. By providing sample dialogues in each lesson, they attempt to develop student communication skills. Among the three textbooks, the DU and UY textbooks focus more attention on Chinese cross-cultural knowledge than the UX textbook. The publications of the latest editions of the DU and the UY textbooks in recent years further differentiate these two textbooks since culture and cultural information have been placed as an independent component – intercultural competence – in the theoretical framework.

The structure of the textbooks inevitably influences the design of the course contents, teaching materials and related assessments. Due to the similarities of the textbooks' components, it is not surprising that the Chinese 1 course offered by Dalarna University would be very similar to other beginning level Chinese courses offered in Sweden, in particularly those utilizing the UY textbooks. Nonetheless, no matter which of these three textbooks is chosen, there are some common limitations that educators need to overcome in order to promote intercultural competence in CFL education. First of all, it is necessary to abandon the inherited introductory approach utilized in the textbook and focus on integrating the cross-cultural elements and intercultural competence into the curriculum, such as identifying the cross-cultural values in the target culture and revealing the cultural elements embedded in the language throughout the whole teaching and learning process.



### *5.1.2. MANIFESTING CROSS-CULTURAL ELEMENTS IN THE CHINESE 1 COURSE*

In order to integrate intercultural competence into the present Chinese 1 course, as recommended by the ICCLE (2008) curriculum, it is crucial and essential for the educators to incorporate cultural knowledge and understanding, cross-cultural awareness and global perspectives into the course's syllabus. As discussed above, the DU textbook is mostly grammar oriented. In an endeavor to incorporate intercultural communicative competence in the Chinese 1 course, its contents must first be investigated from this specific perspective. This action research study thus focuses on the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the textbook which has been in use since 2013.

#### **5.1.2.1 Cross-Cultural Elements in the Chinese 1 Course**

Since Chinese 1 is the first course for entry-level students, the dialogues in the textbook are short and simple. According to the syllabus<sup>21</sup>, students need to learn and understand approximately 400 characters and 500 character-compounds which are compiled in 10 lessons (11 lessons in the earlier edition of the textbook). Yet, despite their simplicity, the contents of the dialogues do reflect some aspects of the Chinese culture. When synthesizing the contents of the written dialogues, it is not difficult to identify the Chinese cultural elements reflected in the texts:

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<sup>21</sup> The syllabus of the Chinese 1 course is available online: <http://www.du.se/sv/Utbildning/Kurser-A-O/Kursplan/?kod=KI1024>

- A. The complex Chinese kinship appellation system revealing the social hierarchy and the masculine culture of Chinese society, such as the tradition that requires the Chinese to mention the male family members before the female ones
- B. The Confucian traditional respect for “age” and its influence on the Chinese language. For instance, the use of the age-identifiers, “老 lǎo - old” and “小 xiǎo - young” in the Chinese language for addressing acquaintances, as well as traditional Chinese ways to express the age of a person
- C. The Chinese address system which requires first the surname and then the profession in order to show respect, for example, “陈老师 Chén lǎoshī – Chen + teacher”
- D. The Chinese collectivist culture emphasizing the cultivation of interpersonal relationships in their group through social activities, such as inviting a friend to have a meal or to go to the cinema, returning a favour, etc.
- E. The modest and self-denigrating forms of social communication based on the Confucius tradition
- F. The limited respect for privacy as compared to the West
- G. Chinese etiquette in making phone calls and letter writing
- H. The traditional custom of drinking tea in China

Apparently, most of the points listed elucidate the collectivist culture of the Chinese society under the influence of Confucianism. When teaching the Chinese language in the Chinese 1 course, it is essential to introduce these Confucian values to the Swedish beginning learners and guide them to compare the cross-cultural differences between the Chinese and Swedish cultures. Furthermore, some implicit cultural elements which

are “hidden” in the texts and dialogues should be illustrated. By applying Chen’s (1992, 1997) approach, the contents of the texts are analysed and categorized as semantic, syntactic and pragmatic culture of the Chinese language.

### **5.1.2.2 Semantic Culture in the Chinese 1 Course**

When scrutinizing the contents of the texts, most of the basic vocabulary presented in Chinese 1 course share similar denotative and connotative meanings in both English and Chinese. Nonetheless there is some vocabulary that should be highlighted for the teaching of intercultural communication.

When introducing Chinese names in Lesson 1, it is important for the teacher to explain the cultural differences in the usage of Chinese and Western names. Furthermore, the teacher needs to explain the usage of “您 nín - the second person formal personal pronoun” and “你 nǐ - the second person pronoun”, as well as the adverb “贵 guì - honorable” and how this adverb demonstrates the relationship of power and solidarity between speakers in Chinese society.

The Chinese kinship appellation system is introduced and elaborated in Lesson 2. From the semantic perspective, the usage of the prefix, “大 dà -big”, “小 xiǎo - little” as well as numbers such as “二 èr - the second” and “三 sān - the third” are explained to students in class. For example, “大哥 dà gē - big brother”, “二姐 èr jiě - the second elder sister” and “小弟 xiǎo dì - little brother”.

The age-identifiers “老 lǎo – old” and “小 xiǎo – young” introduced in Lesson 4 are culturally governed in their usage and reflect the deep Chinese respect for older persons. Since the Swedish culture is strongly individualist, the use of age-identifiers is not always easy for Swedish students. Therefore, how to make students aware of this cultural element in Chinese is essential and necessary.

Another subtle and difficult concept is the Chinese address system in which one needs to place the Chinese surname in front of the profession or the appropriate title, such as in Lesson 1, both the interlocutors use “先生 xiānshēng – Mr.” and “小姐 xiǎojiě – Miss” to address the newly acquainted persons, for example, “李小姐 Lǐ xiǎojiě – Li + Miss”. In Lesson 6, the profession is added after the surname of a person in order to show respect, such as “常老师 Cháng lǎoshī – Chang + teacher”.

In Lectures 3 and 6, the teacher needs to emphasize how the Chinese cyclical and linear concepts of time affect time phrases, for instance, how adverbs such as “上 shàng – up, 下 xià – down, 前 qián – in front/before, 后 hòu – behind/after” are used. By comparing the differences of time concept between Chinese and English, it might be easier for the students to understand these adverbs and their application.

In Lesson 5, beverage vocabularies, such as “啤酒 píjiǔ – beer, 咖啡 kāfēi – coffee, 可乐 kělè – cola, 百事可乐 bǎishìkělè – Pepsi Cola and 雪碧 xuěbì – Sprite, are introduced. Since this type of vocabulary often utilizes imported words and phonetic transliterations, once students understand their meanings and the methods used to create these words, it is much easier to remember and utilize them in Chinese. Another

vocabulary item, “酒 jiǔ – wine”, is worth mentioning when introducing different types of beverages. In Chinese, “酒 jiǔ – wine” can refer to all kinds of alcoholic beverages. In some regions in China, “酒 jiǔ – wine” generally refers to rice wines, such as “茅台 máotái”, a kind of strong liquor with a heady aroma. Foreign students need to understand the cultural connotation of this word or there can be misunderstandings in communication.

### **5.1.2.3 Syntactic Culture in the Chinese 1 Course**

Explaining the syntactic cultural differences between the Chinese and English languages will allow the learners to compare both structures and will gradually enhance their knowledge and ability to utilize the Chinese language.

For instance, the most common word order in Chinese is subject (agent of the action), followed by the adverbial (including time words, location words and adverbs regarding manners, etc.) and then verb, and finally an object (receiver of the action). When introducing the word order in Chinese in Lesson 4 and time words in Lesson 6, it is important for the teacher to clarify that the positioning of adverbial phrases in the Chinese language differs from English. As suggested by Li, J (2012), this characteristic of Chinese syntactic usage reveals the paratactic style and the part-whole synthetic character of the language.

Since Chinese is not an aspect-oriented language, it has to add the particle “le” (taught in Lessons 5 and 8) and complements (introducing directional complement in Lesson 6 and descriptive complement in Lesson 7) to describe how action verbs are performed.

This is one of the significant differences among Chinese, English and Swedish and thus should be emphasized when teaching.

Measure words, which are introduced in Lessons 2 and 9, are one distinctive characteristic of the Chinese language which reflects the pictographic and concrete nature of the Chinese language.

The introduction of topic comment sentences in Lesson 10 manifests another important aspect of the language for expressing social contexts.

#### **5.1.2.4 Pragmatic Culture in the Chinese 1 Course**

Based on the communicative approach, the dialogues designed in the textbook are functional. In each lesson, there are useful expressions for communication in daily life.

In Lesson 1, students have to learn how to introduce themselves in a proper way. The polite expression, “你贵姓 Nǐ guìxìng? – What is your honorific surname?” is introduced.

In Lesson 2, students learn how to introduce their family members.

In Lesson 3, students learn how to invite friends for dinner. In addition, it teaches students how to ask “how old are you” in three different ways.

In Lesson 4, the concept of returning a favor to a friend is demonstrated. The expression, “好久不见 Hǎojiǔ bùjiàn – long time no see” is introduced.

In Lesson 5, the Chinese etiquette for visiting a friend's home is illustrated. Students also learn how to introduce a third person (我介绍一下 Wǒ jièshào yīxià – let me introduce) and are taught the importance of tea drinking in China.

In Lesson 6, the Chinese etiquette for making phone calls, such as the use of expressions, “喂! Wèi! – Hello!” and “有事儿吗? Yǒu shìr ma? - What's the matter?” are introduced.

In Lesson 7, students learn how Chinese people respond to compliments and the expression, “哪里哪里! Nǎlǐ! – You flatter me!” is introduced.

In Lesson 8, the format for writing a diary and a letter in Chinese is demonstrated.

In Lesson 9, students learn how to address a salesperson and other professionals in Chinese.

In Lesson 10, the useful expression, “不客气。Bù kèqi. – Not at all.” is introduced.

In all these dialogues, students need to learn aspects of Chinese culture and etiquette in order to communicate appropriately with others. In Lesson 3, for example, the textbook introduces three sentences which all mean “How old are you?”: 1. “你今年多大? Nǐ jīnnián duōdà?”; 2. “你今年几岁? Nǐ jīnnián jǐ suì?”; 3. “您今年多大年纪/岁数了? Nín jīnnián duōdà niánjì/suìshù?”). However, in order to know which phrase to utilize, the students will need to understand the social and cultural factors reflected in each sentence.

### **5.1.2.5 Cultural Questions and Scalable Tasks**

The investigation of the cultural elements in the Chinese 1 course was fundamental for the development of this study. After reviewing the findings, the researcher designed the cultural questions that were utilized for collecting data to evaluate student acquisition of intercultural competence during the course (see Table 2 in p.90 and Table 3 in p.157).

In order to introduce the cross-cultural knowledge as well as the implicit Chinese semantic, syntactic and pragmatic culture to the students in the experimental groups, a new set of course materials -- “scalable tasks” -- were produced in 2014.

### *5.1.3 SCALABLE TASKS – INTEGRATING CULTURAL ELEMENTS INTO THE CHINESE 1 COURSE*

The cultural elements are the core components to develop students’ intercultural communicative competence in the Chinese 1 course. To integrate this knowledge into the course, however, would inevitably increase the contents of the course. How to incorporate this component into the course without causing dramatic changes in its original settings was a challenging aspect of this study. To overcome this dilemma, a flipped classroom approach was utilized.

#### **5.1.3.1 The Flipped Classroom Approach**

What is a flipped classroom approach? Traditional education follows the lecture-homework model in which teachers give lectures in class and students do their homework after class. In order to enhance the learning process, the flipped classroom approach reverses this traditional model by providing the lectures and related tasks to the students prior to the class and then guiding students to do that which was formally



called “homework” during the class session (Horn, 2013; Keengwe et al., 2014; Tucker, 2012).

The flipped classroom approach is a form of blended learning as it generally utilizes different media, such as videos, web pages and ICT tools to provide course instruction and contents (Snowden, 2012; Strayer, 2007). The increasing accessibility to ICT both in school and at home has contributed to the growing interests in implementing this approach over the past few decades. Specific flipped classroom blogs, websites and Facebook communities have been established by different academics across the world. In addition, online social learning platforms, such as “Edmodo” (Wallace, 2004) and “Scalable-learning”, have been used to support flipped classroom teaching.

By applying the flipped classroom approach, seven new tasks were designed. These tasks focus on revealing the implicit cultural elements in the present course by comparing the cultural differences between Chinese and English (and even Swedish in a few cases). They also provide examples and case studies for students so that the students can explore how to apply this knowledge to specific social situations. In each scalable task, there was a short video (around 10 to 14 minutes) and some questions prepared for the students. To complete the task, students had to watch the video and answer the questions utilizing a learning platform that has been designed to employ the flipped classroom concept. The platform is accessible via the website [www.scalablelearning.com](http://www.scalablelearning.com). In order to identify this task from the ordinary assignments utilized in the Chinese 1 course, this task is named after the learning platform - “scalable tasks”.

This interactive online platform has four characteristics. Firstly, it encourages interaction between teaching and learning as it allows students to raise questions even while they are watching the video. Teachers can easily view all the questions raised by participating students and personally provide feedback to students. Secondly, once students finish their tasks, the platform will generate the student learning outcomes, such as how many the students were able to correctly answer the questions. This helps the teacher assess how well the students have learned their tasks and what needs to be clarified in class later on. Thirdly, [scalablelearning.com](http://scalablelearning.com) is a self-study monitoring tool for learners. Because of this nature, when designing the questions, the teacher has to include their answers and explanations in the tasks. After completing their tasks, students can assess their performance by checking the explanations of the answers. Last but not least, it provides flexibility for the learners as it allows them to watch the videos and do the tasks at any time and as many times as they like during the assigned period.

#### **5.1.3.2 Integrating Scalable Tasks into Chinese 1 Course**

As described in part 5.1.1.1, the Chinese 1 course offered by DU is grammar-oriented since almost 70% of the total contents of the course is the component of linguistic competence. After analyzing the Chinese 1 course contents and identifying the integrated cultural elements, a flipped classroom approach was utilized and scalable tasks were designed in order to introduce intercultural competence into the present Chinese 1 course.

When implementing the revised syllabus with the experimental groups, in each lesson, the integrated cultural elements, such as the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic culture

in the Chinese language, should be emphasized in the online lectures. This is an enhancement of linguistic and pragmatic competence from the perspective of intercultural communication. More detailed information about semantic, syntactic and pragmatic cultural elements in the target language, as well as the cross-cultural differences between Chinese and English, and even Swedish in a few cases, is then delivered to students through the scalable tasks. As described in the previous section, the scalable tasks focus on comparing the cultural differences between Chinese, English and Swedish, and revealing the implicit eight cultural elements in the Chinese 1 course. In addition, questions are included in each scalable task to assess whether students have correctly understood the concepts. At the end of each task, case studies are also used so that students can explore how to apply each lesson to specific social situations and which strategies are needed for successful intercultural communication. The case studies are, in fact, the component of strategic competence as suggested by Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006) which can be learned through teaching activities.

As described, all the components of the theoretical framework presented in each lesson are not isolated; rather they are interrelated. Based on Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor's (2006) theoretical framework, the introduction of the scalable tasks in the Chinese 1 course would stimulate other components in the model through interactions and eventually will enhance the ultimate learning outcomes, the four skills of discourse competence. Before evaluating the effectiveness of the revised syllabus and the scalable tasks, a summary of each task is presented as follows.

### **5.1.3.3 Seven Scalable Tasks**

Scalable Task 1 – Exchanging Greetings – attempts to integrate the intercultural components in Lesson 1, including the cultural elements C, the Chinese address system and element B, the Confucian traditions for addressing people from different age groups. In practice, the contents of Lesson 1 were investigated by applying the Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor’s theoretical framework model (2006). The semantic use of the respectful form of you “您 nín” and the pragmatic use of the expression “贵姓 guìxìng” are presented when introducing Chinese greeting etiquette. In order to promote intercultural competence in this scalable task, the degree of formality in addressing the interlocutor’s Chinese name in different social situations is illustrated in four videos. For instance, when a Chinese person should be addressed by his or her full name or when that person should simply be called by his or her given name is demonstrated. In the last part, two case studies are given in which students have to decide whether the dialogue includes correct introductions in two different scenarios. Then the students are asked to correct the introductions if they are not culturally appropriate. This task thus serves as the component of strategic competence in the theoretical framework in which students have to apply the learned cross-cultural knowledge to restore appropriate intercultural communication in the scenarios.

Scalable Task 2 – Family – is designed to supplement Lesson 2 and endeavors to give a deeper insight into the cultural element A by explaining the Chinese family structure and the kinship terms utilized in Chinese (see Appendix Three). In this task, the component of linguistic competence includes the application of the prefixes “大 dà – big” and “小 xiǎo – little”, as well as numbers such as “二 èr – the second” and “三

sān - the third”, when correctly addressing family members with phrases such as, “大哥 dà gē - big brother”, “二姐 èr jiě - the second elder sister” and “小弟 xiǎodì - little brother”. Supplementary kinship terms for immediate family numbers, such as “父亲 fùqīn - father”, “母亲 mǔqīn - mother”, “老公 lǎogōng - husband” and “老婆 lǎopó - wife” are introduced. As for pragmatic competence, the proper order for introducing individuals or family members is explained. In order to increase their intercultural awareness, students are asked to compare the Swedish and Chinese concepts of the family. Two case studies are provided to further facilitate student learning. Both case studies present a culturally inappropriate introduction of someone’s family members and the students are asked to find the mistakes in the dialogues. In the first case study, the gender and age preferences for these introductions are explained. In the second case study, special attention is placed on who should be included as family members in the introduction. For instance, a boyfriend or girlfriend and pets should be excluded according to Chinese customs. When analyzing the questions in the case studies, students need to apply strategic competence to correct the inappropriate introductions in the task.

Scalable Task 3 – Chinese Concepts of Dates and Times – intends to give more in-depth cross-cultural knowledge of the Chinese conception of dates and time introduced in Lesson 3, as well as discussing the cultural element F which concerns the differing Chinese and Western attitudes towards personal privacy. In the task, the Chinese cyclical and linear concepts of time are introduced and compared to the Western linear concept. Furthermore, it points out how these concepts of time affect the word order in both Chinese and English, as well as semantic language usage regarding how adverbs

such as “上 shàng - up, 下 xià - down, 前 qián - in front/before and 后 hòu - behind/after” are used to form time phrases. These concepts are different from the West where the conception of time is mainly linear. Besides Chinese time concepts, this task also explains Chinese birthday celebration customs. How to appropriately ask “How old are you?” to persons of varying ages is explained. In the case study, students need to identify the incorrect word order and the inappropriate use of Chinese expressions for “How old are you?” in the dialogues.

Scalable Task 4 – Friends’ Gatherings – aims to supplement Lesson 4 by illustrating the Chinese collectivist culture discussed in cultural element D. In the beginning of the task, it compares the favorite pastimes of Chinese and Swedish people in order to demonstrate the collectivist nature of Chinese society. It then explains Chinese customs for “treating friends” and the underlying “mutual reciprocity principle” which governs many Chinese social interactions. For instance, in what occasions would a Chinese person treat friends for food? In addition, it helps students learn how to appropriately respond to these types of invitations. As for linguistic competence, semantic language usage of age-identifiers “老 lǎo – old” and “小 xiǎo – young” is explained and how they should be utilized in formal and informal situations. For pragmatic competence, less formal and more natural greetings used by Chinese people are introduced, such as “在看书啊? Zài kànshū a? - Reading a book? (The action takes place in a study room)”, and “洗衣服哪? Xǐ yīfú nǎ? - Doing your laundry? (The action takes place in a laundry area)”. The task further explains that Chinese people usually greet someone with specific questions based on the specific scenario. Therefore, it is crucial for the

students to understand the implicit meaning of such kinds of questions and to learn how to respond properly. In the last part, two case studies are provided. The first one is related to greetings in which students are instructed to judge whether the response is appropriate. The second one is about Chinese “treating friends” customs and students are asked to choose which reasons would be culturally appropriate for the treat illustrated in the scenario.

Scalable Task 5 – Visiting Friends – attempts to introduce the tea drinking custom in China (cultural element H) and further clarifies the Chinese address system during introductions (cultural element C). In the first part of the task, the Chinese and Swedish etiquette for visiting friends and social gatherings are compared. It then explains what presents a visitor should bring and which kinds of foods and drinks are usually offered at a banquet. For instance, the number of dishes that might be offered and the Chinese wine “白酒 báijiǔ” is introduced. The important role of tea in Chinese society is then presented. The second part introduces the rules for introducing a third person. For linguistic competence, this task explains that in order to show respect when introducing a third person, that person’s profession should be added after the surname. Similar to other scalable tasks, two cases studies are included at the end of the task. The first one is the Chinese tea drinking custom. Students are then asked to decide whether the response given in the dialogue is appropriate. The second one is related to the rules of third person introductions in which students have to point out the mistakes in the introduction.

Scalable Task 6 – Making Appointments – compares the cultural differences and similarities in making phone calls in English, Swedish and Chinese in both formal and informal settings. This helps clarify the cultural element G from the course. As for linguistic competence, the consistency of using the respectful form of you “您 nín” is emphasized. Besides, the appropriate use of the interlocutor’s professional title in a formal phone call is explained, for example, “王律師 Wáng lǜshī- Lawyer Wang”. Pragmatic language usage in a Chinese phone call, such as “喂! Wèi!” and “有事儿吗? Yǒushìr ma? - What’s the matter?” is introduced. In the second part of the task, the Chinese concept of “face” and how to apply both direct and indirect strategies in making requests is discussed. This is the strategic competence as presented in the theoretical framework. In the last part, two case studies are provided. In the first case study, students have to decide whether the person in the dialogue is a Chinese or a Western student. Then the students are asked to comment if the phone call is culturally correct. As for the second case study, students have to decide whether the usage of “您 nín” is correct in the dialogue. The last question of the task asks the students to examine whether the given dialogue is appropriate.

Scalable Task 7 – Chinese Modesty – attempts to explain the complex Chinese concepts of politeness as discussed in cultural element E, including modest and self-denigrating responses by Chinese people after receiving compliments in different social settings. In the beginning the task explains the traditions of Chinese politeness and Chinese modesty as expressed in speech. A summary of examples from Lessons 7, 8 and 10 is presented to demonstrate how Chinese people respond to compliments in both spoken



and written Chinese. For the written language, an example of a modest closing for a Chinese letter (from lesson 8) is demonstrated. Then the cross-cultural differences regarding compliments between Chinese and Western societies are discussed. For instance, while Americans utilize direct and unambiguous compliments in conversations, Chinese people adopt indirect strategies without compliments or do not respond to them. This cultural difference is expressed in the usage of pragmatic phrases such as “哪里哪里! Nǎlǐ nǎlǐ!” in Chinese when responding to spoken compliments. However, an alternative response to compliments, “谢谢 (xièxie)! Thank you!” is introduced since this is becoming popular in contemporary Chinese culture due to the influence of Western culture. A case study was then designed to assess whether the students can identify which opening of a phone call dialogue is made by a Chinese person. In the second part, three videos were made to demonstrate how Chinese people express gratitude in speech and the pragmatic use of phrases such as “不客气 Bù kèqi – don't be polite/you are welcome”, “不用謝 bù yòng xiè – no need to thank (me)” and “沒事儿 méishìr – no big deal” are demonstrated. Again, a case study was designed to assess whether the students can select the most culturally appropriate answer according to Chinese modesty customs.

When designing the scalable tasks, the researcher endeavored to integrate all the intercultural components discussed in the previous section. Nonetheless, due to time limitations for each scalable task, there are several elements that could not be covered in the tasks but are explained in the online lectures. These elements include the

syntactic use of the particle “了 le”, verb complements, measure words and topic comment sentences, as well as some functional expressions introduced in Lesson 9.

#### **5.1.3.4 A Practical Example**

In summary, utilizing the flipped classroom approach and the interactive online platform, Scalablelearning.com, in this study maintained the course workload at the right level for both the teacher and the students. Since the scalable tasks were not included in the regular lectures, use of the online platform minimized any disruptions of the original course contents and structure. Moreover due to the self-study nature of the website, no additional work was generated for the teacher. From the student perspective, the workload of the scalable tasks was not as demanding as other assignments since the only options were either a “passing” or “failing” grade. As long as students watched the entire video and answered all the questions, they would pass the task.

Student feedback regarding the scalable tasks was highly positive. The responses to the short questionnaires included at the end of each task indicated that the students were satisfied with these extra-curricular assignments and found them very useful for learning the Chinese language and culture. They commented that the contents and length of the videos were appropriate and they enjoyed learning the tasks.

## **5.2 FINDINGS OF THE ISS QUESTIONNAIRE**

Since the Chinese 1 course is a distance course in which students participate in just one two-hour online lecture per week, it is difficult for the researcher to directly observe

students' intercultural competence. This is particularly the case with affective ability which is based on many personal factors. Due to the limited time spent in-class, the researcher selected ISS as an instrument for assessing the affective dimensions of the students' intercultural competence.

### *5.2.1 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THE ISS FOR ALL THE GROUPS*

The ISS is designed so that higher scores reflect a higher level of sensitivity in intercultural interactions. The highest score is 5 while the lowest is 1. In this action research study, the ISS data was computed by SPSS/PC 12.0 for Windows.

#### **5.2.1.1 The VT13 Pilot Group**

After computing the data of the VT13 pilot group, descriptive statistics showed there were 21 students in this group and the Cronbach alpha coefficient of this scale was 0.84, suggesting a very good internal consistency of the scale.

The total mean score on the ISS scale was 4.06 (out of 5), showing that they were highly intercultural sensitive with regard to intercultural communication.

From the five dimensions of intercultural sensitivity, the participants had the highest score for the second dimension, Respect for Cultural Differences (4.37). The second highest score was for the fourth dimension, Interaction Enjoyment (4.33); the third place was the first dimension, Interaction Engagement (4.09) and the fourth place was the fifth dimension, Interaction Attentiveness (3.73). The lowest score was the third dimension, Interaction Confidence (3.67). The mean difference between the highest score of the second dimension to the lowest one, the third dimension was 0.7.

### **5.2.1.1 The HT13 Control Group**

For the HT13 control group, descriptive statistics showed there were 34 students in this group. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of this scale was 0.8, showing a satisfactory level of internal consistency of the scale.

The total mean score on the ISS scale was 4.04 (out of 5), suggesting that they were highly intercultural sensitive with regard to intercultural communication.

When checking the five dimensions of intercultural sensitivity, the participants had the highest score for the fourth dimension, Interaction Enjoyment (4.39). The second highest score was for the second dimension, Respect for Cultural Differences (4.33); the third place was the first dimension, Interaction Engagement (4.03) and the fourth was the fifth dimension, Interaction Attentiveness (3.75). The lowest score was the third dimension, Interaction Confidence (3.66). The mean difference between the highest score of the fourth dimension to the lowest one, the third dimension was 0.73.

### **5.2.1.3 VT14 Experimental Group 1**

According to the descriptive statistics, there were 23 students in VT14 experimental group 1. A very good internal consistency was recorded on the reliability test as the Cronbach alpha coefficient of this scale was 0.86.

The total mean score on the ISS scale was 4.04 (out of 5), which was the same as the HT13 control group, suggesting that they were highly intercultural sensitive with regard to intercultural communication.

Among the five dimensions of intercultural sensitivity, the highest score was given to the fourth dimension, Interaction Enjoyment (4.39). The second highest score was for the second dimension, Respect for Cultural Differences (4.36); the third place was the first dimension, Interaction Engagement (4.01) and the fourth was the fifth dimension, Interaction Attentiveness (3.83). The lowest score was the third dimension, Interaction Confidence (3.82). The mean difference between the highest score of the fourth dimension to the lowest third dimension was 0.57. The priority of the five dimensions was the same as the HT13 control group.

#### **5.2.1.4 HT14 Experimental Group 2**

As for HT14 experimental group 2, descriptive statistics showed there were 34 students in this group. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of this scale was 0.76, which was a bit lower than the other groups but was still considered to be acceptable.

The total mean score on the ISS scale was 4.09 (out of 5), a little higher than VT14 experimental group 1. The mean score suggested that the subjects in this group were intercultural sensitive with regard to intercultural communication.

Among the five dimensions, highest score received was for the fourth dimension, Interaction Enjoyment (4.46). The second highest score was for the second dimension, Respect for Cultural Differences (4.44); the third place was the first dimension, Interaction Engagement (4.06) and the fourth was the fifth dimension, Interaction Attentiveness (3.76). The lowest score was the third dimension, Interaction Confidence (3.64). The mean difference between the highest score of the fourth dimension to the

lowest one, the third dimension was 0.82. This result was consistent with the HT13 control group and VT14 experimental group 1.

To summarize, the high values of Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient obtained by the four groups (0.84, 0.8, 0.86 and 0.76) suggests that the internal consistency and reliability of ISS scale were very good. When checking the mean scores of the scale (e.g. the mean scores recorded for the groups are 4.06, 4.04, 4.04 and 4.09), it is apparent that all the four groups had similar statistics, showing that the participating students had a high level of intercultural sensitivity.

#### *5.2.2 COMPARISONS BETWEEN GROUPS – ONE-WAY ANOVA*

However, those statistics were not sufficient to prove that there was no significant difference in mean scores among the groups. In order to test the hypothesis that the mean scores of the ISS from the pilot group, the control group and experimental groups were equal, another application – one-way between-groups ANOVA with post-hoc tests- was then computed. According to the results of the one-way between-groups ANOVA, there was no statistically significant difference at the  $p > .05$  level in ISS mean scores for the four groups:  $F(3, 108) = .14, p = .94$ . The actual difference in mean scores between the groups were very small as the effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .004. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score received by the pilot group ( $M = 4.06, SD = .35$ ), the control group ( $M = 4.04, SD = .32$ ), VT14 experimental group 1 ( $M = 4.08, SD = .38$ ) and HT14 experimental group 2 ( $M = 4.09, SD = .29$ ) did not differ significantly.

By reviewing the results generated above, it can be concluded that there was no significant difference in mean scores, according to the ISS scale, received among the groups, despite the fact that the experimental groups were taught by the enhanced course syllabus in different periods of time.

### *5.2.3 COMPARISONS BETWEEN GROUPS - THE FIVE DIMENSIONS*

When analyzing the patterns of the score distribution among the groups, the study finds that the HT13, VT14 and HT14 groups were identical. The highest mean score received among the five dimensions was for “interaction enjoyment” and the second highest was for “respect cultural differences”. The third highest score was with regard to “interaction engagement” while the fourth highest score concerned “interaction attentiveness”, this was followed by the lowest score which was connected to “interaction confidence”. The only different for the VT13 group as compared to the others was that the highest mean score went to “respect cultural differences” while the second highest mean score was for “interaction enjoyment”. All of the other scores were in the same order as in the other groups. The similarity of the score distribution among the groups was illustrated in Figure 8.

The high consistency of the score distribution suggests that all the participating students in this study, regardless of group affiliation, had similar opinions and attitudes with regard to intercultural communications.

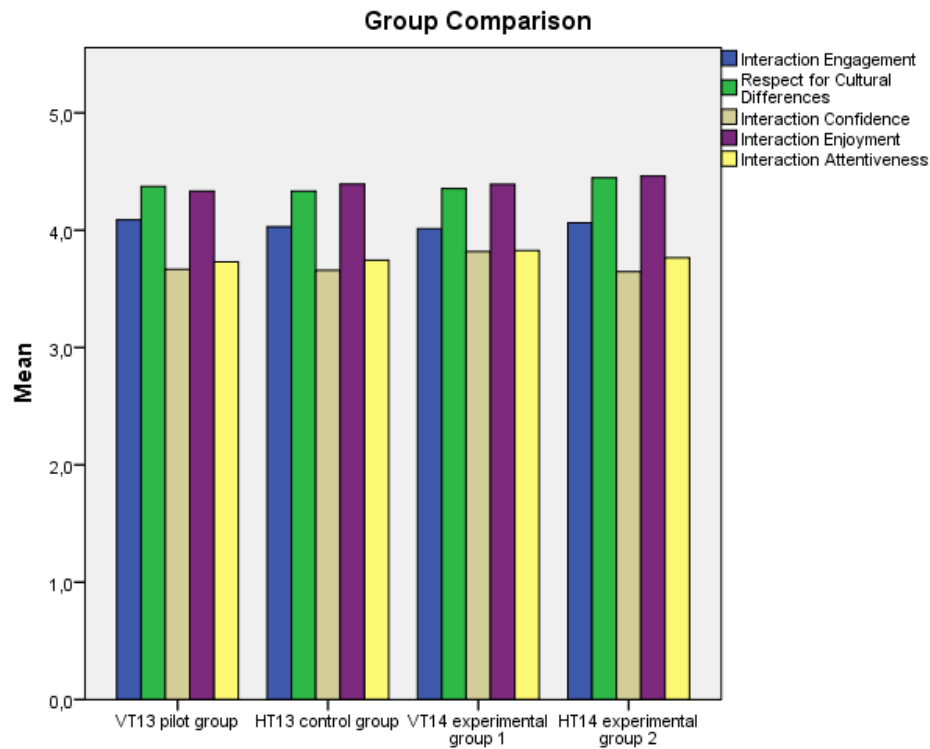


FIGURE 8. BAR GRAPH OF THE GROUPS' MEAN SCORES OF THE FIVE DIMENSION OF THE ISS

#### 5.2.4 NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES AMONG THE GROUPS

In conclusion, there is no significant difference between the control and experimental groups when comparing the mean scores each group received according to the ISS scale and the results generated by the one-way between-groups ANOVA with post-hoc tests. For instance, the mean scores (4.06, 4.04, 4.04 and 4.09) received by the groups indicate that they had similar levels of intercultural sensitivity. The one-way between-groups ANOVA with post-hoc tests further demonstrated that there were no significant differences among the groups in the mean scores they received. Further analysis of the score distribution indicates that the four groups have a very high consistency of the scores with regard to the five dimensions of the scales (see Figure 8).



The great similarity in results among the groups reveals the consistency of the subjects recruited for this study. Despite the variation in ages, gender, educational backgrounds and professions, the Swedish beginning-level students of Chinese had a similar level of intercultural sensitivity at the beginning of the course. Since they were motivated to join the course, they had a positive reaction towards intercultural communications and they showed great interests in learning the Chinese language as well as learning about the Chinese culture. This could be the reason why these two dimensions - interaction enjoyment and respect cultural differences - received the highest scores among the groups. Even though they would like to learn the Chinese language, the lack of opportunities for utilizing Chinese in Sweden might have contributed to the lower scores recorded with regard to the last three dimensions. For example, it might be difficult for students to gain confidence when they have few personal opportunities to engage in intercultural communication. This limitation could also cause difficulty in the assessment of the amount of effort that is required to successfully engage in intercultural communication, thus contributing to a lower ISS interaction confidence score.

### 5.3 FINDINGS OF THE CULTURAL QUESTIONS – STUDENTS’ PERFORMANCE

Students’ performance in the course, such as the assignments and exams were crucial evidence that would demonstrate students’ intercultural communication skills. By comparing and analyzing the data of the specific cultural questions integrated in the assignments and on the exam, this study attempts to measure the effectiveness of the revised course contents and the scalable tasks that were delivered to the experimental groups.

### *5.3.1 THE VT13 PILOT GROUP – SPRING, 2013*

The spring semester, 2013 was the first period of data collection in this action research study. A pilot study (the VT13 pilot group) was implemented to examine the feasibility and effectiveness of the research methodology and research questions. Since the researcher planned to implement the control group at the first stage, this pilot study acted as the preliminary control group which followed the course in its original settings.

#### **5.3.1.1 Co-teaching Tradition**

Traditionally, there have been two teachers co-teaching the Chinese 1 course due to a large number of students in the course. In the spring semester 2013, this study followed this tradition. The researcher and another teacher taught the pilot group simultaneously. In practice, both the researcher and her partner taught three groups of students and shared an equal workload during the course. However, this arrangement also made the data collection more problematic. First of all, the number of students who would actually complete the course was unknown; that is the number of subjects who would complete the course was beyond the control of the researcher. At the end of the spring semester of 2013, the total number of subjects who completed the course was less than 30 (there were 10 subjects from the researcher's group and 11 from the co-teacher's group), the minimum number required for this study. Secondly, although they used identical course materials, both teachers had individual teaching styles and strategies that could possibly jeopardize the consistency of the data.

#### **5.3.1.2 Data Analysis – The Influence of the Teachers**

There were 21 subjects included in the pilot study of which 10 were from the researcher's group and the other 11 were from the other group. In order to investigate whether the co-teaching mode generated a significant difference between the mean scores of the groups, independent-samples t-tests (by IBM SPSS Statistics 21 program) were performed to test the hypothesis that the mean scores of the cultural questions obtained by the groups were equal.

The first independent-samples t-test was computed to compare the mean scores of all the cultural questions that the subjects in the groups obtained. The assumption of homogeneity of variances was tested and satisfied by Levene's  $F$  test ( $F = .12, p = .73$ ). As suggested by the result of the t-test, there was no significant difference in the mean scores for all the cultural questions between the researcher's group and her partner's group. The mean score of the researcher's group was 39.3 ( $SD = 6.96$ ) while the partner's group received a score of 41.27 ( $SD = 5.76$ );  $t(19) = -.71, p = .49$  (two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = -1.97, 95%  $CI$ : -7.79 to 3.84) was small (eta squared = .023).

Since the time restrictions for completing the assignments and the written exam are not the same, this may affect the students' performance in these two datasets. Two independent-samples t-tests were thus computed to examine the mean scores of the cultural questions that were integrated into the assignments and the exam.

For the cultural questions integrated in the assignments, along with a satisfactory result of Levene's test showing equal variances in the test ( $F = .11, p = .32$ ), the independent-samples t-test shows that there was no significant difference in the mean scores

between the two groups. The mean score of the researcher's group was 27 ( $SD = 4.99$ ) while the second group received a score of 27.18 ( $SD = 3.52$ );  $t(19) = -.097$ ,  $p = .92$  (two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference =  $-.18$ , 95%  $CI$ :  $-4.09$  to  $3.73$ ) was very small (eta squared =  $<.000$ ).

A similar result was found regarding the cultural questions which had been integrated into the exam. The result of the independent-samples t-test, which received a positive result of Levene's test for equality variances ( $F = .01$ ,  $p = .93$ ), suggests that there was no significant difference in the mean scores of the exam between the researcher's group ( $M = 11.50$ ,  $SD = 4.48$ ) and the second group ( $M = 13.27$ ,  $SD = 3.85$ );  $t(19) = -.98$ ,  $p = .34$  (two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference =  $-1.77$ , 95%  $CI$ :  $-5.58$  to  $2.03$ ) was small (eta squared =  $.047$ ).

This result might reflect the limited influence of the teachers in a distance education course when the teachers only interacted with students for two hours per week during a synchronized Connect seminar.

### **5.3.1.3 Reliability of the Cultural Questions**

Since there were no significant differences in mean scores of the cultural questions obtained by the two teachers' groups, the data for all the 21 subjects was merged into one group in order to more efficiently analyze the data.

A reliability test was then conducted to evaluate the internal consistency of the scores from the research questions. The test result showed that the Cronbach's alpha value was 0.66 for all 70 units of the cultural questions. Generally speaking, Cronbach's alpha

values above 0.7 are considered acceptable while values above 0.8 are preferable.

Given the fact that the Cronbach's alpha was 0.66, it was necessary for the researcher to review the cultural questions as well as the decoding process. For instance, was the data imported correctly? Were there any questions negatively worded? Were there any important factors that had not been considered when designing the questions?

After the evaluation, the researcher found that there were two characteristics in the design of the cultural questions that might lower the reliability of the internal consistency of the mean scores. Firstly, the 30 cultural questions included in the student assignments were distributed in 10 assignments (out of 15). The reason for this was to collect data which would reflect the students' intercultural communication skills at different stages of the course. However, this arrangement added a time variable to the data which might increase the internal inconsistency of the mean scores. Secondly, the two types of questions – the multiple choice and open-ended questions - used in the study might be another factor affecting the value of the reliability of the scores. The options provided by multiple choice questions explicitly provided hints to the students and thus it was easier for the students to surmise the correct answers. Conversely, the open-ended questions were more demanding since students had to utilize their language skills and knowledge when answering these questions. Since the level of difficulty between these two types of questions was different, this may also contribute to inconsistency in the internal reliability of the data.

When investigating the cultural questions individually, the researcher found that there were some misleading codes that might contribute to low Cronbach's alpha value of the

internal consistency of the scores from the research questions. For instance, the codes applied to questions that related to making phone calls (G201, G203) and writing Chinese letters and notes (G301, G304) were unclear when dividing certain concepts. Another two codes that are related to the Chinese address system, CE103 and CE104 were identified as problematic or invalid (see Table 3 in p. 156).

#### **5.3.1.4 Modification of the Research Settings and the Cultural Questions**

As discussed earlier, the subjects in the VT13 Pilot Group were taught by two teachers. This arrangement posed some challenges that could possibly jeopardize the consistency of the data. In order to minimize the risk, when the HT13 control group was launched in autumn, 2013, the researcher became the sole teacher while her partners became responsible for other administrative tasks.

Besides adjusting the research settings, much effort was devoted to investigating the consistency of the wording of the cultural questions and the accuracy of the questions' coding. In order to increase the reliability of the mean scores for the research questions, micro-adjustments were made to the coding system for the questions related to making phone calls (units G101 and G203) and writing Chinese letters and notes (units G301, G304). Two invalid units CE103 and CE104 used on the exam were deleted. Moreover, all the multiple choice questions (eight multiple questions included in written assignment no.13 and five in written assignment no.15) were either eliminated or replaced by open-ended questions so that the level of difficulty would be consistent. For instance, the two multiple choice questions (units CE102 and EE3) were simply excluded from data analysis, leaving the nine open-ended questions unchanged. The

number of sub-questions on the exam was then lowered to 20 for data analysis (see Table 3 in p.156).

The modification of the cultural questions then faced a great challenge when the Chinese department decided to replace the second edition textbook with a third version. Even though most of the contents in the third edition textbook remained the same as in the second edition, the new edition deleted one lesson from the old version and reconstructed each lesson in a clearer and more consistent framework. This modification caused some changes in the contents of the last five lessons and consequently affected the original planning, materials and lesson assignments for the original course. When adjusting the assignments on the basis of the third edition textbook, the total numbers of cultural questions included in the assignments was reduced from 30 to 25 since there was one less lesson. Furthermore, instead of integrated into 10 assignments (out of 15), these questions were rearranged and included predominantly in the last five assignments. This modification was an attempt to minimize the influences caused by the time factor on the mean scores.

In summary, after the evaluation and modification of the cultural questions, a total of 34 open-ended questions were prepared for data collection. These 34 questions were then further decoded into 66 units of information for data analysis in which 46 were included in five student assignments and 20 were integrated on the exam. The detail of each cultural information is listed on Appendix Five and the distribution of the modified cultural questions is presented in Table 3 below.

**TABLE 3. DISTRIBUTION OF CULTURAL QUESTIONS IN THE COURSE**

Cultural Element	Cultural Questions in Assignments	Cultural Questions in Final Exam	Total
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A – kinship system	A1, A2, A3	AE1	4
B – respect of age	B1, B2		2
C - address system	<u>C1 – addressing teachers</u> C101, C102, C103 <u>C2 – application of “nin”</u> C201, C202, C203 <u>C3 – addressing friends</u> C301, C302, C303, C304 <u>C4 – 1<sup>st</sup> meeting introduction</u> C401, C402, C403 <u>C5 – 3<sup>rd</sup> person introduction</u> C501, C502, C503, C504, C505, C506, C507	<u>CE1 – addressing teachers</u> CE101, CE102 <u>CE2 – application of “nin”</u> CE201 <u>CE3 – addressing friends</u> CE301, CE302 <u>CE4 – 1<sup>st</sup> meeting introduction</u> CE401, CE402, CE403 <u>CE5 – 3<sup>rd</sup> person introduction</u> CE501, CE502, CE503	31
D – collective culture	<u>D1 - Reasons for a treat</u> D101, D102 <u>D2 - Response to a request for a treat</u> D201 <u>D3 – Response to a treat of dinner</u> D301	<u>DE1 - Reasons for a treat</u> DE101 <u>DE2 - Response to a request for a treat</u> DE201 <u>DE3 – Response to a treat of dinner</u> DE301	7
E – Chinese modesty	E1, E2	EE1, EE2	4
F – respect of privacy	F1, F2		2
G – phone call & letter	<u>G1 – Etiquette in making phone call</u> G101, G102, G103 <u>G2 – Application of “Wei” and “You shir ma?”</u> G201, G202, G203, G204 <u>G3 – Etiquette in writing letters</u> G301, G302, G303, G304	<u>GE1 – Etiquette in making phone call</u> GE101  <u>GE3 – Etiquette in Writing letters</u> GE301	13
H – tea drinking custom	H1, H2	HE1	3
Total: 8 cultural elements	46 units of information	20 units of information	66

### 5.3.2 THE HT13 CONTROL GROUP – AUTUMN, 2013

In the autumn semester 2013, the HT13 control group was formed. The control group utilized the modified cultural questions and course materials due to change to the third edition textbook. Furthermore, the researcher was the only teacher teaching all the students in the course. Despite the modifications, most of the contents of this control group were similar to the VT13 pilot group. In this action research study, both VT13 and HT13 groups were used as a reference for the later experimental groups by providing information of how students learned and developed their intercultural communication skills during the Chinese 1 course.



At the end of the course, there were 34 subjects who completed the course and this number met the minimum requirement for the study. A reliability test was then conducted in order to check the internal consistency of the mean scores of the cultural questions which had been evaluated and modified after the pilot study. The Cronbach's alpha value obtained was 0.84, indicating that the internal consistency reliability for the questions was very good. The mean score for all of the 66 units of the cultural questions was 36.18 while the mean score for the 46 units of the cultural questions included in the assignments was 26.32. As for the exam, the mean score for the 20 units of the cultural questions was 9.85.

### *5.3.3 VT14 EXPERIMENTAL GROUP 1 AND HT14 EXPERIMENTAL GROUP 2 – THE YEAR 2014*

Since the HT13 control group included enough subjects, the study proceeded to the next stage – starting the experimental group in the spring semester, 2014 (VT14 experimental group 1). Unfortunately, the experimental group faced similar changes as in the VT13 pilot group. At the end of the semester, only 23 subjects had completed the course and thus the group did not meet the minimum required number for this study.

The experimental group basically followed the course plan and the materials that had been prepared for the HT13 control group. However, intercultural communicative components were included in the contents of each lecture. This included, for instance, the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic culture of the Chinese language. Moreover, an additional assignment - “scalable tasks” - was designed to provide more comprehensive insights for the cultural elements included in the course.

When checking the students' performance on the cultural questions, a reliability test was conducted to investigate the internal consistency of the mean scores obtained by the subjects. The test result showed that the Cronbach's alpha value of the scores was 0.85, suggesting a very good internal consistency reliability of the questions used in this study. The mean score for all the 66 units of the cultural questions in this group was 45.43, the mean score for the 46 units of the cultural questions included in the assignments was 32.91 and the mean score for the 20 units of the cultural questions used on the exam was 12.52.

In order to collect sufficient data for this study, the second experimental group was launched in the autumn semester, 2014 (HT14 experimental group 2). Having the same condition as the first experimental group, this group of students was taught using revised course in which scalable tasks were included as part of the assignments. At the end of the semester, there were 34 subjects who completed the course. Thus, the group met the minimum number of students required for this research.

A reliability test was then conducted to investigate the internal consistency of the scores of the research questions. The test result showed that the Cronbach's alpha value of the scores was 0.87, suggesting a very good internal consistency reliability of the questions used in this study. The mean score for all the 66 units of the cultural questions in this group was 45.09, the mean score for the 46 units of the cultural questions included in the assignments was 33.24 and the mean score for the 20 units of the cultural questions used on the exam was 11.85.

When comparing the descriptive statistics, the mean scores obtained by these two experimental groups were very similar. The difference in the mean scores of all the 66 units of the cultural questions was 0.34, while the difference in the mean scores of the 46 units included in the assignments was 0.33. More diversity among the mean scores was found in the last 20 units of cultural questions that were included on the exam, as the difference was 0.67.

#### 5.3.4 COMPARISONS BETWEEN GROUPS

One of the main objectives of this action research study was to integrate intercultural communicative components into an actual Chinese 1 course and to investigate the effectiveness of this implementation. Could the revised course contents and scalable tasks help students enhance their intercultural communicative competence? If so, how effective were these changes?

As illustrated in Table 4, the mean scores of the cultural questions obtained by the experimental groups were higher than the pilot and control group. A series of one-way between-groups ANOVA with post-hoc tests were then computed to develop a more in-depth analysis of the students' performance.

**TABLE 4. MEAN SCORES OF CULTURAL QUESTIONS OBTAINED BY GROUPS**

Mean Scores of Cultural Questions	VT13 pilot group	HT13 control group	VT14 experimental group 1	HT14 experimental group 2
Overall Performance	---	36.18	45.43	45.09
Assignments	---	26.32	32.91	33.24
Exam	9.48	9.85	12.52	11.85

##### 5.3.4.1 The Overall Performance

In this section, the analysis was conducted to illustrate the overall performance of the students when answering the cultural questions. Data collected from the VT13 pilot group was excluded from this analysis as some cultural questions were modified after this pilot study and thus did not match the ones collected from the latter groups.

When checking the descriptive statistics of these groups in Table 4, one can conclude that the two experimental groups got better results as the students from VT14 experimental group 1 got 9.25 more while students from HT14 experimental group 2 got 8.91 more in their mean score as compared to the HT13 group.

As referring to the hypothesis that assumed the mean scores of all the 66 units of the cultural questions obtained by the HT13 control group and two experimental groups were equal, a one-way between-groups ANOVA with post-hoc tests was conducted to compare the groups. As illustrated by the results of the one-way between-groups ANOVA, there was a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level in mean scores of the cultural questions obtained by the three groups:  $F(2, 88) = 12.61, p = .000$ . The actual difference in mean scores between the groups was very large as the effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .22. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score received by the control group ( $M = 36.18, SD = 8.72$ ) was significantly different from VT14 experimental group 1 ( $M = 45.43, SD = 7.87$ ) and HT14 experimental group 2 ( $M = 45.09, SD = 8.21$ ). In other words, as compared to the two experimental groups, the control group performed differently when answering the cultural questions and obtained a less satisfactory result.

#### **5.3.4.2 The Performance of the Assignments**

As introduced earlier, the 66 units of the cultural questions were comprised of two sets of data. The first set of data was the 46 units of cultural questions that were integrated in the five student assignments while the other 20 units of cultural questions were included on the exam. These two sets of cultural questions shared common characteristics. First of all, they were all task-based designed open-ended questions. Secondly, they were open-book tests and students were allowed to use the course textbook, course materials and dictionary, etc., when completing their tasks (see Table 3 in p.157). However, while students were allowed to finish their assignments within a week, they had to complete their exam in 3 hours. Under this premise, an additional factor – time limitation – had to be considered when analyzing the performance of the target groups. To get the best result, these two set of data should be investigated and analyzed separately.

Let's first look at the 46 units of cultural questions that were integrated in the assignments.

When checking the mean scores received by the HT13 control group and the two experimental groups in Table 4, the latter groups performed better as the mean score they got was 6.59 and 6.92 more than the HT13 group respectively. In order to test the hypothesis that the mean scores obtained by the groups were equal, a one-way between-groups ANOVA with post-hoc tests was computed. The results of the one-way between-groups ANOVA illustrated that there was a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level in mean scores of the cultural questions obtained by the three groups:  $F(2, 88) = 12.50, p = .000$ . Through the calculation using eta squared, it

appears that the actual difference in mean scores between the groups was very large as the effect size was .22. The differences among the groups is displayed by the post-hoc tests in which the mean score received by the control group ( $M = 26.32, SD = 6.71$ ) was significantly different from VT14 experimental group 1 ( $M = 32.91, SD = 6.08$ ) and HT14 experimental group 2 ( $M = 33.24, SD = 5.91$ ). In other words, the control group and the experimental groups performed differently when doing the assignments and the less satisfactory result was recorded for the control group.

#### **5.3.4.3 The Performance on the Exam**

As mentioned, there was more rigid time control during the final written exam. Did all the groups perform consistently when doing their assignments and on the final written exam despite the time factor?

##### *Test 1: The VT13 pilot group and the HT13 control group*

Since the open-ended questions used on the exam were identical for all the groups, the analysis began with the VT13 pilot group and the HT13 control group as they both used the course materials based on the original course's plan and contents. The descriptive statistics of these two groups were very similar and the difference in mean scores of the exam was very small (0.37, see Table 4 in p. 161). An Independent-samples t-test was then computed to test the hypothesis that the mean scores of the cultural questions included on the exam obtained by the groups were equal. With a satisfactory result of the Levene's test of equal variances ( $F = .001, p = .98$ ), the result of the t-test showed that there was no significant difference in the mean scores for the VT13 pilot group ( $M = 9.48, SD = 3.59$ ) and the HT13 control group ( $M = 9.85, SD = 3.19$ );  $t(53) = -.41, p$

= .69 (two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = -.38, 95% *CI*: -2.24 to 1.49) was very small (eta squared = .003).

#### *Test 2: The HT13 control group and the two experimental groups*

In order to investigate whether there was a difference between the control group and the two experimental groups, a one-way between-groups ANOVA with post-hoc tests was computed.

As depicted by the results of the one-way between-groups ANOVA, there was a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level in mean scores of the cultural questions obtained by these three groups:  $F(2, 88) = 6.28, p = .003$ . The effect size, which was calculated using eta squared, was .13, indicating that the actual difference in mean scores between these three groups was large. By comparing the post-hoc tests, it became apparent that no significant difference was found between VT14 experimental group 1 ( $M = 12.52, SD = 2.91$ ) and HT14 experimental group 2 ( $M = 11.85, SD = 2.97$ ). However, as suggested by the post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test, the control group ( $M = 9.85, SD = 3.19$ ) was significantly different from the two experimental groups. Apparently, the two experimental groups obtained better results when answering their cultural questions included on the exam as compared to the control group.

#### *5.3.5 STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE BETWEEN GROUPS – A SUMMARY*

The Cronbach's alpha values for the scores obtained by the HT13 (0.84), VT14 (0.85) and HT14 (0.87) groups indicate a high internal consistency reliability for the cultural questions utilized in this study. In addition, when comparing the descriptive statistics

and the independent samples t-tests between the VT13 pilot group and the HT13 control group, the researcher found that there were no significant differences in the mean scores for the cultural questions included on the final exam. These results would then suggest that the subjects, who joined the unmodified Chinese 1 course, even though they were enrolled in the course in two different semesters, provided similar answers to the cultural questions on the exam.

The performance of the VT14 and HT14 experimental groups was also consistent and the one-way between-groups ANOVA with post-hoc tests indicated that the groups had no significant difference in the mean scores for the cultural questions that were included in both the assignments and on the exam. These results appear to confirm the two experimental groups that utilized the revised course materials and scalable tasks responded to the cultural questions in similar ways despite taking the course at different times.

These findings also confirmed that there was a significant difference between the mean scores for the cultural questions obtained by the control group and the experimental groups. In light of the results of the descriptive statistics (as shown in Table 4 on p.161) and one-way between-groups ANOVA with post-hoc tests, this action research study would suggest that the revised course contents and the utilization of the scalable tasks had a positive effect on the development of the students' intercultural communicative competence during their Chinese language studies. The performance of the VT14 and HT14 experimental groups was significantly better than the HT13 control group in



answering the cultural questions that were integrated into both the assignments and the exam.

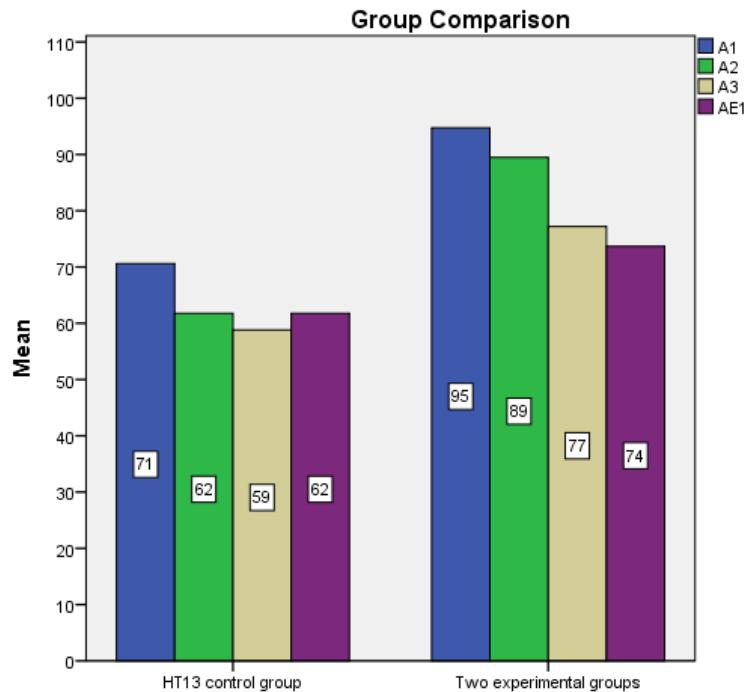
#### 5.4 FINDINGS OF THE CULTURAL QUESTIONS – ACQUISITIONS OF CULTURAL ELEMENTS

As illustrated by the statistics in the previous discussion, there was a significant difference between the mean scores for cultural questions received by the control group and the experimental groups. In this section, a special effort was devoted to an in-depth investigation of the differences in the scores between the HT13 control group and the two experimental groups. These findings could then shed light on how students acquired intercultural communicative components in the original course as well as in the modified course. Since the design of the cultural questions was based on the eight cultural elements integrated into the course, the analysis followed this strategy and began with the first cultural element A – the Chinese kinship appellation system (see Table 3, p. 157).

##### *5.4.1 ELEMENT A: CHINESE KINSHIP APPELLATION SYSTEM*

There are four cultural questions related to the Chinese kinship appellation system. The questions are encoded into four units, namely A1, A2, A3 and AE1. The first two units (A1, A2) are paired questions which ask students to introduce their family members at home. Units A3 and AE1 are task-based questions in which students have to answer the questions based on the information provided in the tasks. Unit A3 requires students to introduce a Swedish student's family that consists of his parents, an elder brother, an elder sister and a younger sister. Additionally, that student also has a dog and a

girlfriend. Unit AE1 is one part of a writing task included on the exam. The task required students to write an invitation letter to a friend in which the students must mention which family members will join a birthday party.



**FIGURE 9. ELEMENT A: CHINESE KINSHIP APPELLATION SYSTEM**

**Cultural Information:**

**A1:** introducing family members at home (written ex.4)

**A2:** introducing family members at home (spoken ex.2)

**A3:** introducing the assigned Character's family members based on scenario (written ex.10)

**AE1:** introducing the assigned Character's family members based on scenario (exam)

When comparing the performance of the two groups in the four units (Figure 9), the HT13 control group had more even mean scores in which the highest mean score was the first unit, A1 (0.71), and the lowest was for the unit A3 (0.59). The mean difference between the highest and the lowest scores was 0.12. This result showed the consistency of the students when they answered the questions. According to the researcher's observation, students in all the groups earned the highest score on the first cultural

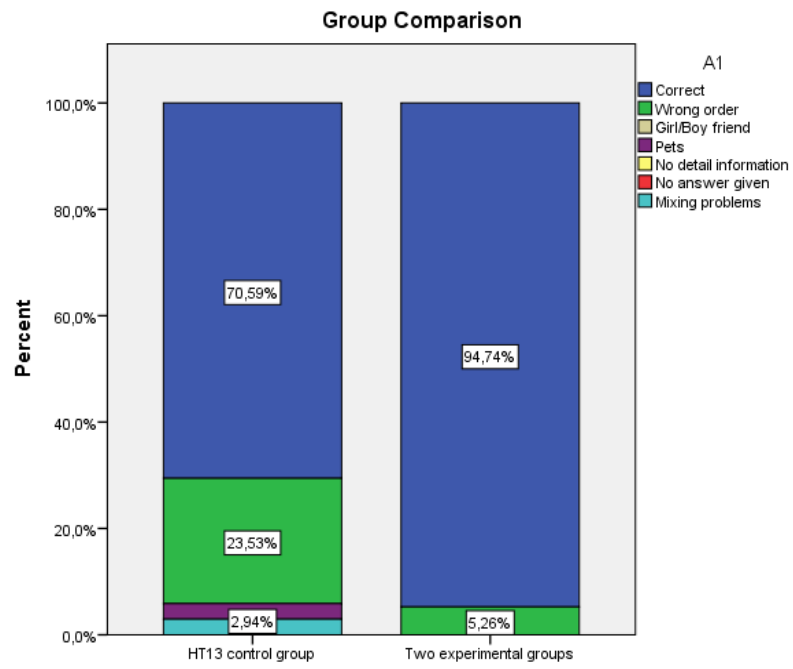
question when they had just learnt the introduction of family members in class.

However, instead of improving, they obtained lower scores on the latter questions. One possible reason for this phenomenon was that over time the students gradually forgot what they had learnt.

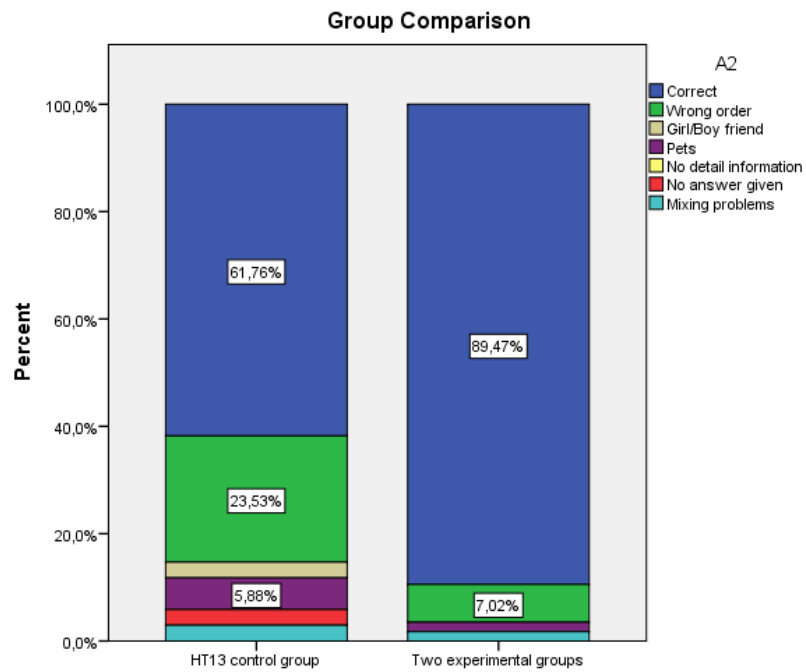
For the two experimental groups, a scalable task (scalable task no. 2) was produced in order to enhance students' intercultural competence in introducing family members in Chinese. The direct result was the high score (0.95) they obtained in unit A1. However, similar to the control group, their memory of this knowledge seemed to diminish gradually over time and they obtained lower scores on latter questions. The mean difference between the highest and the lowest scores was 0.31, a much wider range as compared to the HT13 control group. The lowest score they earned was for AE1 (0.74), the question that was included on the exam. The less satisfactory performance of the students could be due to the greater time pressure during the examination. Yet it is important to note that all the scores obtained by the two experimental groups are higher than the results obtained by the HT13 control group.

#### **5.4.1.1 Further Analysis of Students' Answers**

Are there any differences in the answers provided by the HT13 control group and the experimental groups?



**FIGURE 10. ANALYSIS OF UNIT A1**



**FIGURE 11. ANALYSIS OF UNIT A2**

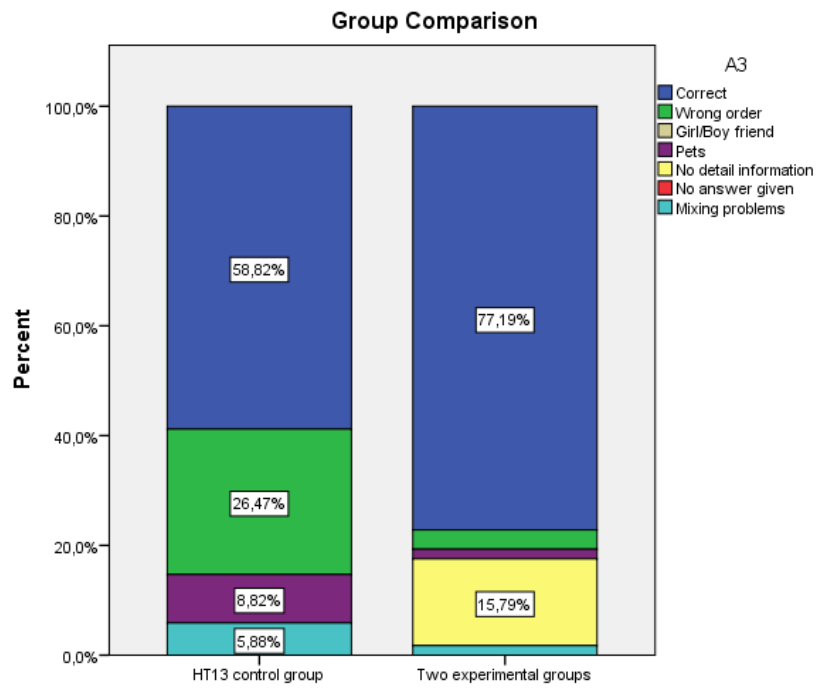


FIGURE 12. ANALYSIS OF UNIT A3

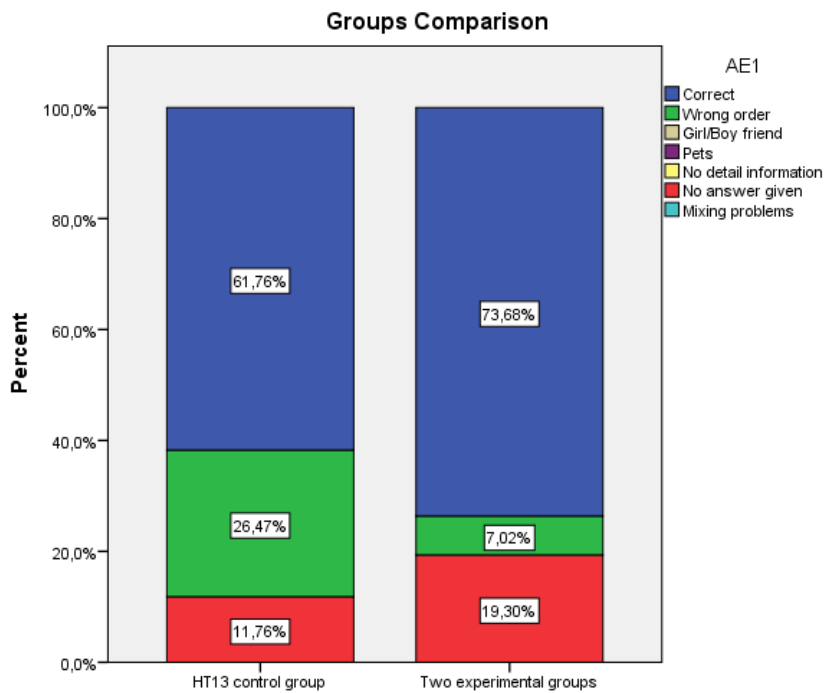


FIGURE 13. ANALYSIS OF UNIT AE1

As referred to the four figures of units A1, A2, A3 and AE1 (see Figure 10, 11, 12 and 13), the most common mistake made by the HT13 control group was introducing their family members in the incorrect order (from 24-26% of all four units). This might be a result of insufficient information provided in the course and the textbook regarding the Chinese family structure and the Chinese custom of introducing family members, such as introducing the male members before the female members, the elder one before the younger one and so on. An example is given by a student when answering A3 in which she introduced the family members of the made-up character, David as below:

大卫: 我家有四个人。妈妈爸爸姐姐和我。

David: My family has four persons. Mother, father, elder sister and me.

Another problematic answer is quoted here:

大卫: 我家有六口人。爸爸, 妈妈, 一个姐姐, 一个哥哥, 一个妹妹和我。

David: My family has four persons. Father, mother, one elder sister, one elder brother, one little sister and me.

Another mistake made by this group of students included introducing their boyfriend/girlfriend, and their pets as part of their family in units A1, A2 and A3. This can be demonstrated in the below example when another student introducing David's family (A3):

大卫: 我家有五个人。我爸爸, 我妈妈, 一个哥哥, 一个姐姐 和我。我也有一个女朋友和一个狗。

David: My family has five persons. My father, my mother, one elder brother, one elder sister and me. I also have a girlfriend and a dog.

When scrutinizing the answers given by the two experimental groups, the most common mistake they made was the same as the HT13 group in which they failed to introduce their family members according to the Chinese custom (7% or less of all the questions). However, very few of them (only around 2% or less) included their boyfriend/girlfriend and their pets as their family members in units A2 and A3.

Unit A3 is a specially designed cultural question which aims to investigate whether students can apply the intercultural knowledge about the Chinese custom of introducing family members in a specific case. About 77% of the two experimental groups provided correct answers while very few students made mistakes as compared to the control group. Interestingly, 16% of the students rhetorically shorten their introduction by not giving details of their family members. In this case, no point was given and this might be the reason why the experimental groups obtained a lower mean score on this task. As compared to the experimental groups, the HT13 control group did not shorten their introductions.

The mean scores of the unit AE1 were similar between the HT13 (0.62) and the experimental groups (0.74). The less satisfactory results obtained by both groups could be caused by the time limitation implemented during the exam. For example, there were students in both groups who failed to complete the question during the exam (12% of the students in the HT13 control group and 19% in the experimental groups).

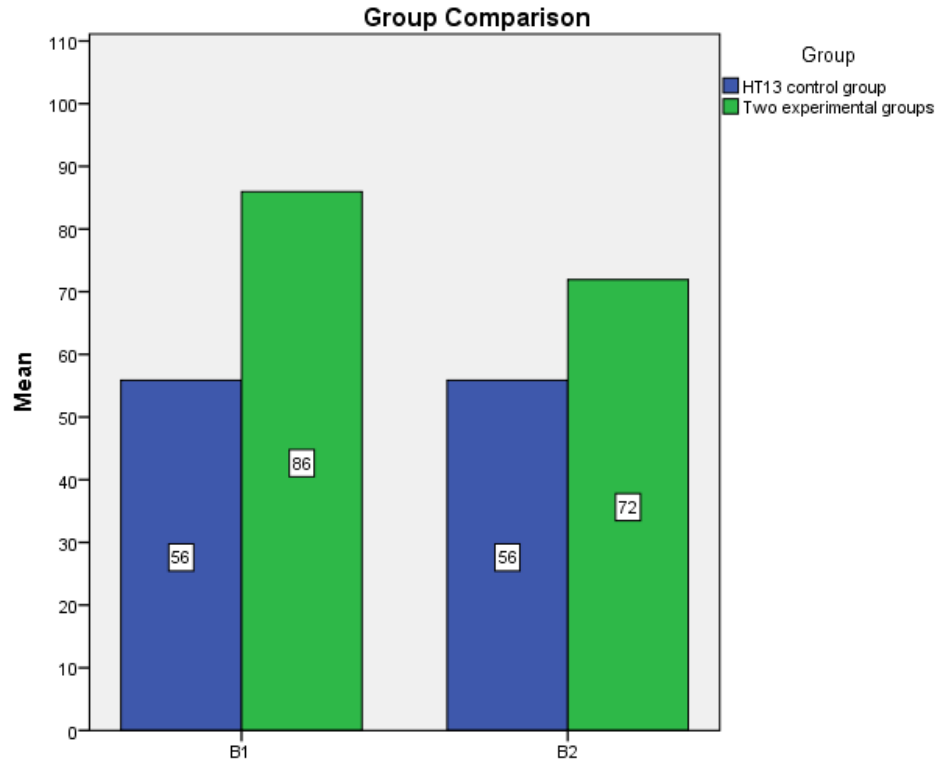
To summarize, when analyzing the answers given by the students in the four units, consistency was found in both groups. For instance, the control group had a similar percentage of students (around 23-26%) who failed to introduce their family members in the proper order while the experimental groups had 7% or fewer students making this type of mistake. This indicates that the experimental groups had a better understanding of the Chinese kinship appellation system as compared to the control group.

#### *5.4.2 ELEMENT B: THE TRADITIONAL RESPECT FOR "AGE"*

Intercultural knowledge regarding how to ask the question -“How old are you?” is provided in lesson 3 in the textbook. According to the Chinese custom, the question - “你今年多大? Nǐ jīnnián duō dà?” - is commonly used to ask for “How old are you?” among adults. To ask a child who is under the age of 10, the question - “你今年几岁? Nǐ jīnnián jǐ suì?” - should be used instead. People will be more polite when consulting an older person’s age and questions such as “您多大年纪了? / 您多大岁数了? Nín duō dà niánjì le? / Nín duō dà suìshù le?” should be applied.

Two cultural questions were designed to investigate whether students managed to apply this knowledge in the situations of intercultural communication. The first question is concern asking a child his/her age and it is encoded as unit B1. The second question is designed to determine the age of an older person and is marked as unit B2.





**FIGURE 14. ELEMENT B: THE TRADITIONAL RESPECT FOR “AGE”**

**Cultural Information:**

**B1:** Asking a 4-years old boy’s age (written ex.13)

**B2:** Asking a 75-years old lady’s age (written ex.15)

When checking the mean scores of these two cultural questions obtained by the HT13 control group (see Figure 14), the researcher found that the students had consistent results (0.56). The two experimental groups obtained better results on the questions in which they earned very high mean scores (0.86 for the first question and 0.72 for the second one, see Figure 14). The less satisfactory result of the second question could be caused by the time factor since the students completed the two tasks in two different periods of time.

To compare the answers given by the students in the units of B1 and B2 (Figure 15 and 16), one can see that the most common mistake made by the groups was overusing the application of the question, “你今年多大? Nǐ jīnnián duō dà?”. This question was used in the dialogues of lesson 3 and the students were able to practice it in class. In other words, the students did not have an opportunity to practice the other two questions and thus it was more difficult for them to remember how to apply the constructions in relevant social situations. In the following example, even though a student managed to utilize the honorific form of you – “您 nín” when addressing the interlocutor (who is 75 years old) in B2, she kept using the expression that she practiced most.

大卫: 我今年二十三岁。您今年多大?

晓婷的奶奶: 我今年 75 了。

David: I am 23 years old. How old are you (honorific form).

Xiao-ting's grandmother: I am 75 years old.

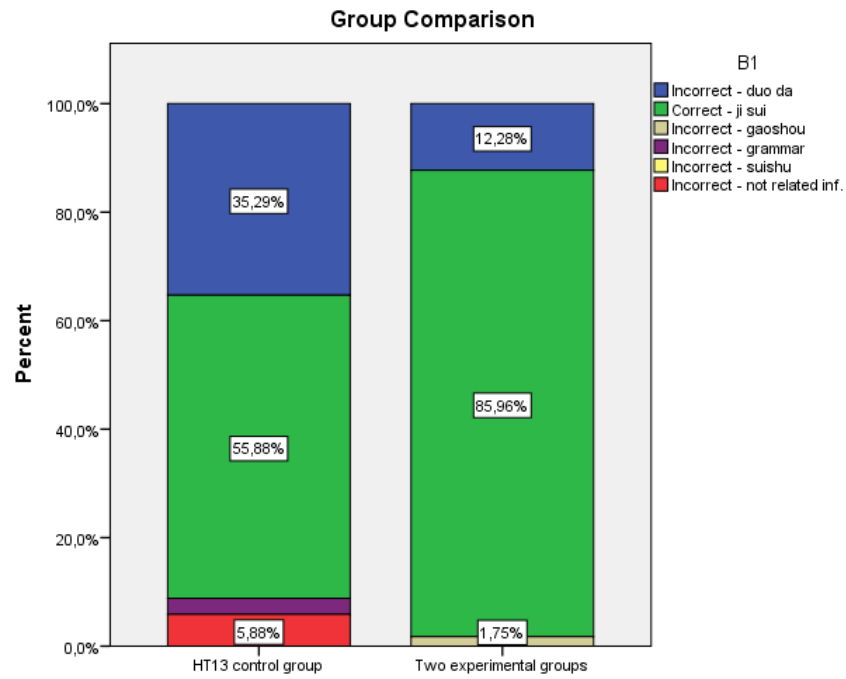


FIGURE 15. ANALYSIS OF UNIT B1

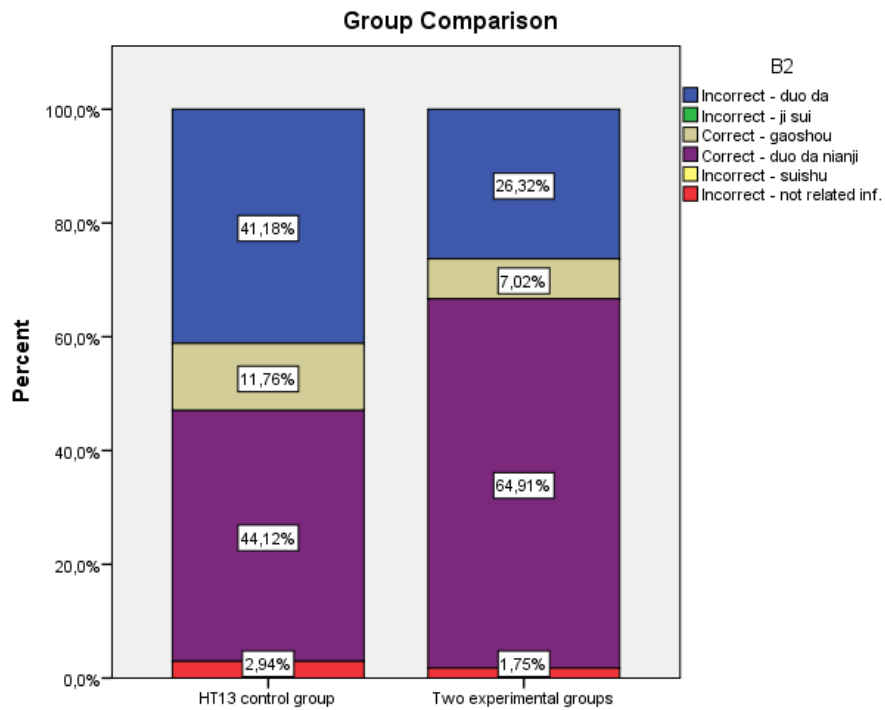


FIGURE 16. ANALYSIS OF UNIT B2

### *5.4.3 ELEMENT C: CHINESE ADDRESS SYSTEM*

Similar to English, the addressing system in the Swedish language strongly reflects the individualistic culture in which Swedish people address each other with their first name regardless the formality of the social activities. On the contrary, the Chinese address system is more complicated and can be a difficult topic for the foreign learners of Chinese. To master this oriental address system, students are required to understand how a Chinese full name is constructed. Then the students have to determine the relation between the speakers, such as the degree of intimacy and their social status. Last but not least, they have to be aware of the difference in addressing someone in formal and informal settings.

Since the target course in this study is a beginning-level Chinese course, learning how to introduce oneself, addressing teachers and classmates are crucial tasks for the students. There are examples provided by the textbook but it does not include any relevant cultural information that explains all three of the conditions listed above. Under this premise, scalable tasks (no. 1 and 6) were produced for the experimental groups.

In order to investigate how skillful the students were in addressing someone in different social situations, the researcher designed a series of cultural questions for the students, forming the biggest and the most crucial part of the data collection. The questions were then encoded into 30 units of cultural information for analysis.

#### **5.4.3.1 Addressing the Teacher**

According to the Chinese address system, students should first address a teacher by first saying the teacher's surname and then the profession. This is done in order to show respect, for example, “陈老师 Chén lǎoshī – Chen plus teacher”. Could the students in the target course master this Chinese convention and address their teacher appropriately? Three cultural questions were designed to examine whether the students could address their teacher properly in different situations.

The three questions were encoded into five units for analysis. The first two units, C101 and CE101 refer to two similar scenarios in which a Swedish student has to introduce his Chinese teacher to a Chinese classmate. When interpreting the statistics provided in Figure 17, the performance of the HT13 control group was quite consistent as the students' mean scores were similar for these two questions. The experimental groups, who received supplementary information from the scalable tasks regarding the addressing system, performed better than the HT13 control group on the first task but slightly less satisfactorily than the control group on the second task during their exam. One common mistake the students made was not saying the teacher's surname before the profession, which is not appropriate in a third person introduction. Other incorrect addresses include using the teacher's first name plus the profession or stating the profession before the surname, such as 月清老师, 老师何 and 老师何月清.

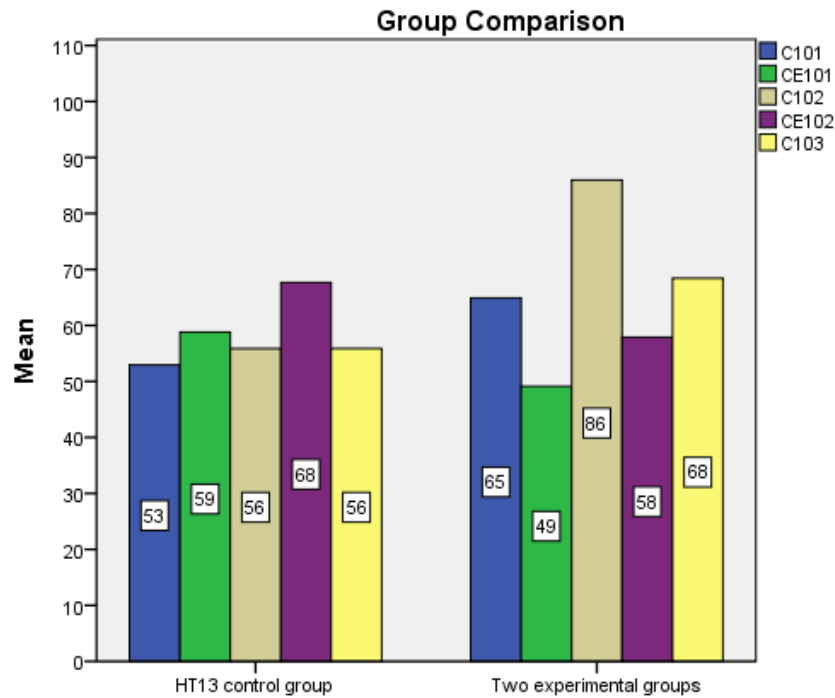


FIGURE 17. ELEMENT C: ADDRESSING THE TEACHER

**Cultural Information:**  
**C101:** addressing the teacher in a 3rd person introduction (written ex.13)  
**CE101:** addressing the teacher in a 3rd person introduction (exam)  
**C102:** addressing the teacher on a phone call dialogue (written ex.10)  
**CE102:** addressing the teacher on a phone call dialogue (exam)  
**C103:** addressing the teacher on a note (written ex.13)

Another two units, C102 and CE102 come from two telephone-based dialogues. The HT13 control group received a higher mean score for the second question (CE102) than the first question, despite the fact that the difference was not significant. The mean scores received by the experimental group differed greatly for these two questions. A high mean score was recorded in the first unit C102 in which most students properly followed the example from their textbook when composing a telephone-based dialogue. However, during the exam (unit CE102), many students forgot to put the teacher

surname in front of their profession. Another mistake they made included just addressing their teacher full name in the beginning of the phone call dialogue, such as:

胡新龙: 喂, 哪位? Hu Xin-long (the teacher): Hello, who is it?

范汉娜: 我是范汉娜, 胡新龙在吗?

Fan Han-na (the student): It is Fan Han-na, is Hu Xin-long there?

Unit C103 is the last piece of information demonstrating how the students should address their teacher in a note. As referred to in Figure 17, one can conclude that the experimental groups did slightly better than the control group on this task. Despite receiving less than satisfactory results, the HT13 control group performed more consistently and had more even mean scores. The experimental groups were given supplementary information regarding the Chinese address system through a scalable task and the immediate result was the comparatively higher mean scores they obtained in the units C101, C102 and C103. However, this knowledge seemed to be forgotten over time and they made as many mistakes as the control group during the exam. Another possible factor that might contribute to this phenomenon is the influence of the first name biases in the Swedish culture.

#### **5.4.3.2 The Application of “您 nín”**

The usage of “您 nín – the second person formal personal pronoun” is introduced in the first lesson in the textbook. The use of “您 nín” and the respectful address of the teacher should go hand in hand in the Chinese language. For the Swedish students, despite that “ni” is an analogous word to “您 nín” in Swedish, the application of this honorific word

of “ni” has been diminished due to the influence of liberalism and the equal rights movement in the 1960s. In modern Swedish, “ni” is used as the plural form of you only (Proctor & Rowland, 2003, p.544) and the informal form of you - “du” – is used in all situations. Would this cultural background affect Swedish students learning the use of “您 nín” in Chinese?

The applications of “您 nín” in different cultural questions were summarized in Figure 18. Unit C201 is included in a scenario in which a student has to introduce his Chinese teacher to a Chinese classmate. Unit C203 comes from a note and the other two, C202 and CE201 are extracted from two telephone-based dialogues. The performance of all of the groups was quite even when comparing the mean scores they received from the questions, suggesting that they were consistent when applying this formal second person pronoun. All of the groups performed poorly in the unit CE201. This could be due to the time constraint of the written exam.

When the mean scores in Figure 18 were analyzed, the experimental groups did better as compared to the control group as they received higher mean scores on every task. This was not unexpected however, since the experimental groups had done the scalable tasks that explained and emphasized the usage of “您 nín”. Nonetheless, the generally substandard mean scores obtained by the experimental groups could be related to the cultural influence of the students’ first language in which the application of the formal second person pronoun has disappeared from the Swedish language.



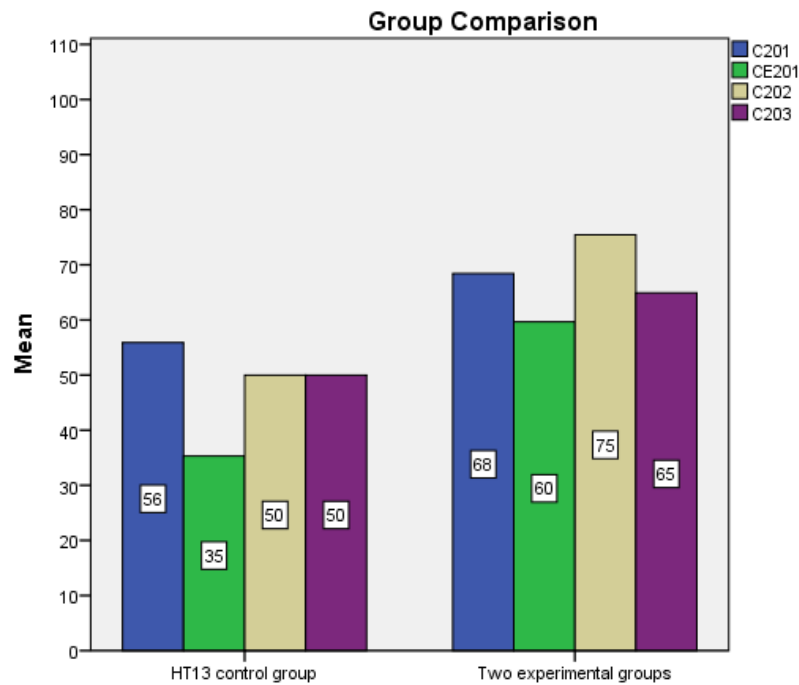


FIGURE 18. ELEMENT C: THE APPLICATION OF “您 NÍN”

**Cultural Information:**

- C201:** using “nin” in a 3rd person introduction (written ex.13)
- CE201:** using “nin” in a 3rd person introduction (written ex.13)
- C202:** using “nin” in a phone call dialogue (written ex.13)
- C203:** using “nin” in a note (written ex.13)

### 5.4.3.3 Addressing Friends

When addressing a friend in Chinese, the speaker has to consider two conditions.

Firstly, the level of intimacy in the relationship; secondly, in what situation the dialogue takes place. For the first condition, close friends are less formal. For instance, if Chen Mei-li (陈美丽 Chén Měi-lì) and Wang Pang (王朋 Wáng Péng) are good friends, Wang Pang will call Chen Mei-li as “Mei-li” – her first name. On the other hand, Chen Mei-li will address Wang Pang simply as “Wang Pang”. The second case does not contradict the first one but illustrates the complex addressing system in Chinese.

According to the Chinese custom, when a Chinese full name only has one character as the given name, one will be addressed using his/her full name in both formal and informal settings. In Chinese, the use of a single character given name, without the corresponding surname is only viewed as acceptable by the most intimate family members in informal situations.

It is important to notice that the second condition can override the first rule when deciding the formality of the introduction. If the two friends are in a formal meeting, they will both address each other by their full name. Corresponding titles, such as “先生 xiānshēng – Mr.”, “小姐 xiǎojiě – Miss” or profession, “教授 jiàoshòu - professor” might have to be added after the full name.

Since the first scalable task provided some explanations to the above cultural rules of addressing friends, the experimental groups performed slightly better on the four tasks that were assigned. This is shown in Figure 19.

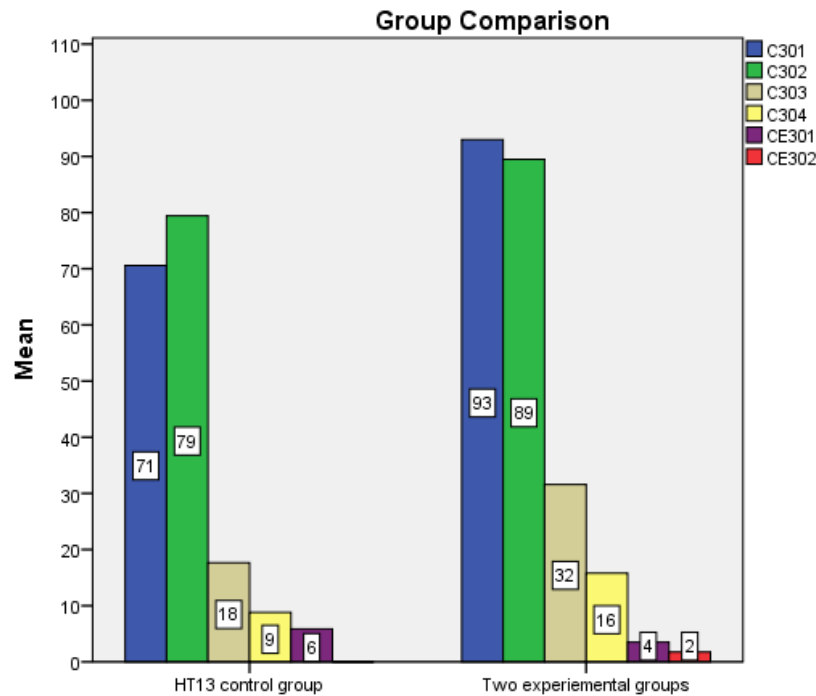


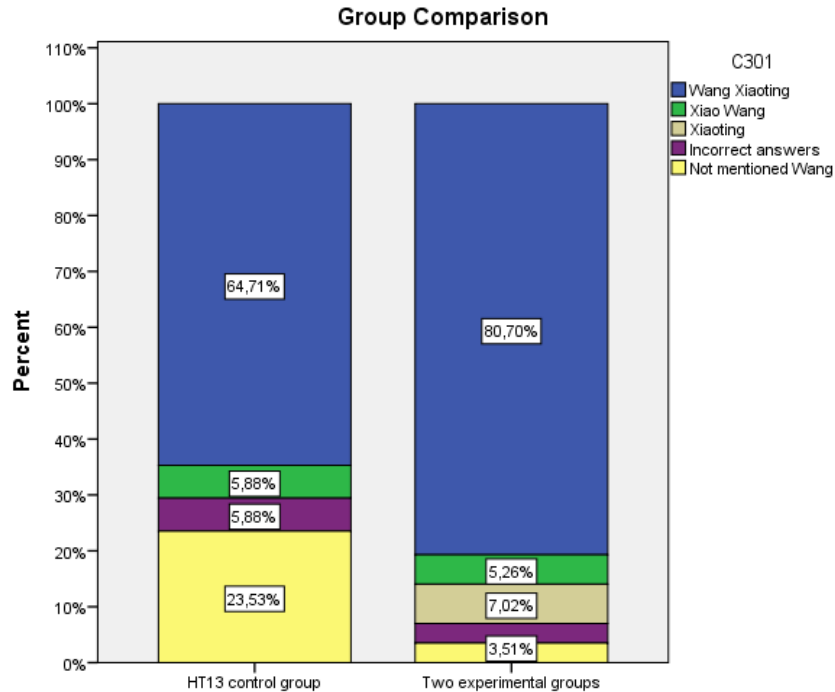
FIGURE 19. ELEMENT C: ADDRESSING FRIENDS

**Cultural Information:**

- C301:** addressing a Chinese friend in a phone call dialogue (written ex.13)
- C302:** addressing a Chinese friend in a phone call dialogue (written ex.15)
- C303:** addressing a close Chinese friend in a letter (written ex.13)
- C304:** addressing the sender (a Chinese) in a letter (written ex.13)
- CE301:** addressing a close Chinese friend in a letter (exam)
- CE302:** addressing the sender (a Chinese) in a letter (exam)

Two units, C301 and C302 are encoded from two telephone-based dialogues in which the speaker is required to make a phone call to a friend, Wang Xiao-ting (王晓婷 Wáng Xiǎo-tíng). In these two dialogues, most of the students from the experimental groups managed to address “Wang Xiao-ting” in an appropriate manner. Even the control group earned substantially high mean scores (0.71 and 0.79 respectively). When analyzing the answers given by the students in unit C301 (Figure 20), one can see that most of the students addressed Wang Xiao-ting as “Wang Xiao-ting” on the telephone.

According to the Chinese telephone etiquette, it is a bit formal but appropriate. Other acceptable answers include the following less formal but more intimate options, such as “小王 Xiǎo Wáng – Little Wang” and “晓婷 Xiǎo-tíng – Wang’s first name”. Only around 6% of the students in the control group gave “小王 Xiǎo Wáng – Little Wang” as the answer and about 12% of the experimental groups provided these two alternative answers for this task. The low number of students who would give these types of answers indicates that the students, quite possibly, did not thoroughly comprehend the implicit rules behind the Chinese address system. Moreover, there were about 24% of the students who did not mention “Wang Xiao-ting” at all in the dialogue. This made the dialogue unnatural as it violated the natural turn taking mechanism of a Chinese telephone conversation.



**FIGURE 20. ANALYSIS OF UNIT C301**

Another four units of information, namely C303, C304, CE301, and CE302, came from two writing tasks. The first two are included in an assignment and the other two are a part of the written exam. The first task requires students to pretend that s/he is a Chinese girl who is going to write a letter to her Chinese friend. The second task requires students, who are still pretending to be a Chinese girl, to write an invitation to her Chinese male friend and ask him to attend a birthday party. In these two letters, the recipients of the letters are encoded as C303 and CE301 while the writers of the letters are marked as C304 and CE302.

Since the two letters are both informal, the writers in these two letters should address the friend by their given name while they should write their character's own given name as well in order to show intimacy. However, when checking the mean scores received by the students in the groups, it became clear, as shown in Figure 19 (see p.185), that the students performed poorly. The mean score of the unit CE302 obtained by the control group was too low to be included on the graph. When analyzing the answers given by the students, the researcher found that most students simply copied and pasted the provided Chinese full names when completing their tasks. This phenomenon was also witnessed during the role-play activities in class. Their performance might suggest that they did not fully understand the complex Chinese address system and failed to apply it in these two situations.

#### **5.4.3.4 Introduction Etiquette during an Initial Meeting**

How to greet a Chinese person and introduce one-self in Chinese are learning objectives in the first lesson of the course. The first dialogue in lesson one demonstrates a formal

greeting in Chinese. More in-depth discussion and an explanation regarding introducing one-self in Chinese were delivered to the experimental groups through the scalable task no. 1. In order to determine whether the students can greet a Chinese person and introduce one-self in an appropriate way, two short writing tasks were designed. One of the tasks was an assignment and the other one was included on the exam.

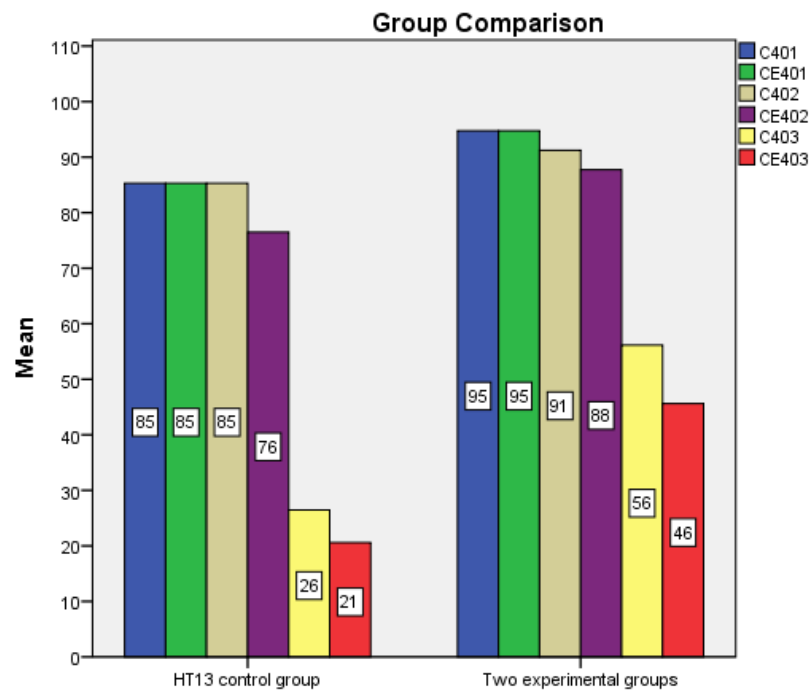


FIGURE 21. ELEMENT C: FIRST TIME GREETING AND INTRODUCING EACH OTHER

**Cultural Information:**

- C401:** using the phrases “gui xing” and “jiao shenme mingzi” (written ex.10)
- CE401:** using the phrases “gui xing” and “jiao shenme mingzi” (exam)
- C402:** correctly addressing the Chinese name in the 1st meeting introduction (written ex.10)
- CE402:** correctly addressing the Chinese name in the 1st meeting introduction (exam)
- C403:** correct turn-taking of the introduction (written ex.10)
- CE403:** correct turn-taking of the introduction (exam)

There were three sets of information that the researcher specifically analyzed in the students’ writing tasks. Firstly, did the students know how to use the expression, “贵姓

guìxìng – honorific surname”, to ask the interlocutor’s surname in the first time greeting? The information was encoded as units C401 and CE401 in two tasks. As shown in Figure 21 above, all of the groups had consistent results and the experimental groups received higher mean scores than the control group.

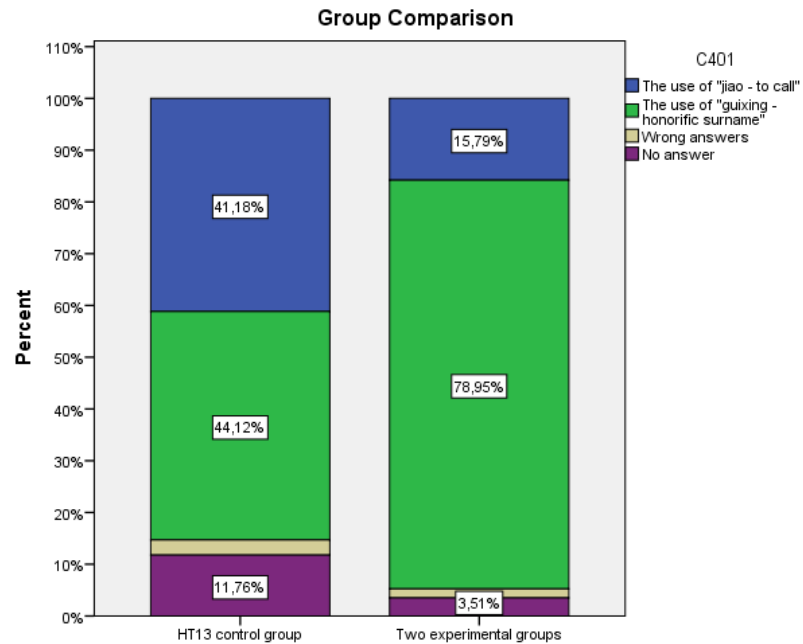
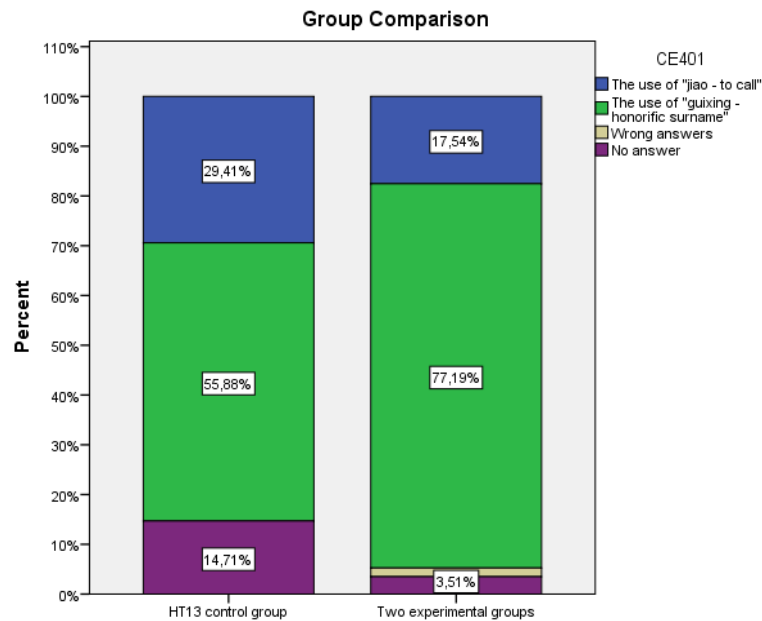


FIGURE 22. ANALYSIS OF UNIT C401

To scrutinize the answers in the unit C401 (see Figure 22), more than 40% of the students in the control group chose to ask the question, “你叫什么名字? Nǐ jiào shénme míngzì? - What is your name?” while another 40% followed the example in the textbook and applied the phrase, “贵姓 guìxìng – honorific surname”. As compared to the phrase “贵姓 guìxìng”, “你叫什么名字? Nǐ jiào shénme míngzì?” is used in informal settings in which the interlocutors are the same age or younger.



**FIGURE 23. ANALYSIS OF UNIT CE401**

When doing a similar task on the exam (unit CE401, see Figure 23), more students in the control group (56%) used the phrase “贵姓 guìxìng”. The performances of the experimental groups in the two tasks were very similar and more than 77% of the students used the phrase, “贵姓 guìxìng”. From the researcher’s observation, many students in the experimental groups managed to apply this polite phrase when engaged in role-play activities.

Another two units of information, C402 and CE402 were used to examine whether the students managed to properly include a Chinese person’s name in an introduction. As opposed to the West where a person’s given name precedes the family name, in Chinese the order is reversed. In Chinese, one’s surname is placed in the first position and the given name is placed in the second position. According to Figure 21 (see p.188), all of



the groups performed very well and the experimental groups received slightly higher mean scores on the tasks as compared to the control group.

The last two units of the information, namely C403 and CE403, are encoded to investigate the turn taking mechanism applied in the two writing tasks. Once a dialogue begins, the turn taking mechanism governs who should speak next and even what is expected in the next utterance. Since the turn taking mechanism is culturally oriented, it differs from one language to another. The first lesson of the textbook contains a dialogue regarding the protocol for greeting a person during an initial meeting. The dialogue is a rather formal introduction, and the textbook illustrates the etiquette of turn taking found in the Chinese language. Here is the dialogue provided in the textbook (Yao & Yue, 2008, p.20):

**Dialogue I: Exchanging Greetings**

Wáng Péng: Nǐ hǎo!

王朋: 你好! *Hello!*

Lǐ Yǒu: Nǐ hǎo!

李友: 你好! *Hello!*

Wáng Péng: Qǐng wèn, nǐ guì xìng?

王朋: 请问, 你贵姓? *May I ask your surname please?*

Lǐ Yǒu: Wǒ xìng Lǐ. Nǐ ne?

李友: 我姓李。你呢? *My surname is Li, how about yours?*

Wáng Péng: Wǒ xìng Wáng. Lǐ xiǎo jiě, nǐ jiào shén me míngzi?

王朋: 我姓王, 李小姐, 你叫什么名字? *My surname is Wang. Miss Li, what is your name?*

Lǐ Yǒu: Wǒ jiào Lǐ Yǒu. Wáng xiān sheng, nǐ jiào shén me míngzi?

李友： 我叫李友。王先生，你叫什么名字？      *My name is Li You. Mr. Wang, what is your name?*

王朋： Wǒ jiào Wáng Péng.

王朋： 我叫王朋。                      *My name is Wang Peng.*

In this scenario, Wang Peng initiated the dialogue and played a leading role in the turn taking. His interlocutor, Li You followed his cues and responded him with similar questions in the whole dialogue. As mentioned, turn taking is culturally oriented and is invisible to the language learners. Could the students be able to follow the above turn taking mechanism when composing the dialogues?

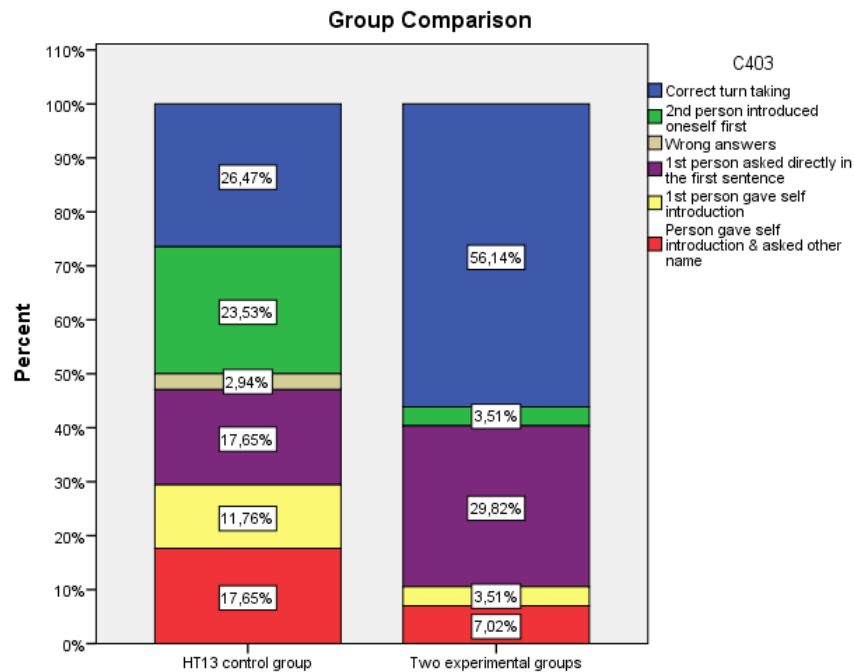


FIGURE 24. ANALYSIS OF UNIT C403

When checking the unit C403 (Figure 24), the answers given by the control group in response to questions in different categories are quite even in amounts. Only 27% of the students in this group followed the turn taking procedure as illustrated in the example.

The remainder of the students organized the dialogues differently. For instance, some students (about 24%) required the second speaker in the dialogue to introduce himself after the first speaker said, “你好！ Nǐ hǎo! - Hello!”. For instance:

Speaker 1: 你好！ Hello!

Speaker 2: 你好！ 请问， 你叫 什么？ Hello! Can I ask, what is your name?

In some dialogues (about 18%), the first speaker initiated the greeting by directly asking the second speaker's name. Here was an example:

Speaker 1: 你好！ 请问， 你贵姓？ Hello! Can I ask, what is your honourable surname?

Speaker 2: 你好！ 我姓陈， 你呢？ Hello! My surname is Chen, and you?

Some (about 12%) started with the first speaker's self-introduction as shown in the example below:

Speaker 1: 你好！ 我叫大卫。 Hello! My name is David.

Speaker 2: 你好， 我叫陈美丽。 Hello! I am called Chen Mei-li.

Some (about 18%) were a combination of the previous two styles in which the first speaker gave a self-introduction and asked the second speaker's name at the very beginning of the conversation. This was a typical example:

Speaker 1: 你好， 我姓卡森， 叫大卫。 你叫什么名字？ Hello, my surname is Karlsson. I am called David. What is your name?

Speaker 2: 大卫，你好！我叫美丽。你是美国人吗？ David, hello! My name is Mei-li. Are you an American?

In short, all these types of introductions mostly followed the Swedish language’s turn taking mechanism. While the students managed to apply the polite phrase, “贵姓 – your honorable surname”, they utilized their own language’s turn taking mechanism which differs from Chinese, forming interesting hybrid dialogues.

More students in the experimental groups (56%) followed the turn taking protocol as illustrated in the example provided in the textbook. The second most common category of answer (30%) was a conversation in which the first speaker initiated the greeting by directly asking the second speaker’s name. Very few students attempted other types of answers in this group.

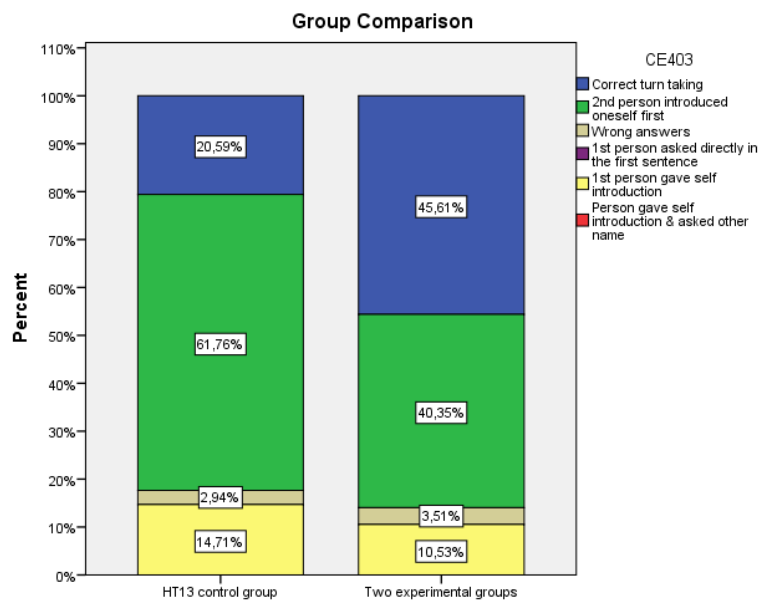


FIGURE 25. ANALYSIS OF UNIT CE403

There was a variety of answers given by the groups in response to the questions in unit CE403. Many of the students provided identical answers as shown in Figure 25. This could be the result of the restricted length of the dialogue imposed during the exam.

The experimental groups received higher mean scores on this task. Many students (46%) in the experimental groups still followed the example provided in the textbook.

The other 40% composed dialogues in which the second speaker spoke out of turn by introducing himself immediately the first speaker's greeting. About 11% applied the combined style in this dialogue composition. It is interesting to examine the control group as most of the students (62%) composed dialogues in which the second speaker in the dialogue introduced himself after the first speaker said, “你好! Nǐ hǎo! -Hello!”.

Another 15% used the combined style in which the first speaker gave a self-introduction and asked the second speaker's name at the very beginning of the conversation. Only 21% of the students followed the turn taking order as described in the textbook.

According to the researcher's observation, this kind of Western style introduction was more commonly seen in the control group. After the scalable tasks, the experimental groups were more aware of the invisible “turn taking” and many students performed appropriately in the role-play activities.

#### **5.4.3.5 Introducing a Third Person in a Gathering**

In lesson 5, dialogue 1 shows its readers how to introduce a family member to friends in a gathering. Nevertheless, some cultural rules related to a third person introduction are not covered in the lesson. The deficiency of the course contents motivated the

production of the scalable task no.5. Additionally, five short writing tasks were designed in which four of the tasks were integrated into two assignments and the last task was included on the written exam. Ten units of information were examined in these three writing tasks and were encoded as C501, CE501, C502, C503, C504, C505, CE502, C506, C507 and CE503. The mean scores of these ten units are illustrated in Figure 26.

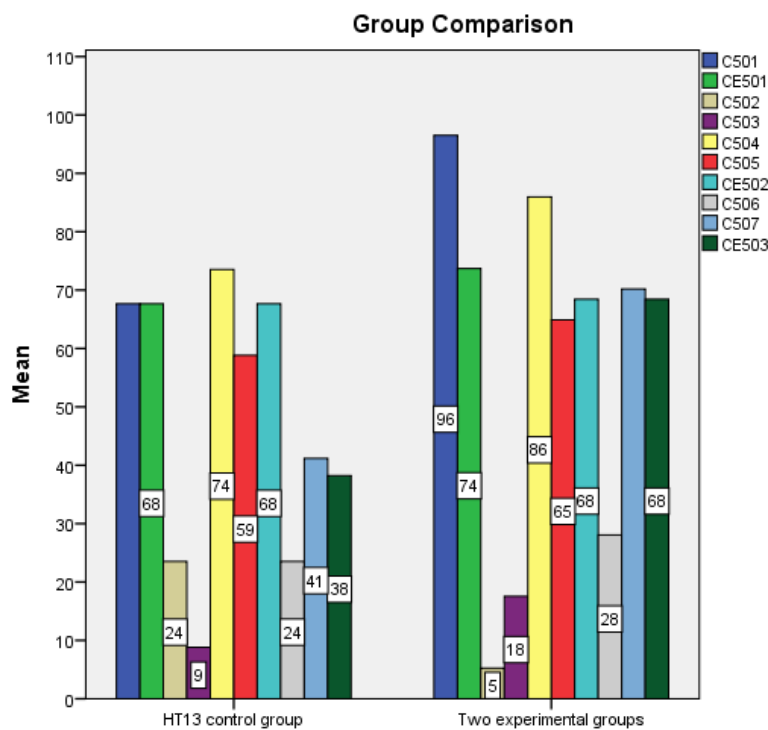


FIGURE 26. ELEMENT C: INTRODUCING A THIRD PERSON IN A GATHERING

**Cultural Information:**

- C501:** using a proper title in a 3<sup>rd</sup> person introduction (written ex.10)
- CE501:** using a proper title in a 3<sup>rd</sup> person introduction (exam)
- C502:** introducing a professor in a conference (written ex.13)
- C503:** introducing a Chinese classmate in a conference (written ex.15)
- C504:** correctly addressing the Chinese name in a 3<sup>rd</sup> person introduction (written ex.10)
- C505:** correctly addressing the Chinese name in a 3<sup>rd</sup> person introduction (written ex.13)
- CE502:** correctly addressing the Chinese name in a 3<sup>rd</sup> person introduction (exam)
- C506:** correct order of introduction (written ex.10)
- C507:** correct order of introduction (written ex.13)
- CE503:** correct order of introduction (exam)

The first concern is regarding a proper title used for an introduction. In lesson 5, dialogue 1, Gao Wen-zhong (高文中 Gāo Wén-zhōng) introduced his older sister as “我的姐姐 wǒ de jiějiě - my older sister”. Other titles, such as “我的老师 wǒ de lǎoshī - my teacher”, “我的同学 wǒ de tóngxué - my classmate”, “我的朋友 wǒ de péngyǒu - my friend”, titles of the family members and titles such as “先生 xiānshēng - Mr.”, “小姐 xiǎojiě - Miss” which are used in formal introductions are taught in this course. Four units of cultural information - C501, CE501, C502 and C503 - are assigned to examine this topic. The unit, CE501 was included on the written exam. As shown in Figure 26, the control group had identical mean scores in both their assignment and their exam (units C501 and CE501). Up to 68% of the students in this group managed to give an appropriate title to a person while 32% of them did not mention any title. Almost all of the students (96%) in the experimental groups gave a proper title to the person who was introduced in the gathering (unit C501). However, 26% of the students forgot to apply an appropriate title to the person when completing the task on the exam (unit CE501). In addition, another two challenging questions were included in two assignments. These two questions are encoded as units C502 and C503. In the first task (unit C502), students are asked to introduce a Chinese professor at an academic conference. In the second task (unit C503), the students have to introduce a Chinese classmate at the conference. As referred to in Figure 26, the mean scores obtained by the groups were varied although very low. Since neither the textbook nor the scalable tasks provide similar examples as in the tasks, many students did not manage to complete the tasks correctly.

The accuracy of addressing a Chinese person in a third person introduction is the second concern of the Chinese address system. Three units of cultural information, C504, C505 and CE502 are used to mark this information from three writing tasks. The last unit, CE502 is included on the written exam. Although the experimental groups did better in C504, their performance was quite similar to the control group with regard to the other two tasks (C505 and CE502). To compare the mean scores of the three units shown in Figure 26, the students from all of the groups received a lower mean score on the latter questions, showing their inability to correctly utilize the third person form of address in this type of social situation presented on the exam. Yet it may have been simply that the time constraints of the exam are adversely affected the students' performance.

The third topic under consideration relates to the correct order of an introduction. To appropriately introduce a third person to others is rather complicated in Chinese as the priority of introduction is governed by different social factors, such as the age, gender and social status of the participants. Three units, C506, C507 and CE503 were used to analyze the students' performance in this topic. As illustrated in Figure 26 above, each group of students performed poorly on the first tasks and very low mean scores (0.24 for the control group and 0.28 for the experimental groups) were recorded for C506. Most of the students failed to apply the cultural rules of the introduction and used an improper order of introduction (see Figure 27). The students improved over time however, and in general the students received better scores on the last two tasks. The control group received scores of 0.41 and 0.38 for units C507 and CE503 respectively (see Figure 26). The performance of the experimental groups was much better than the



control group as the experimental group received scores of 0.7 and 0.68 for the last two units, C507 and CE503.

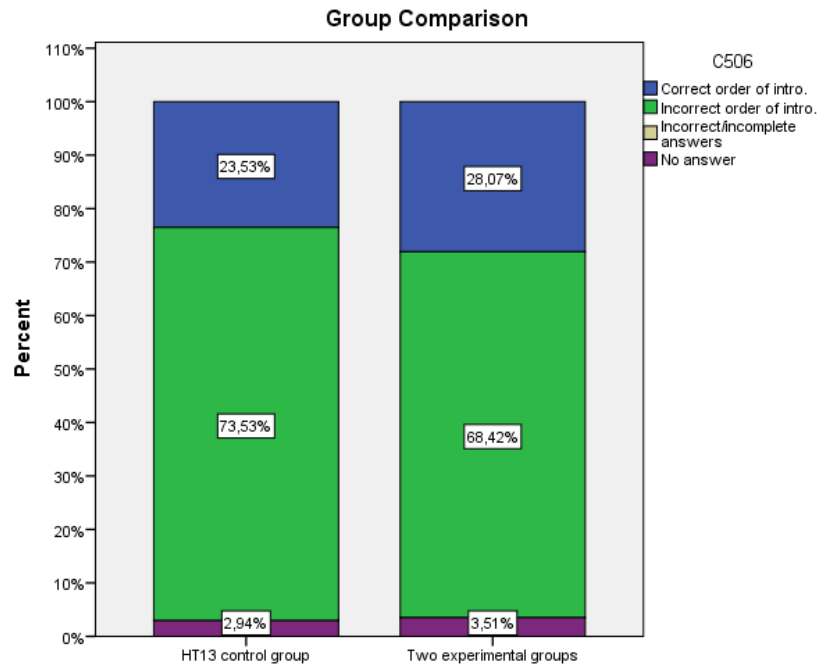


FIGURE 27. ANALYSIS OF UNIT C506

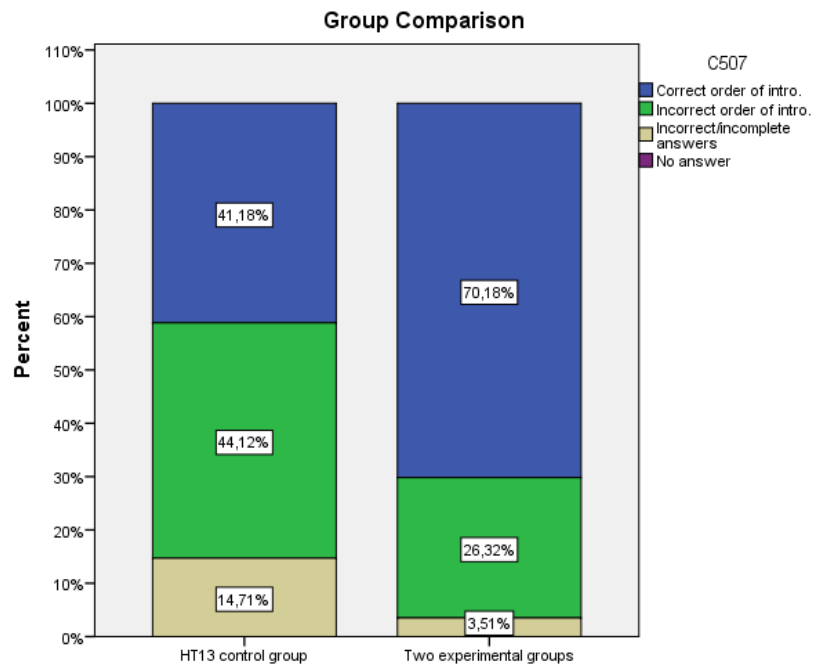
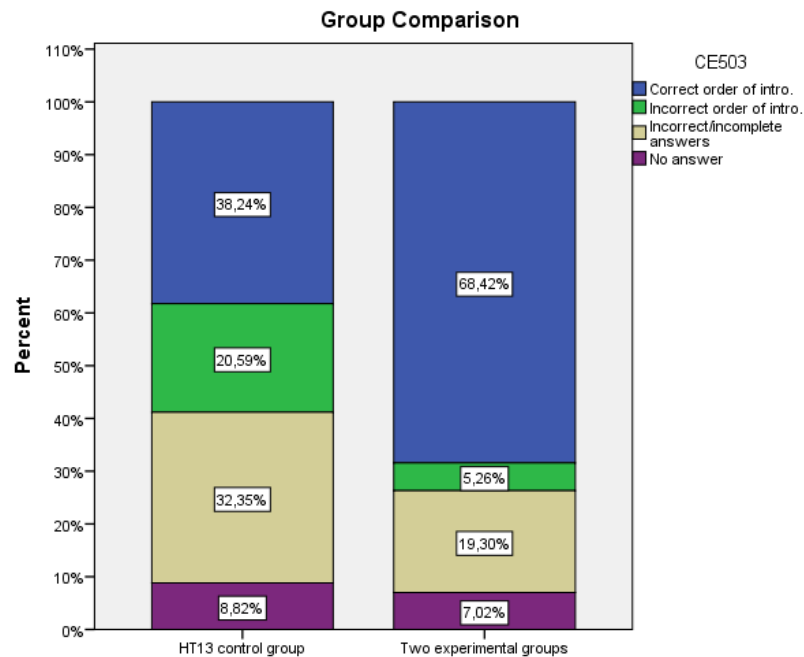


FIGURE 28. ANALYSIS OF UNIT C507

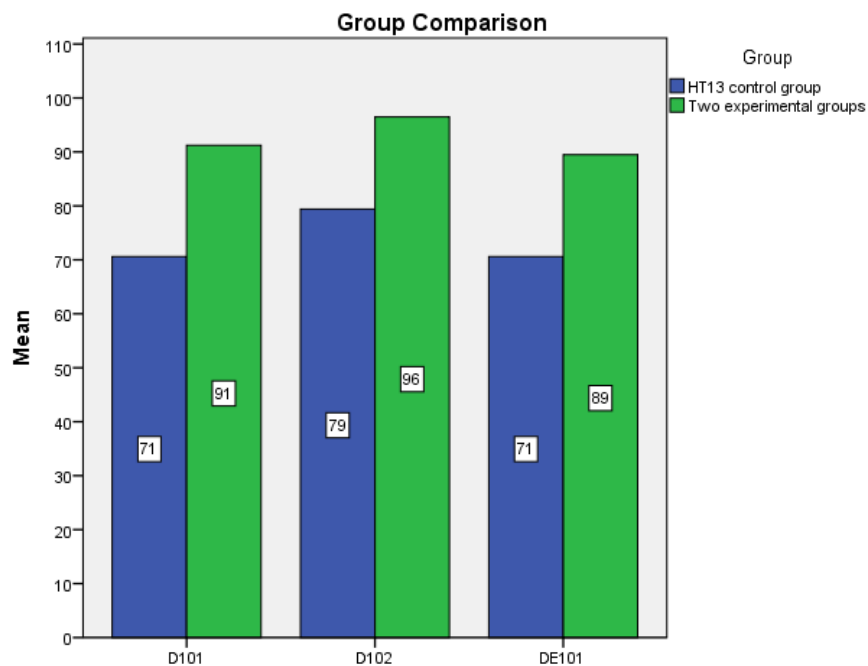


**FIGURE 29. ANALYSIS OF UNIT CE503**

When checking the answers produced by the control group in the unit C507 (Figure 28), the majority of the students (about 44%) continually failed to utilize the culturally appropriate order of introduction. Another 5% of the students provided incorrect or incomplete answers. Regarding the second task (unit CE503, see Figure 29), about 32% of the students in the control group were unable to produce a correct or complete answer while about 9% of the students did not provide any answers. As compared to the HT13 control group, about 19% of the students in the experimental groups did not manage to produce correct answer and about 7% of the students in these groups simply gave up. The unsatisfactory results obtained by the groups may have been due to the time constraints of the written exam and/or the complicated rules of introduction in Chinese.

**5.4.4 ELEMENT D: CHINESE COLLECTIVE CULTURE**

There are 7 units of cultural questions used to investigate the students’ level of understanding with regard to the collective aspects of the Chinese culture that are the basis for some social activities. This cultural perspective in the Chinese language is not described or introduced in the textbook. Nonetheless, when discussing topics such as inviting friends to go out for a dinner, it is necessary for the students to understand how a native-Chinese speaker will perceive such an offer and how they would most likely react. This cross-cultural knowledge was introduced to the experimental groups through scalable task no.4.



**FIGURE 30. ELEMENT D: CHINESE COLLECTIVE CULTURE- REASONS FOR A TREAT**

**Cultural Information:**  
**D101:** giving reasons for a treat (written ex.10)  
**D102:** giving reasons for a treat (written ex.15)  
**DE101:** giving reasons for a treat (exam)

Three questions are designed to determine whether the students are cognizant of the Chinese mutual reciprocity principle. These three questions are encoded as units D101, D102 and DE101. When checking Figure 30, one can see that both the control group and the experimental groups had consistent and quite even mean scores for these three questions. The experimental groups received substantially higher mean scores as compared to the control group. This might suggest that the experimental groups understood some “proper” reasons behind the scenario in the task (which was to invite someone to dinner), such as returning a favor and celebrating one’s birthday. As for the control group, some reasons the students provided as a reason to invite a person to dinner were not culturally appropriate. Reasons such as “我喜歡你。 Wǒ xǐhuān nǐ. - I like you”, “你很漂亮。 Nǐ hěn piàoliang. - You are pretty” and “我想跟你做朋友。 Wǒ xiǎng gēn nǐ zuò péngyǒu. - I want to be your friend” are not considered as valid for inviting someone to dinner in China. Since there is no extra explanation provided in the textbook, the students in the control group could not improve their answer over time.

After promising to help you, your Chinese friend requests you to treat him to a cup of coffee. How would you reply? This is the scenario set for another two cultural questions. The questions are marked as units D201 and DE201 respectively. Due to the fact that these two questions are similar to a scenario provided in lesson 6 in the textbook, the students in each of the groups managed to provide appropriate answers and very high mean scores were recorded (see Figure 31).

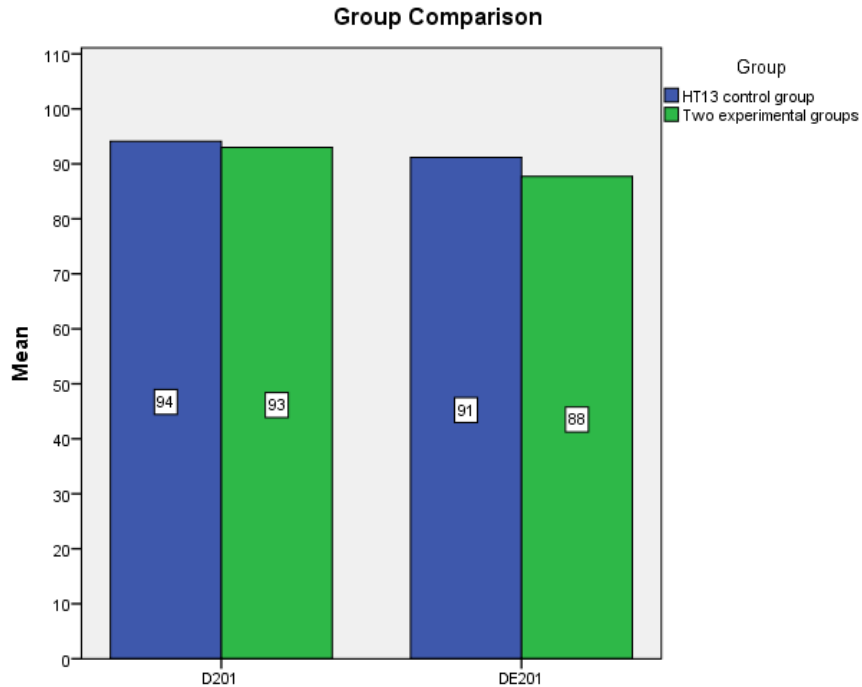


FIGURE 31. ELEMENT D: CHINESE COLLECTIVE CULTURE- RESPONSE TO A REQUEST FOR A TREAT

**Cultural Information:**

**D201:** giving a response to a request for a treat (written ex. 10)

**DE201:** giving a response to a request for a treat (exam)

How would you respond to a treat from your friend who wanted to return a favor you did for him? This is another scenario used in two cultural questions. The questions are encoded as units D301 and DE301. The textbook does not provide a similar scenario to its readers. Therefore, scalable task no.4 was produced to elucidate this Chinese “treating friends” custom and the underlying “principle of mutual reciprocity” which governs many Chinese social interactions. To be modest, the Chinese people tend to decline this kind of invitations by politely saying, “不客气 bù kèqi – not at all”, “不用 bù yòng - no need to do so” or “不谢 bù xiè - no need to thank me”. The students’ performance is illustrated in Figure 32. Since the control group did not do the scalable

task, these two questions seemed to be very difficult for them to answer in a polite and appropriate manner and as a result very low mean scores were recorded (0.12 and 0.09 respectively). Even though the experimental groups achieved better results, the mean scores they obtained were still low. This indicates that the students had problems understanding this Chinese tradition and failed to apply the cultural knowledge they had learned, in particularly during the written exam when the time was limited.

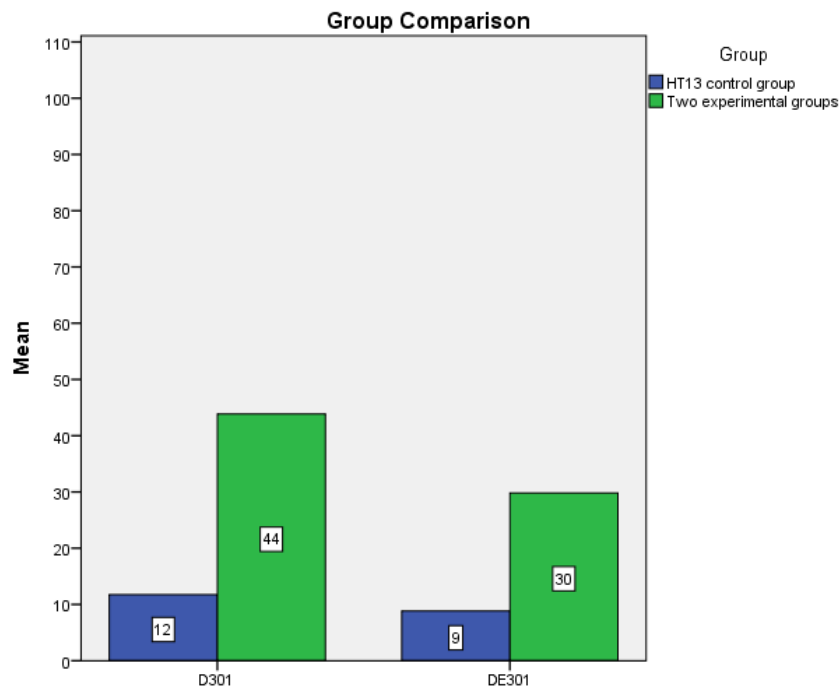


FIGURE 32. ELEMENT D: CHINESE COLLECTIVE CULTURE- RESPONSE TO A TREAT OF DINNER

**Cultural Information:**

**D301:** giving a response to a treat of dinner (written ex.13)

**DE301:** giving a response to a treat of dinner (exam)

If the students did not follow the Chinese convention when responding to this kind of invitation, what did they say? When scrutinizing the answers given by the HT13 control group in the units D301 and DE301, “谢谢 Xièxie - Thank you” and “太好了 Tài hǎo le! - that’s great!” are common answers that were provided by the students. These

answers are Western style replies to an invitation that explicitly demonstrates an appreciation for the offer. During the written exam, about 68% of the students applied these two answers as a response to an invitation. Some answers found in unit D301 (see Figure 33) are very direct as the invitee asked the inviter “什麼時候吃飯。Shénme shíhòu chīfàn - when the dinner would be” (18%). Nonetheless, there were fewer students (only 6%) in the control group who gave this type of answers to the question (see Figure 34) during their written exam while another 6% of the students declined the invitation by saying that they did not like American food. The students in the control group might not be aware that a direct rejection of an invitation could be regarded as rude for some Chinese people.

The experimental groups performed better on these two questions and the students were more willing to give different answers as compared to the control group. Despite the fact that Westernized answers “好的。Hǎo de. – OK.”, “谢谢。Xièxie. - Thank you.” and “太好了! Tài hǎo le! - that’s great!” were still dominant in the total number of answers, more students in the experimental groups managed to apply “不客气。Bù kèqi. – Not at all.” as the answer of choice in their compositions (32% and 20% respectively, see Figure 33 and 34).

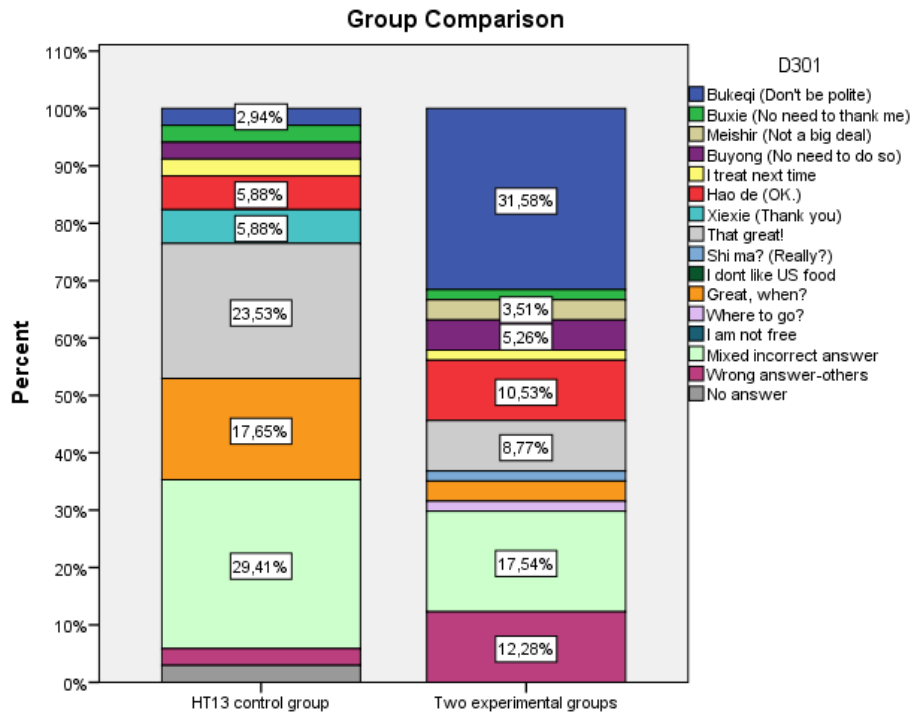


FIGURE 33. ANALYSIS OF UNIT D301

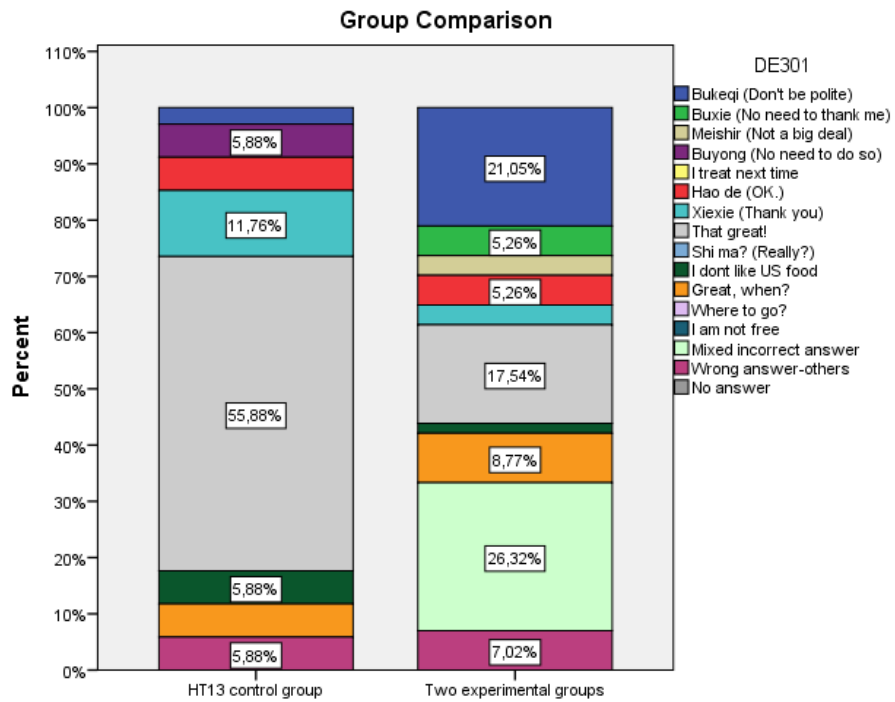


FIGURE 34. ANALYSIS OF UNIT DE301



A special focus should be placed on the hybrid answers provided by all of the groups in response to these two questions. These answers are combinations which consist of one Chinese and one Western reply to an invitation. For instance, a commonly mixed answer is, “不客气, 好的。Bù kèqi, hǎo de. – Not at all, OK.”, or “不客气, 什么时候? Bù kèqi, shénme shíhòu? – Not at all, when?”. When analyzing these hybrid answers, one can find that the first part of the answer is a polite declination of the invitation while the second part is an acceptance of the offer. In other words, this kind of answers is illogical. The creation of such answers suggests that the students were becoming more aware of the Chinese modest way of replying to such an offer and they managed to imitate it in their response. Nevertheless, it could be the influence of their own culture in which they added the second part of the answer which explicitly indicated their appreciation and interest in participating in the activity. As referred to in Figure 33 (unit D301), the hybrid answers are commonly found since more than 29% of the answers in the control group and 17% in the experimental groups fall under this category. As for the other question (unit DE301, see Figure 34), about 26% of the students in the experimental groups answered similarly while no student from the control group did so on the exam. The descriptive statistics suggests that the performance of the experimental groups was more consistent when answering the two questions and they were more aware of the cultural difference with regard to this issue. The students in the control group did not provide hybrid answers; instead they produced more Westernized answers, such as “太好了! Tài hǎo le! - That's great!”.

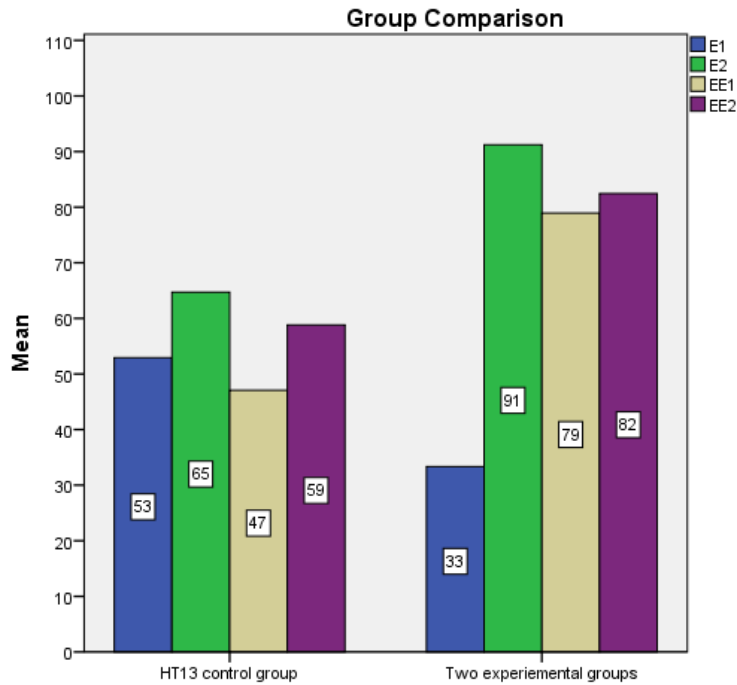
Referring to the researcher's observation, the appearance of this type of hybrid answers was one of the natural processes of developing students' intercultural communicative

competence. Yet it was crucial that more guidance and explanation regarding the answers should be given to the students so that they would become able to apply the culturally correct answers in different social situations.

#### *5.4.5 ELEMENT E: CHINESE MODESTY AND SELF-DENIGRATION*

Lesson 5 and 7 introduce information regarding how Chinese people respond to a compliment. This includes, for example, the usage of the phrase “是吗? Shì ma? - Really?” and “哪里, 哪里! Nǎli, nǎli! - You flatter me!”. As for the Chinese self-designated tradition and the custom of humility when expressing gratitude, even though there are brief examples in the textbook, further descriptions or detailed explanations of humility are lacking from the textbook. This motivated the production of the scalable task no.7 which was designed to give the students more detailed information about these Chinese customs in both written and colloquial speech.

Four questions were designed to determine whether the students understood these Chinese traditions and whether they were aware of the cultural differences in different social situations. Among them, two questions were integrated into assignments no. 10 and 13. They were encoded as units E1 and E2. Two more questions were included on the written exam and were marked as “EE1 and EE2”. The units, E1 and EE1 refer to a scenario in which a Swedish student has to give a response to a Chinese compliment. Another two units, E2 and EE2 are similar to the former two but the students are required to write a response to a compliment from the Chinese perspective.



**FIGURE 35. ELEMENT E: CHINESE MODESTY AND SELF-DENIGRATION**

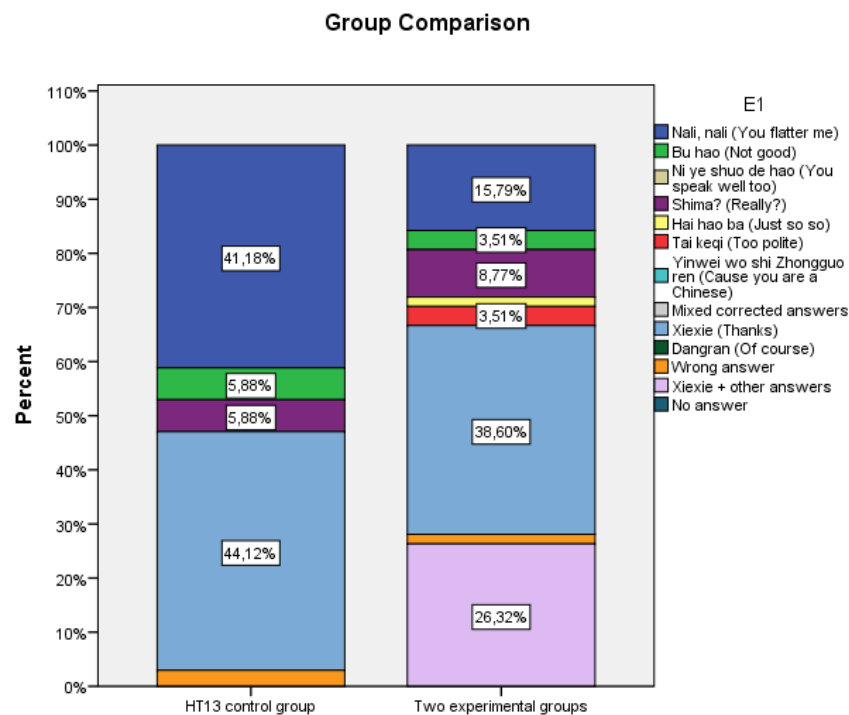
**Cultural Information:**

- E1:** a Swede responded to a compliment (written ex.10)
- E2:** a Chinese responded to a compliment (written ex.13)
- EE1:** a Swede responded to a compliment (exam)
- EE2:** a Chinese responded to a compliment (exam)

In Figure 35, the performance of the HT13 control group and the two experimental groups is illustrated. When comparing the mean scores of the groups, the control group had more even mean scores on the four questions. The students performed slightly better on the assignments than on the written exam. For instance, the difference in the mean scores of students on the first pair of units E1 and EE1, and on the second pair (E2 and EE2) was 0.6.

The performance of the experimental groups, however, was more radical. Even though they had much higher mean scores on the last three questions, they received a dramatically lower mean score for the first unit of E1. What happened to the students?

How could they perform so differently in their assignments? When checking the schedule for the course, the researcher discovered that the students had not yet studied the related scalable task (task no. 7) before completing the task. This arrangement was caused by some administrative restrictions and it immediately affected the students' performance with regard to the first question. After the students had studied the scalable task no. 7, they received substantially high scores for the remaining questions.



**FIGURE 36. ANALYSIS OF UNIT E1**

Now let's look at the answers provided by the students in unit E1 (Figure 36). When comparing the descriptive statistics in the table, the experimental groups had a lower mean score (0.2) than the control group. About 41% of the students in the control group followed the example in lesson 7 and provided the answer, “哪里，哪里！ Nǎli, nǎli! - You flatter me!”. Even though the other possible answer, “是吗？ Shì ma? -Really?”

was introduced in lesson 5, only 6% of in the control group and 9% of the experimental groups chose the second possible answer. The mostly frequently provided answer to this question was “谢谢。 Xièxie. - Thanks.”. This was the case with both the control group (44%) and the experimental group (39%). This preference could be a result of the Western tradition towards compliments in which people in the West will not negate themselves to show their modesty; rather, they accept compliments with pleasure.

One interesting feature was found in the experimental groups when the second largest category (about 26%) of answers was examined. The students added “谢谢。 Xièxie. - Thanks.” despite the fact that they had already written “是吗? Shì ma? - Really?”, “太好了 Tàì kèqi. - Too polite. ”, etc. This was a hybrid of both the Chinese and the western style of response to a compliment. The hybrid answers illustrate that the students were uncertain how a modest response should be in Chinese. Since the two elements in the hybrid answers contradicted each other, this type of hybrid answer is considered to be, in terms of this study, “incorrect”.

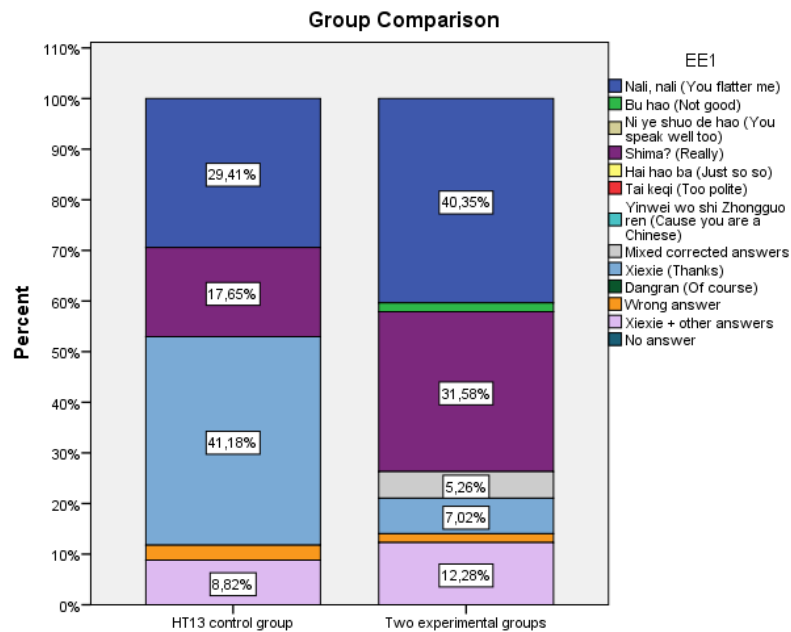


FIGURE 37. ANALYSIS OF UNIT EE1

The unit, EE1 was included on the written exam. According to Figure 35, the control group received a lower mean score (0.47) with regard to this question as compared to unit E1 (0.53). According to Figure 37 (unit EE1), about 41% of the answers provided by the control group contained “谢谢。 Xièxie. - Thanks.”, and this figure was similar to the former unit, E1. While there were fewer students who responded with the answer “哪里， 哪里！ Nǎli, nǎli! -You flatter me!” (30%), more students used “是吗？ Shì ma? - Really?” as the answer (18%) in unit EE1.

The experimental groups had a much higher mean score with regard to this question as compared to the control group. Only 7% of the students from the experimental groups used “谢谢。 Xièxie. - Thanks.” as the answer. Similar to the control group, more students (about 32%) used “是吗？ Shì ma? - Really?” as the answer while about 40% used “哪里， 哪里！ Nǎli, nǎli! -You flatter me!”. When examining the answers, it

becomes that the answers provided by the experimental groups were more diverse than the control group. Some students in the experimental groups even managed to produce more complicated correct answers, like “是吗？你太客氣了！Shì ma? Nǐ tài kèqìle. – Really? You are so polite!”

Once again, each group provided hybrid answers (about 9% for the control group and 12% for the experimental groups). This shows that even though some students were aware of the importance of appearing modest in Chinese culture and in the Chinese language, they could not abandon their desire to respond according to Swedish cultural norm which is seen through students’ usage of “谢谢。Xièxie. - Thanks.” when replying to a compliment.

How could a Chinese student respond to a compliment? Two questions were designed for the Swedish students to consider this issue and they were encoded as units E2 and EE2. When checking Figure 38 and 39, it is apparent that all of the groups achieved better results on these two questions. One reason could be that there were examples provided in the textbook and it was easier for the students to find the correct answers. About 53% of the control group and 75% of the experimental groups responded with the answer, “哪里，哪里！ Nǎli, nǎli! -You flatter me!”, which outweighed the other correct answers in the unit E2.

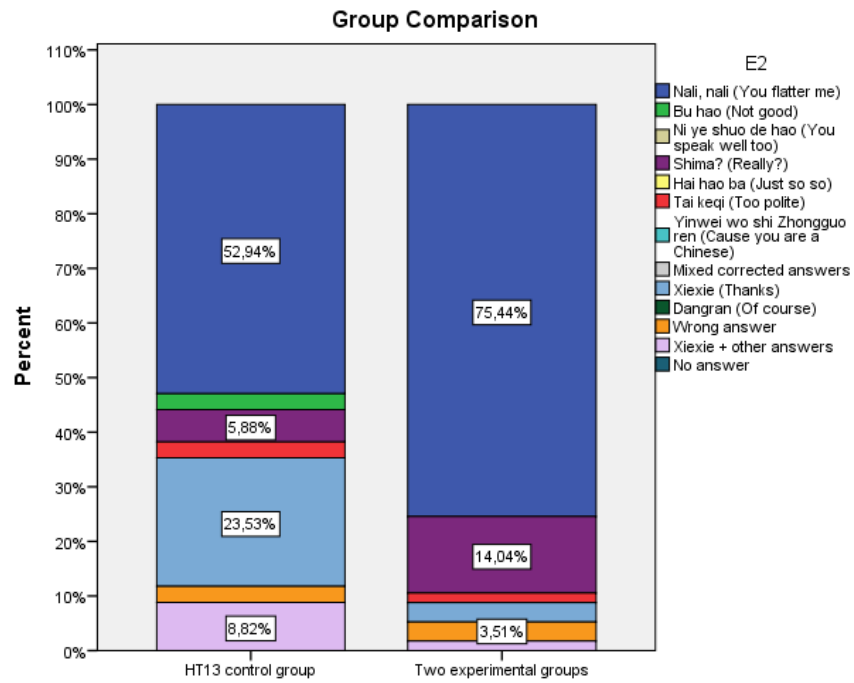


FIGURE 38. ANALYSIS OF UNIT E2

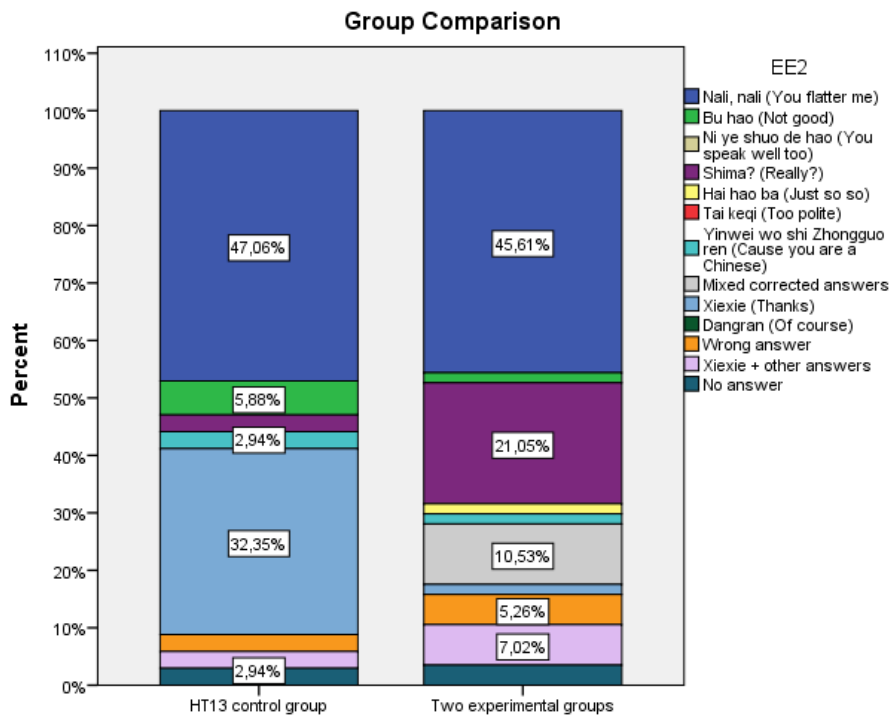


FIGURE 39. ANALYSIS OF UNIT EE2



Based on the researcher's observation, after studying the scalable task no.7 that analyzed the traditional Chinese modest cultural in speech, students in the experimental groups had become more aware of the cross-cultural differences in responding to a compliment in Chinese. Even though a few students still gave the mixed Chinese and Western style reply to a compliment, many of them managed to give more modest answers in the cultural questions (units E2, EE1 and EE2).

#### *5.4.6 ELEMENT F: THE CONCERN OF PRIVACY*

A short discussion about privacy is introduced in lesson 5, "Cultural Highlights". It attempts to explain the difference in the interpretation of "privacy" between the Chinese and the West in which some private issues, such as one's marital status, age and salary are not considered to be offensive topics for the Chinese people. As a beginning-level student of Chinese, how much would a Swedish student be aware of this cultural difference?

Two task-based questions were designed to investigate if the Swedish students were intercultural sensitive with regard to the privacy concern of the Chinese people. The questions were marked as units F1 and F2. The first question (unit F1) requires the students to compose a question that would be asked by an elderly Chinese woman to a Swedish university student at a family gathering. Another question (unit F2) is similar to the former question, except in this case it is an elderly Chinese man who asks the question. Gender is a factor that might create differences in the students' answers.

Since these two are both open-ended questions, it is no surprise the researcher received student responses containing more than 16 different "suggested questions". The

answers were then examined and summarized into six categories (see Figure 40 and 41).

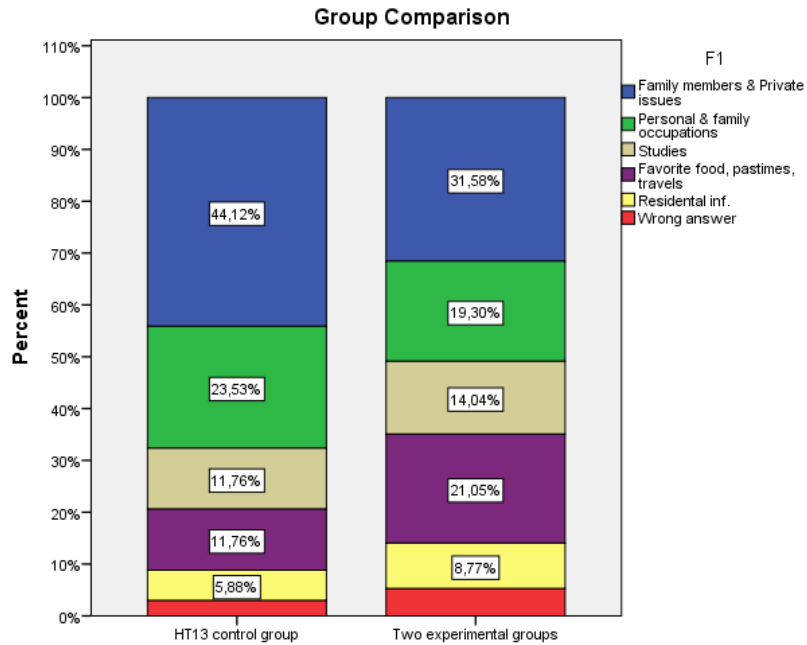


FIGURE 40. ANALYSIS OF UNIT F1

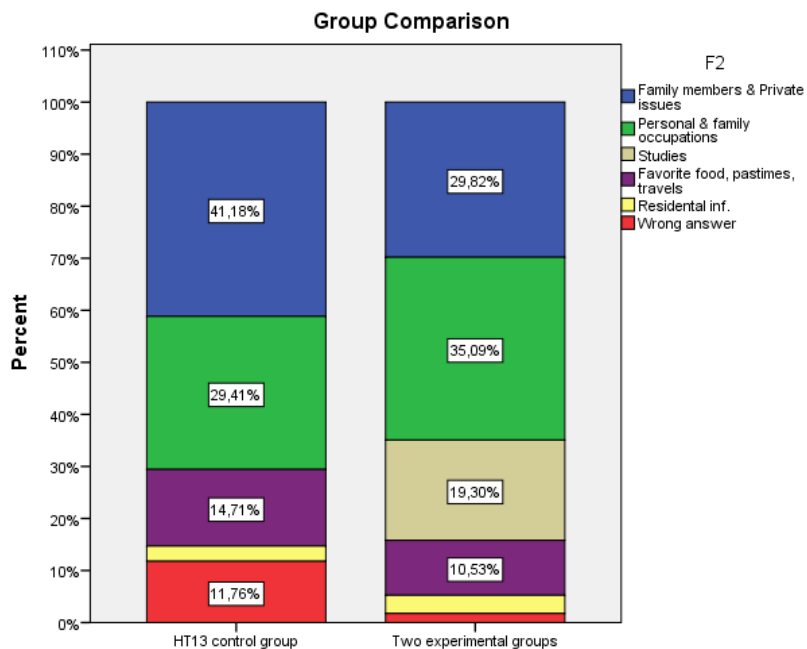


FIGURE 41. ANALYSIS OF UNIT F2

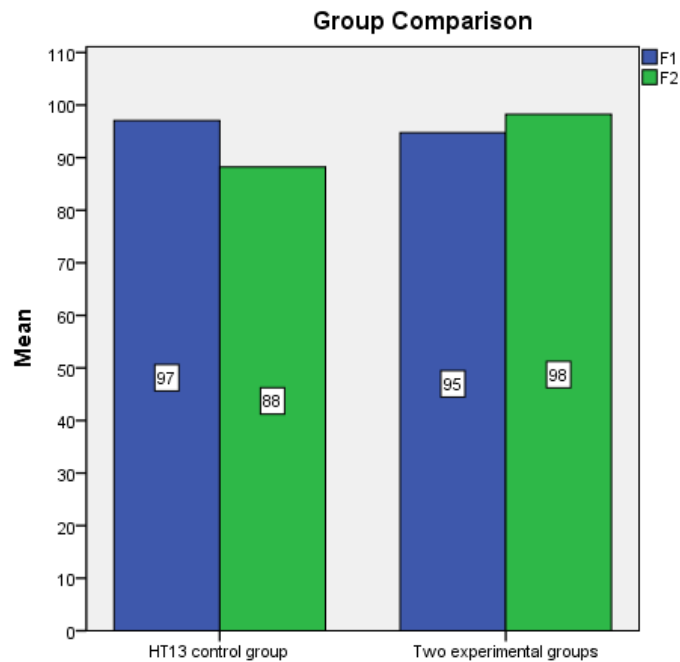
The first category of the students' suggested questions concerns the interlocutor's private life, the most common question is, “你家人有几口人? Nǐ jiā yǒu jǐ kǒu rén? - How many family members are there in your family?”. A few students managed to use vocabulary that was not taught in the course and replied with questions like “你结婚了吗? Nǐ jiéhūnle ma? - Are you married”.

The second category includes questions related to interlocutor's (or their relatives) occupation. For instance, the most common question in this category is, “你/你爸爸妈妈做什么工作? Nǐ/Nǐ bàba māmā zuò shénme gōngzuò? - What is your/your parents' occupation?”. A few were interested in knowing the salary earned by the interlocutor, despite the fact that they used vocabulary not covered in the course.

Questions related to studies or learning activities are collected in the third category, for example, “你为什么学中文? Nǐ wèishéme xué Zhōngwén? - Why are you studying Chinese?”. The fourth category contains all of the questions related to personal interests of food, past times and travels. A few questions are included in the fifth category in which students asked about where the interlocutor was living or the interlocutor's place of origin. The last category puts all the incorrect answers together. This type of answers contained many grammatical mistakes which render the questions incomprehensible.

When analyzing the unit F1 in Figure 40, one can see that the answers given by the experimental groups were more diverse as compared to the HT13 control group as most of the answers produced by the control group focused on the first and second category (more than 68%). The results are similar to unit F2 (Figure 41) in which the first and

second categories were contained about 70% of all the answers provided by the HT13 control group. The experimental groups gave more preference to the first and second category in this question (about 65%) but their answers varied more than the control group. In short, the experimental groups were more consistent when providing answers to these two questions.



**FIGURE 42. ELEMENT F: THE CONCERN OF PRIVACY**

**Cultural Information:**  
**F1:** possible questions a Chinese mother would ask a Swedish guest (written ex.13)  
**F2:** possible questions a Chinese father would ask a Swedish guest (written ex.15)

Based on the fact that the Swedish students were beginning-level students of Chinese, they had limited knowledge of the Chinese language. Consequently, most of the questions they provided were limited to what they had learned from the course and all

the groups received similarly high mean scores for these two questions (Figure 42). The results also suggested that the factor of gender did not affect the students' answers. As compared to the experimental groups, the HT13 control group seemed to be slightly less confident when answering the later question and their answers were more focused on the first and the second category. Nevertheless, it was difficult to conclude that the experimental groups had a better understanding of the concern of privacy of the Chinese people since the students had not yet learned enough to express themselves freely with regard to this type of open-ended questions.

#### *5.4.7 ELEMENT G: CHINESE ETIQUETTE IN MAKING PHONE CALLS AND WRITING LETTERS*

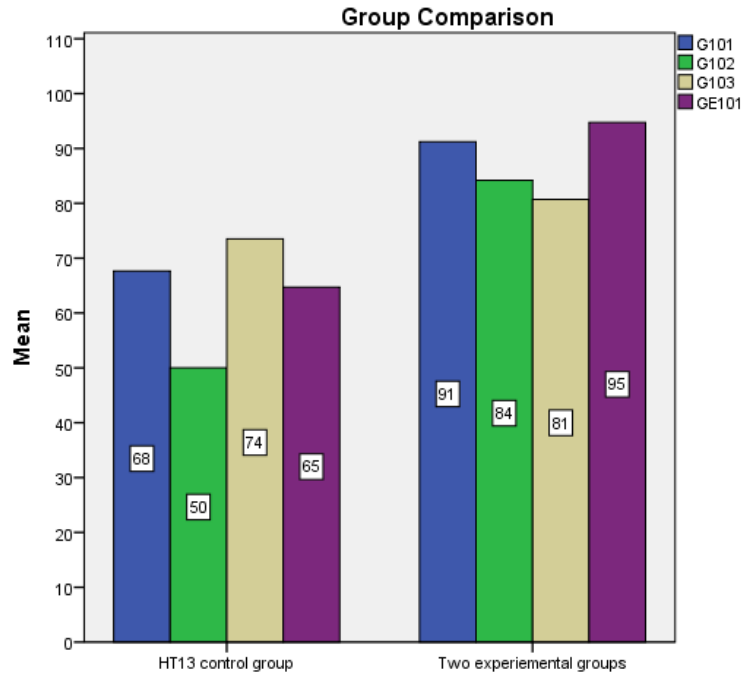
In the Chinese 1 course, students will learn how to place a telephone call as well as write a letter in Chinese.

##### **5.4.7.1 Communicating via the Telephone**

Lesson 6 contains two telephone-based dialogues which show students how to make an appointment over the phone. Despite the fact that some basic information regarding telephone etiquette in China is introduced in the textbook, such as the use of “喂! Wèi! - Hello!”, a more in-depth explanation of the cultural elements that are implicit in the dialogue is missing. This motivated the researcher to create a scalable task (scalable task no.6) to clarify the intercultural differences of making phone calls in Chinese, English and Swedish. The two experimental groups had to complete the task the same week they were studying this lesson in the textbook.

After lesson 6, the students had to compose four telephone-based dialogues in three assignments and on the written exam. All the dialogues have their own scenario. The first one requires the students to write a lengthy and complete telephone conversation between a student and a Chinese teacher while the other three are shorter tasks in which they need reply correctly to questions posed in a conversation that takes places on the telephone. In these four dialogues, information regarding Chinese telephone etiquette was then encoded in eight units of information for data analysis.

G101, G102, G103 and GE101 are units that helped analyze whether the students were able to compose a telephone-based dialogue in which appropriate Chinese etiquette is utilized. G101 refers to the first lengthy telephone-based dialogue. G102, G103 and GE101 are units for the shorter dialogues in which GE101 is the task included in the written exam. When checking the mean scores of the units in Figure 43, the experimental groups received better results than the HT13 control group, indicating that they were more proficient in Chinese telephone etiquette.



**FIGURE 43. ELEMENT G: THE CHINESE ETIQUETTE IN MAKING PHONE CALLS**

**Cultural Information:**

**G101:** making a phone call in appropriate manner – a long dialogue (written ex.10)

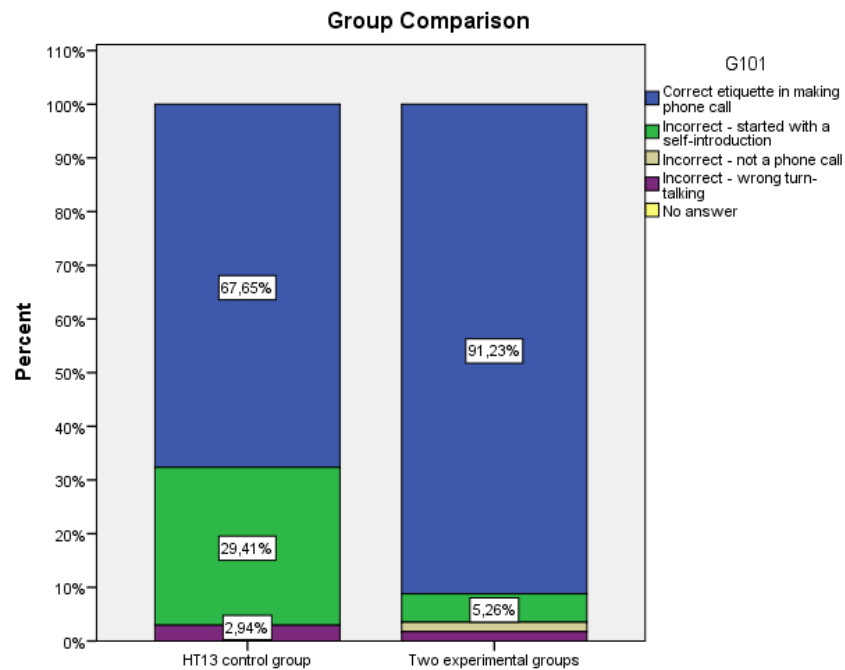
**G102:** making a phone call in appropriate manner – a short dialogue (written ex.13)

**G103:** making a phone call in appropriate manner – a short dialogue (written ex.15)

**GE101:** making a phone call in appropriate manner – a short dialogue (exam)

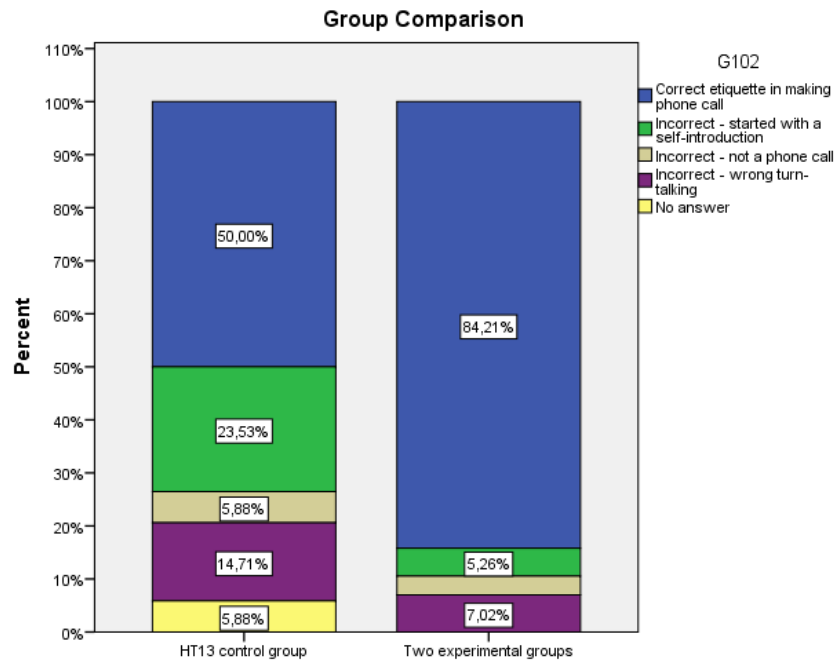
Further investigation was conducted in order to analyze the answers given by the students with regard to these four tasks and the results were presented in the four figures of G101, G102, G103 and GE101 below (Figure 44, 45, 46 and 47). When the student was able to compose a telephone-based dialogue according to Chinese etiquette, it was marked as “correct”. However, there were three situations that were marked as “incorrect”. The first situation was quite common among the students - a Western style opening was utilized, such as introducing oneself as soon as the conversation began, such as “喂，你好！是我罗宾。Wèi, nǐ hǎo! Shì wǒ Luō bīn – Hello! I am Robin”.

The second situation was when the dialogue did not follow the correct Chinese turn-taking mechanism. For instance, after hearing someone say “喂！ Wèi! - Hello!”, a speaker replied, “你好，老师！ 我想问你几个问题。你有空儿吗？ Nǐ hǎo, lǎoshī! Wǒ xiǎng wèn nǐ jǐ gè wèntí. Nǐ yǒu kòngr ma? - Hello Teacher! I want to ask you a few questions, do you have time?”. The speaker had already made a request without first confirming who was speaking on the phone. Besides these two situations, some students also composed a telephone-based dialogue that was identical to a face to face conversation. This type of dialogue was also marked as “incorrect”.

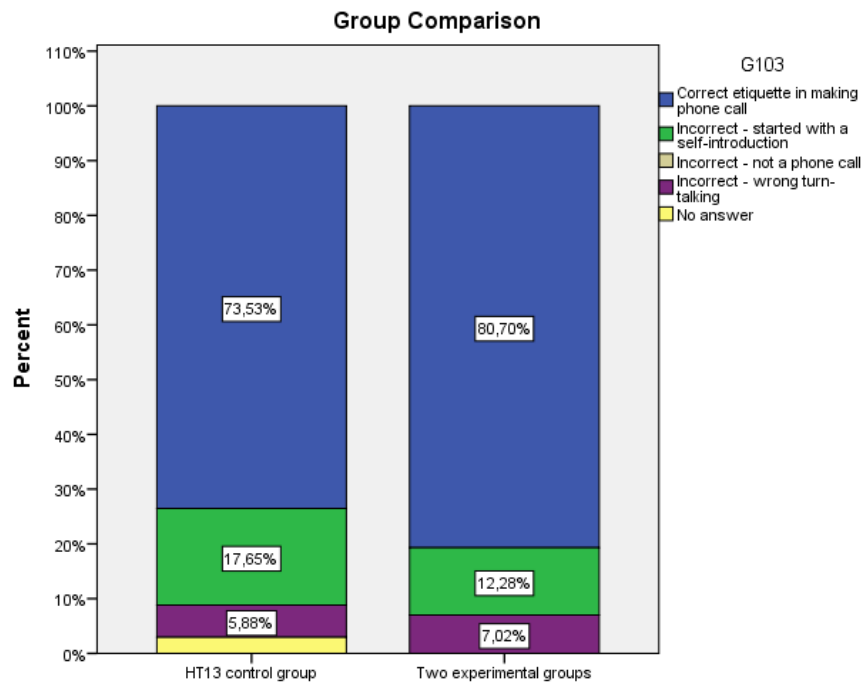


**FIGURE 44. ANALYSIS OF UNIT G101**





**FIGURE 45. ANALYSIS OF UNIT G102**



**FIGURE 46. ANALYSIS OF UNIT G103**

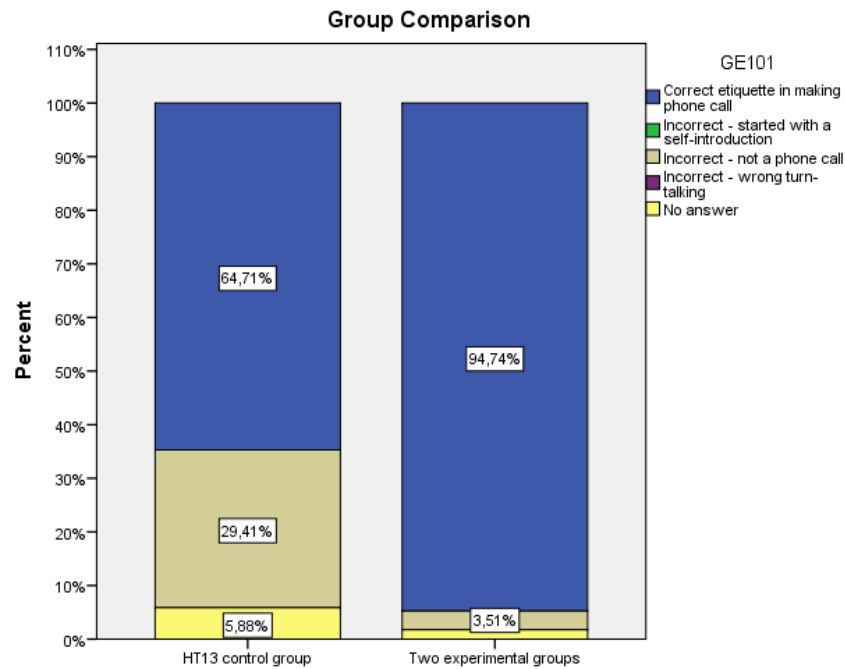
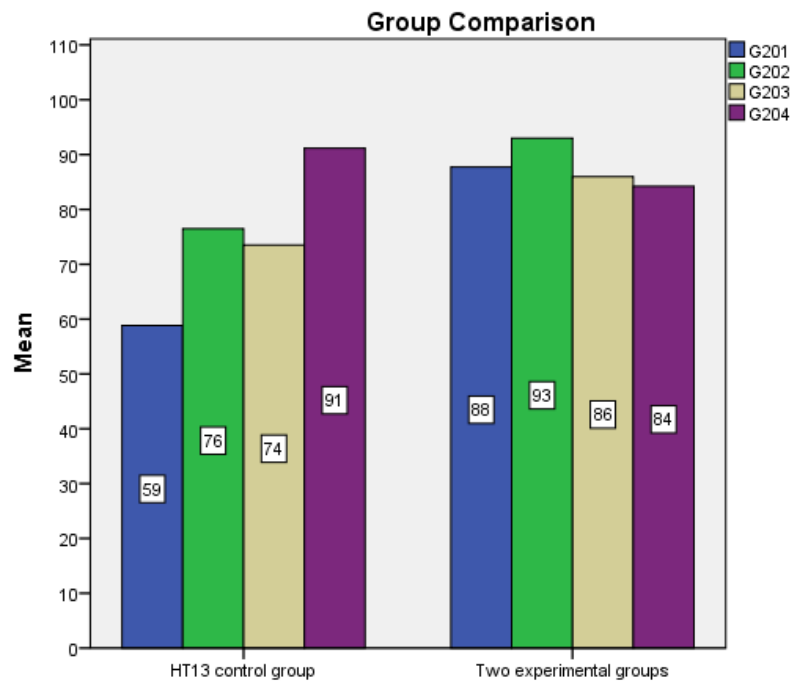


FIGURE 47. ANALYSIS OF UNIT GE101

In analyzing the distribution of the answers provided by the groups in Figure 44, 45, 46 and 47, it is apparent that these three types of incorrect answers were commonly utilized by the HT13 control group in the assignments (units G101, G102 and G103). Moreover, more students (29%) in the HT13 control group composed a face to face dialogue instead of a Chinese telephone conversation during the exam (unit GE101).

In addition to evaluating the telephone-based dialogue etiquette, the researcher also investigated whether the students were able to utilize a typical phrase – “*有事儿吗?* Yǒushìr ma? - What’s up?” and the use of “*喂! Wèi! - Hello!*” in a telephone call. As compared to the HT13 control group, more students in the experimental groups

managed to use the phrase, “有事儿吗? Yǒushir ma? – What’s up?”, in their assignments (unit G201, see Figure 48).



**FIGURE 48. ELEMENT G: THE USE OF “YOU SHI MA?” AND “WEI!”**

**Cultural Information:**

**G201:** using “you shir ma” appropriately (written ex.10)

**G202:** using “wei” appropriately (written ex.10)

**G203:** using “wei” appropriately (written ex.13)

**G204:** using “wei” appropriately (written ex.15)

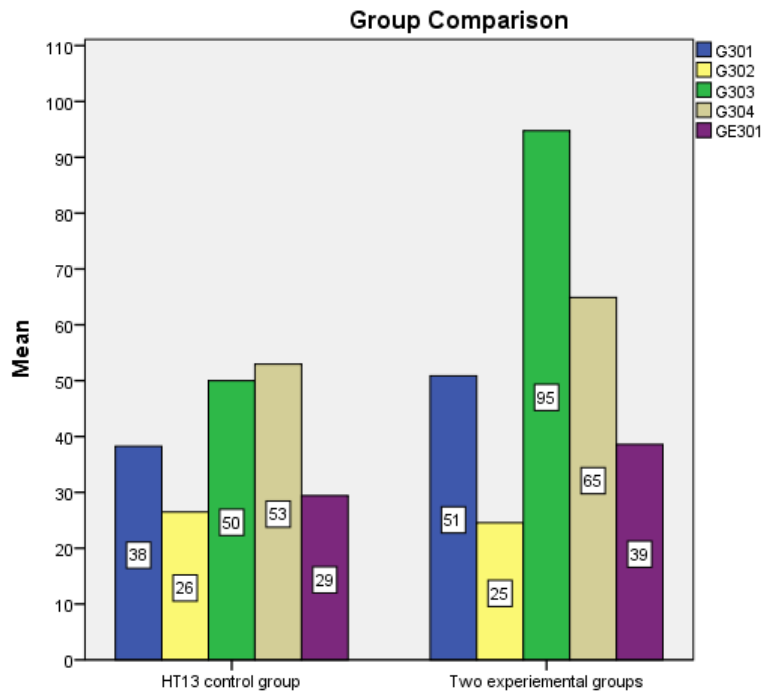
The use of “喂! Wèi! - Hello!” is one distinctive characteristic of a telephone call conducted in Chinese. Since it is explicitly demonstrated in the examples from the textbook, it was easy for the students to learn the phrase and apply it in their assignments. As shown in Figure 48, high mean scores were thus recorded in the units of G202, G203 and G204 in which the experimental groups had higher and more even mean scores as compared to the HT13 control group.

#### 5.4.7.2 Writing Letters

In lesson 8, the textbook introduces two different types of texts to its reader. The first text is a student's diary and the second text is an informal letter. When teaching this lesson, the format of a Chinese letter was described and discussed with the students. A comparison between Chinese and English letters was included in the online lecture.

In assignment 13, the students were instructed to write a short note to their teacher in order to request help with their studies. The researcher evaluated whether the students wrote the note in the correct format (units G301 and G302) and in a culturally appropriate manner (unit G303). From Figure 49, one can see that many students in every group did not pay attention to the format for a Chinese note when they were writing it. The mean score of unit G301 obtained by the experimental groups was 0.51 while the control group received 0.38. The mean score of the unit G302 was the lowest for all the groups (0.26 for the control group and 0.25 for the experimental groups). This unit was used to examine whether the closing of the note was composed appropriately. The results suggested that the students did not understand the format used when writing a note in Chinese. The last unit, G303 was used to investigate whether the students wrote to their teacher in an appropriate manner. As referred to in Figure 49, the experimental groups received a much higher mean score in this unit as compared to the control group. Half of the students in the control group wrote the note without the necessary level of politeness. For instance, the students urged their teacher to return the student's telephone call, “我刚才到你的办公室找你，可是你不在。你要是方便的话可以给我我打个电。Wǒ gāngcái dào nǐ de bàngōngshì zhǎo nǐ, kěshì nǐ bùzài. Nǐ yàoshi fāngbiàn dehuà kěyǐ gěi nǐ wǒ dǎ gè diàn”. In contrast, the

experimental groups were much more aware of this issue and they managed to compose culturally appropriate and respectful notes.



**FIGURE 49. ELEMENT G: CHINESE ETIQUETTE IN WRITING LETTERS**

**Cultural Information:**

**G301:** using the correct format of a note (written ex.13)

**G302:** using a proper sender name (written ex.13)

**G303:** writing the note in appropriate manner (written ex.13)

**G304:** writing the Chinese letter in correct format (written ex.13)

**GE301:** writing the Chinese letter in correct format (exam)

Writing a letter in Chinese is more difficult than composing a note. Even though the format for a Chinese letter was introduced and discussed in the online lectures, it seemed difficult for the students to remember the proper procedure. This was reflected in the poor performance in the assignment (unit G304) and on the written exam (unit GE301). Many students failed to utilize the complete Chinese letter format and some of them simply wrote the letter according to the Western style. According to the

researcher's observation, the lack of opportunity for students to read and write "real" Chinese letters was the main factor that caused the poor performance on the tasks.

#### *5.4.8 ELEMENT H: THE TEA DRINKING CUSTOM IN CHINA*

The importance of the tea drinking custom in China is introduced in the "Cultural Highlights" section in lesson 5. Even though tea is the national drink of China, the lesson does note that the number of coffee drinkers has been increasing in China in recent years. Since this information is included at the end of the lesson, how many students would really be aware of this issue when they interact with Chinese people? In order to draw the students' attention to the importance of the tea drinking custom in China, related information was introduced in the scalable task no. 5.

Three task-based questions were designed to reveal how interculturally sensitive the Swedish students were regarding the custom of tea drinking by the Chinese people. The first question, which was marked as unit H1, asked students to write a short dialogue between a Swedish host (a university student) and a Chinese guest (a 52 years-old woman). The host was going to serve the guest a drink. What did the Chinese guest most likely want to drink? As noted in Figure 50, more than half (53%) of the control group wrote tea. The second choice was water (18%) and the third choice was coffee (15%). The experimental groups seemed to be more aware of this Chinese custom and about 70% of the students in the experimental groups chose tea. About 9% of these students wrote coffee and water.

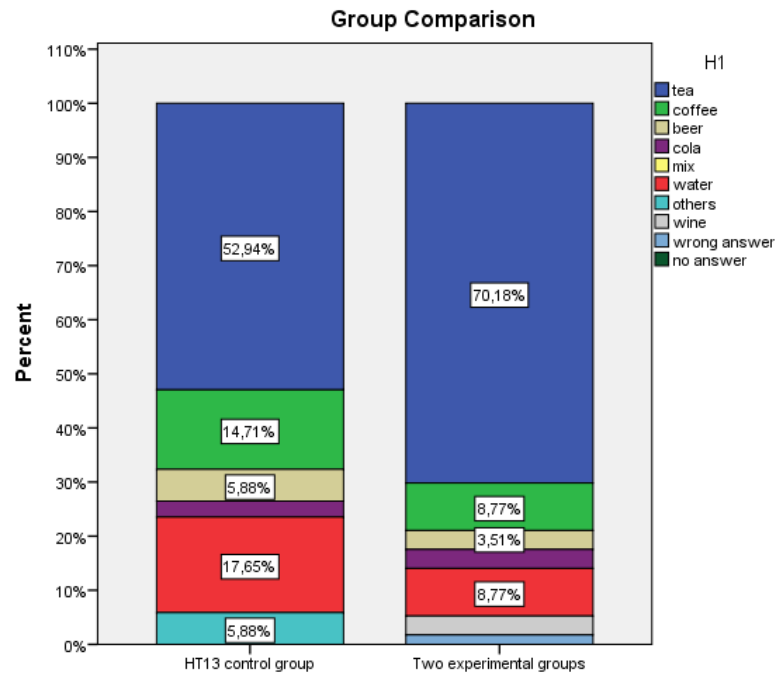
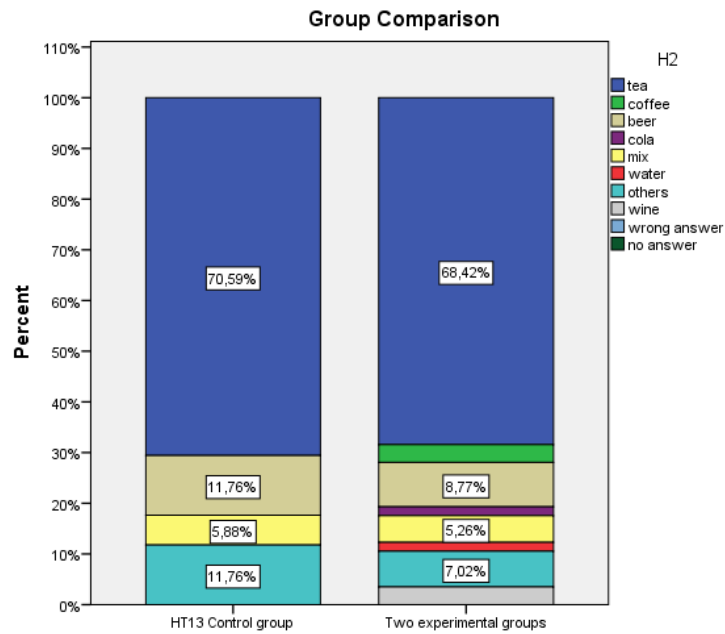


FIGURE 50. ANALYSIS OF UNIT H1

In another question, students had to write a short dialogue between a Chinese host and a Swedish guest. In this scenario both of the characters were university students. What would a Chinese host offer her Swedish guest to drink? The question was encoded as unit H2 and the answers were presented in Figure 51. About 70% of the students in all of the groups wrote tea. The results illustrated that the students were more aware of this Chinese custom when the host was Chinese. As compared to the control group, the experimental groups provide a wider range of answers in this task.



**FIGURE 51. ANALYSIS OF UNIT H2**

The third question was included in the written exam. This was the task scenario: a Swedish student wanted to invite her Chinese classmate to come to her birthday party. She was going to write an invitation letter to her classmate, informing her about the foods and drinks that would be offered at the party. To complete the task, students had to write this invitation letter to a Chinese classmate. The question was encoded as unit HE1 and the data for this unit was presented in Figure 52 below.



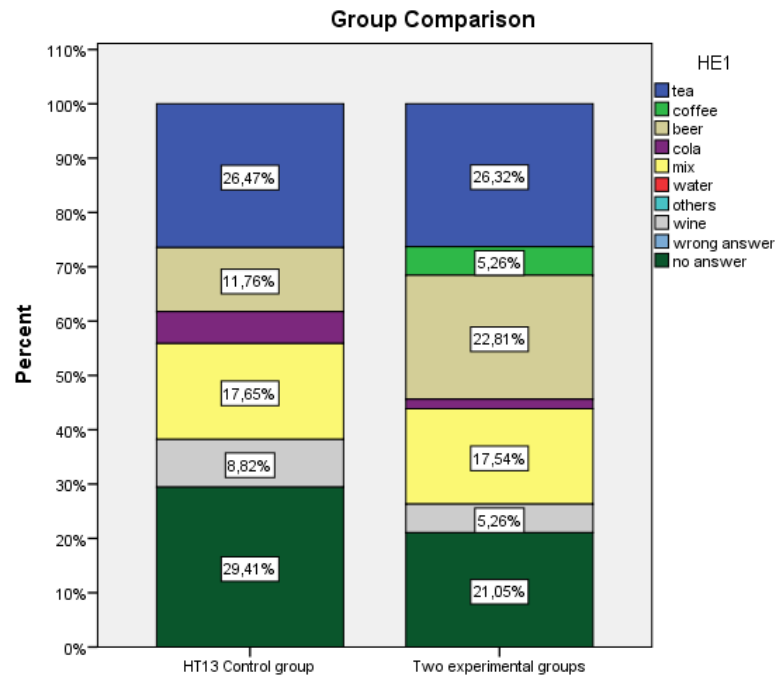


FIGURE 52. ANALYSIS OF UNIT HE1

Even though this task was similar to the previous question (unit H1), the students in across all the groups did not perform as well with this scenario as they had with the previous scenario. The answers provided by the groups were more diverse and only around 26% of the students chose tea. The reason could be that this task was in the last part of the students' written exam and they had little time left to complete the exam. This may also be reflected by the fact that about 29% of the control group and 21% of the experimental groups failed to provide any answer to this question.

When assessing the students' mean scores regarding the three questions shown in Figure 53, the experimental groups' performance was more consistent in the first two questions (units H1 and H2) as compared to the control group. However, the pressure of time during the written exam, many students, in all of the groups, could not recall the

knowledge introduced in the textbook; instead they referred to their own personal experience when answering this task and thus low mean scores were recorded.

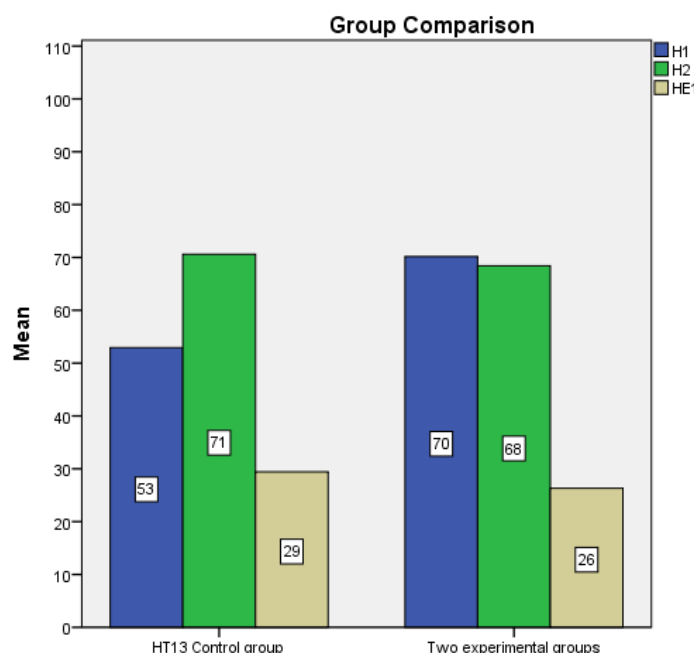


FIGURE 53. ELEMENT H: THE TEA DRINKING CUSTOM IN CHINA

**Cultural Information:**

**H1:** a Swedish host offered drink to a 75 years-old Chinese lady guest (written ex.13)

**H2:** a Chinese host offered drink to her Swedish classmate (written ex.15)

**HE1:** what a Swedish host would offer to her Chinese guest (exam)

*5.4.9 ACQUISITIONS OF CULTURAL ELEMENTS – DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GROUPS*

In conclusion, there were both similarities and differences in the answers provided by the HT13 control group and the two experimental groups. The similarities and differences were summarized and further analyzed as follows.

**5.4.9.1 Cultural Questions with Satisfactory Results**

About 33% of the cultural questions were easier than others and all the groups managed to obtain high mean scores on those tasks. For example, many students could apply the

polite and formal phrase, “贵姓 guìxìng – honorific surname” when composing a dialogue which included an introduction and greeting for someone the student is meeting for the first time. Along with this polite phrase, most of the students could address a Chinese person correctly including the proper order of the surname and given name as well as an appropriate title. One possible explanation is that most of the students were very motivated at the beginning of the course when the initial greetings and introductions were taught. Many opportunities were provided for students to practice using related phrases and addressing a Chinese person. Consequently, most students understood the structure of the full Chinese name and how Chinese names differ from Western names. Other cultural questions that were explained in the textbook, such as the reasons for treating someone (offering to take someone to dinner, for example) and how to respond to an invitation, were also easier for students to remember. Some simple but important customs, such as the use of “喂! Wèi! - Hello!” during a telephone conversation with a Chinese person, were easily adopted by the Swedish learners. In general, students were able to understand and apply basic cross-cultural knowledge in the assignments and on the exam provided the required knowledge is simple and directly referenced in the textbook. After doing the scalable tasks, the experimental groups obtained higher mean scores on these culture-related questions than the control group.

#### **5.4.9.2 The Difference Generated by Scalable Tasks**

Since the intercultural knowledge provided by the textbook is insufficient to foster a complete level of intercultural competence, the scalable tasks were designed to provide

students with more in-depth explanations for the eight identified cross-cultural elements integrated in the course.

As confirmed by the results of the cultural questions and the researcher's observations, the implementation of scalable tasks helped the two experimental groups to achieve better scores on 29% of the cultural questions in which the control group failed to give correct answers. For instance, the experimental groups were able to introduce their family members in a more culturally appropriate order. When asking someone's age, they could properly apply the three Chinese questions - “你今年多大? Nǐ jīnnián duō dà?”, “你今年几岁? Nǐ jīnnián jǐ suì?”, and “您多大年纪了? / 您多大岁数了? Nín duō dà niánjì le? / Nín duō dà suìshù le?” - in different social situations. Since the experimental groups had studied the rules for the formal introduction of a third person in the scalable task, more students could make an appropriate introduction as compared to the HT13 control group. After learning about the Chinese customs regarding the notion of “treating friends” and the underlying “mutual reciprocity principle” in the scalable task, many students in the experimental groups could provide more modest responses to compliments. The comparisons between Chinese, English and Swedish telephone calls in the scalable task helped teach Chinese telephone call etiquette. As a result more students in the experimental groups were able to write a telephone-based dialogue correctly than the students in the HT13 control group. This included correctly using the expression, “有事儿吗? Yǒu shìr ma? - What's up?”.

#### **5.4.9.3 Cultural Questions with Unsatisfactory Results**

Even though the scalable tasks provided in-depth cross-cultural information and guidance for solving the cultural questions, about 38% of the cultural questions presented difficulties for all of the groups.

The first problem was applying the complicated Chinese address system appropriately in different social situations. As observed by the researcher, most of the students addressed themselves and their classmates appropriately in the initial greeting and introduction. However, in order to address a Chinese friend properly in other situations, the students had to consider the level of intimacy of the relationship, as well as and the formality of the event. When reviewing the Chinese notes and letters composed by the students, the researcher found that the students simply copied and pasted the full Chinese name provided in the task without taking into account the degree of intimacy and the formality of the event. Another common mistake was addressing their teacher as “老师 lǎoshī – teacher” without placing teacher’s surname before the title at the beginning of a greeting. As observed by the researcher, this concept is very different from Swedish customs where students address their teachers and nearly everyone in the school, including the principal, directly using their first names. The cross-cultural difference between Swedish and Chinese customs might contribute to the mean scores obtained by the students in this area.

The second problem was the application of “您 nín” – the polite form of “you”. This second person polite form pronoun should be utilized together with the respectful form of addressing the teacher. Even though the usage of “您 nín” was introduced in the scalable tasks and emphasized in class, many students still forgot to consistently include

it in their speech and in their writing. Once again, this cross-cultural difference between Swedish and Chinese might make the usage of the polite Chinese second person pronoun more difficult.

The implicit Chinese turn-taking mechanism utilized in the dialogues was the third problem that the students failed to master. Even though the students studied the textbook dialogues, many students simply followed their own turn-taking customs when composing dialogues for introductions and telephone calls.

A similar issue was that many students relied on their own cultural perspectives when giving a response to an invitation. Although the students were told that Chinese people would generally reject an invitation for a treat as a first response in order to show their modesty, the students immediately accepted the invitations. Even when they were asked to reply from the Chinese perspective, they were not able to adjust their choices accordingly.

The fifth problem was shown in the students' writing of Chinese notes and letters. Since the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition textbook does not provide an example of a Chinese note, it was not surprising that the students had difficulties composing the note in the appropriate format even though a sample was given in the assignment. Nonetheless, a Chinese letter was introduced in lesson 8 and efforts were made in class to clarify the format of the Chinese letter. The low mean scores obtained by the groups were unexpected as many students surprisingly wrote the Chinese letter as they would write a letter in Swedish or English.

In conclusion, the cross-cultural differences between Chinese and the English or Swedish were one of the main factors that generated difficulties for the students to produce correct answers to the cultural questions, especially when the difference was more subtle and abstract, thus requiring more careful consideration.

#### **5.4.9.4 Other Factors**

The overall lower mean scores for the cultural questions obtained by students from the exam illustrate two possible facts of students' acquisition of intercultural competence. Firstly, it might be the case that the students' intercultural competence has not been fully developed in this course. Secondly, the time constraints on students during their written exam might affect their performance. For example, the scalable task drew the students' attention to the tea drinking custom among Chinese people and provided the students with guidance for completing the related assignments. As a result, the experimental groups performed well when answering the cultural question in their assignment. Under the time constraints of the exam, more than 29% of students in the HT13 group and 21% of the experimental groups failed to provide any answers for this task. Thus very poor results were obtained on the exam even though the question was similar to the written assignment.

Besides time pressure, there are other factors that could affect student acquisition of the cultural elements. For instance, even though new cross-cultural knowledge was presented to the students, their assimilation of these concepts could be affected by their own personal experiences in learning Chinese. Other possible factors that could affect the results were thus explored in personal interviews.

## 5.5 FINDINGS OF THE INTERVIEWS

As discussed earlier, there were factors that could not be explained by the quantitative data but were crucial for student acquisition of intercultural competence. In this action research study, interviews were utilized to uncover these factors and their relationship to student acquisition of intercultural competence in the Chinese 1 course.

### 5.5.1 THE HT13 CONTROL GROUP

There were 34 students who participated in the control group. At the end of 2013, 19 subjects in the control group were randomly selected to participate in the interviews. Of the 12 students who indicated that they would participate, only 10 actually did participate. Among the participants, the average ISS mean score was 3.94 (out of 5), suggesting that they have a high level of intercultural sensitivity.

### **Part 1-Personal and External Factors**

The first discussion is about the interviewees' personal factors that might affect the students' results (Table 5). According to the data, three of the interviewees (Matt, Kent and Kristine)<sup>22</sup> had studied the Chinese language before joining the course. Kent and Amy studied other subjects that were related to Chinese culture and society. In other words, more than half of the interviewees were new beginning-level students of Chinese who had no previous experience or knowledge of the target language prior to enrolling in this course. Since they were interested in studying Chinese, it was no

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<sup>22</sup> Due to ethical consideration, pseudonyms were adopted to hide all the interviewees' identity.



surprise that six of them (Mary, Matt, Kent, Amy, Lina and George) had been to China and Matt, Kent and Lina had lived in China for a period of time. Among the interviewees, Matt had a Chinese girlfriend while Mary, Yvonne, Lina and George had Chinese friends.

What motivated them to enroll in the course? Four (Matt, Kent, Yvonne and George) claimed that they were fascinated by the Chinese culture. Matt, Kristine and George regarded learning Chinese as a challenge and that they loved languages. John, Kent and Amy took this course to prepare for their future studies and career development in China.

**TABLE 5. THE HT13 CONTROL GROUP - PERSONAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS OF STUDYING CHINESE**

Interviewee	Prior Chinese knowledge	Other Related knowledge	Visited China before	Lived in China	Chinese Culture	Future career	Other Languages	Chinese friends, etc.
Mary			1					1
John						1		
Matt	1		1	1	1		1	1
Joe								
Kent	1	1	1	1	1	1		
Yvonne					1			1
Amy		1	1			1		
Kristine	1						1	
Lina			1	1				1
George			1		1		1	1
Total	3	2	6	3	4	3	3	5

Note. 1 =student had this factor.

## Part 2-Major Concerns regarding Language Studies

In the second part of the interview, the interviewer asked about the main difference between Chinese and English. From Table 6, Yvonne was the only one who stated that the main difference between Chinese and English or Swedish was cultural. Mary and Joe commented that these languages were completely different. For the rest of the students, some found that the Chinese intonation and pronunciation differed greatly

from Western languages while others referred to problems in understanding Chinese grammar.

When referring to their own goals in the course, nine interviewees focused mostly on developing Chinese linguistic competence, such as pronunciation, grammar, intonation and comprehension of Chinese characters. Only Yvonne expressed her desire to learn about Chinese culture. When completing their assignments, Chinese characters and pronunciation were the most challenging tasks for the students.

In scrutinizing the data, it became apparent that most of the interviewees regarded linguistic practice in Chinese intonation and grammar as their two main concerns during the course. Cultural differences in the languages were not a major concern for the interviewees.

**TABLE 6. THE HT13 CONTROL GROUP - MAJOR CONCERNS REGARDING LANGUAGE STUDIES**

Interviewee	Differences between Chinese vs English	Most interested parts	Most difficult parts
Mary	All aspects	All aspects	All
John	Grammar	Grammar	Pronunciation
Matt	Grammar	Pronunciation	All
Joe	All aspects	Grammar	Pronunciation
Kent	Pronunciation	Pronunciation	Pronunciation
Yvonne	Culture	Culture	Characters
Amy	Grammar	Pronunciation	Grammar
Kristine	Pronunciation	Grammar	Pronunciation
Lina	Characters	Pronunciation	Characters
George	Pronunciation	Pronunciation	Characters

### Part 3-Integrated Cultural Questions

In the third part of the interview, the topic was the cultural questions included in the students' assignments and on the exam. There were nine interviewees who agreed that these questions were very relevant and useful with regard to learning the Chinese

language. Joe, however, commented that learning culture was not relevant with regard to language learning.

Since the control group followed the original course which did not have sufficient resources covering the implicit intercultural communicative components in the course, did the interviewees find the questions difficult? Kent, Yvonne and George commented that the cultural questions were at the right level. While Lina claimed that the questions were too difficult, the remaining six said the cultural questions were not. There were several ways for the students to find the correct answers to the cultural questions. The main student resource was the textbook in which many answers could be found. Matt, Joe and Kent made use of Internet searches and students with Chinese friends would seek advice from those friends. Mary, Matt and Kent sometimes simply guessed.

#### **Part 4-Evaluating ICC through Scenarios and Case Study**

In the last part of the interview, the interviewees were invited to discuss three dialogues and one case study with the interviewer. From the observation of the interviews, the researcher discovered that the interviewees in the control group did not demonstrate a high level competence with regard to intercultural communication (Table 7).

**TABLE 7. THE HT13 CONTROL GROUP –SCENARIOS AND CASE STUDY**

Interviewee	Scenario A	Scenario B	Scenario C	Case study	Researcher's comments
Mary	Appropriate	Appropriate B2	Appropriate	CS1 – B CS2 – B	R1
John	Appropriate	Appropriate B2	Appropriate	CS1 – B or C CS2 – B or C	R1
Matt	Appropriate	Appropriate B2	Appropriate	CS1 – D CS2 – D	R1
Joe	Appropriate	Appropriate	Appropriate	CS1 – B CS2 – B	R1
Kent	Appropriate A3, A4	Appropriate	Appropriate C3	CS1 – D CS2 – C	R2
Yvonne	Inappropriate	Inappropriate	Appropriate	CS1 – B	R3

	A1, A4	B1, B2		CS2 – B	
Amy	Appropriate	Appropriate B2	Appropriate	CS1 – C & B CS2 – Not sure	R1
Kristine	Inappropriate A2, A3	Appropriate B2	Appropriate	CS1 – C CS2 – C	R3
Lina	Inappropriate A2, A3	Appropriate B2	Inappropriate C1	CS1 – C CS2 – B	R3
George	Inappropriate A3	Appropriate	Appropriate	CS1 – A CS2 – A	R1

Note. A1= Wrong turn taking; A2= phrase “gui xing”; A3= the topic about “age”; A4= Others.  
B1= Wrong order of introduction; B2=use of “nin”; B3=Surname of Meili; B4= Others.  
C1= Western style phone call; C2=Surname of the teacher; B3= Others.  
CS1= Giving response as a Swedish; CS2=Giving responses as a Chinese.  
R=Intercultural communicative competence (1 is the lowest level; 5 is the highest).

Six of the interviewees (Mary, John, Matt, Joe, Amy and George) were categorized at level 1 as they were not aware of the intercultural differences in scenarios A, B and C. Even though three of the students (Mary, John, Matt) mentioned the use of “您 nín” in scenario B, they claimed that all the written dialogues were polite and appropriate and thus they would not recommend any changes. George pointed out that scenario A was inappropriate since the second speaker initiated a topic of “age” but he could not find any other cultural differences in the scenarios. As for the case study, the answer, B – “Great, I like US food.” – was chosen by Mary and Joe. George chose answer A, – “Thank you, I’m free tomorrow.” Matt wanted to give his own answer, “太好了，谢谢！ Tàihǎole, xièxiè! – Great, thanks!” When asking how a native Chinese speaker would respond to this invitation, Mary, Joe, George, and Matt left their answers unchanged. Why was this so? They explained that they felt comfortable with the answers they chose. From the researcher’s observation, they were not aware that all these answers were Westernized responses to an invitation. It was interesting to examine John and Amy’s answers. John claimed that both answers B and C were less direct and thus would be used by either Swedish or Chinese speakers as a reply to the

invitation. He probably did not know the response that is preferred by most Chinese people. Unlike John, Amy's answer was a combination of answers C and B, “不客气, 我喜欢美国饭。Bù kèqì, wǒ xǐhuān chī Měiguó fàn – Not at all, I like American food!” This answer was illogical since the first appropriate answer, from a Chinese perspective, would be to decline the invitation while the second part showed an interest in participating in the activity. When Amy was asked to choose an answer again from the Chinese perspective, she gave up as she said that she did not know.

Kent was placed in level 2 as he was more aware of the cultural differences in the dialogues despite an inability to explain them properly. For example, Kent could not clarify the intercultural differences in the dialogues. However, he commented that he would utilize the dialogues written in the textbook for scenarios A and C since the examples provided in the book were more formal and polite. Regarding the case study, he would reply to the invitation by saying, “太好了, 我明天有空儿。Tài hǎole, wǒ míngtiān yǒu kòngr – Great. I am free tomorrow”. However, he would change the answer to C - “不客气。Bù kèqì - Not at all.” – if he were Chinese.

Kristine, Lina and Yvonne were categorized as level 3 since they demonstrated a higher level of competence with regard to intercultural communication when discussing the dialogues with the interviewer. Kristine commented that scenario A was inappropriate. She recommended the use of the more formal and polite phrase, “贵姓 guìxìng” in the dialogue and to drop the references to “age”. Yet she failed to find the cultural differences in the other two scenarios and claimed that they were polite and appropriate. She also recommended the use of “您 nín” in scenario B. Kristine understood the

Chinese style answer, C - “不客气。 Bù kèqì - Not at all.” - and chose this answer in response to the two situations. She explained that she had learned this phrase from the textbook. More interestingly, she added that it was also a Swedish way to respond to an invitation in a similar situation. Lina shared the same opinion as Kristine when discussing scenarios A and B. Moreover, she tried to explain the mistakes with regard to alternating the roles of speaker and listener in scenario C although she failed to describe it properly. She explained that her argument was based on her experience in China. In the case study, Lina chose answer C as a response to the invitation but she would choose answer B if she were Chinese. She explained that it was a more straightforward and polite answer in this situation. In this case, Lina’s choices were the opposite of what they should be. As compared to Kristine and Lina, Yvonne had demonstrated good knowledge of intercultural differences in scenarios A and B. In scenario A, she was the only participant who comprehended that the alternation between the roles of speaker and listener in the dialogue was culturally inappropriate. She was also the only participant who mentioned that, typically, Chinese people would ask the interlocutor’s surname first. She recalled her experience and pointed out that Chinese people tended to ask more questions if they were interested in knowing someone. Furthermore, she was also the only one in this group who managed to identify the culturally inappropriate order of the introductions presented in the dialogue (scenario B). However, she failed to address any cultural issues in scenario C. Furthermore, she did not use the Chinese style answer, C - “不客气。 Bù kèqì - Not at all.” in the case study. She was not aware of the cultural differences among the options given in the case study.

To summarize, very few of the interviewees in this group managed to decipher the implicit Chinese turn taking mechanism in the dialogues. They were quite sensitive to the usage of “您 nín” in the scenario B. However, no one could explain why the introduction of the Chinese student’s surname of, “美丽 Meili” was culturally inappropriate in that dialogue. Similarly, the requirement to use the surname of the teacher in scenario C was neglected. As for the case study, a minimal number of participants were able to describe the cultural difference in the options. Many of the students simply picked the option that they commonly used in their own culture.

### **The HT13 Control Group - Cases Analyses**

There are several cases in the control group that are worth discussing.

The first case is Joe who is representative of students who had never studied Chinese prior to enrolling in this course. He also did not have any Chinese friends or travel experiences that could assist his studies. During the interview, Joe indicated that he was mostly interested in grammar and commented that culture was not very relevant with regard to language learning. He stated that he had limited knowledge in this aspect of the Chinese language. Consequently, Joe’s intercultural communicative competence was the lowest in this group and his ISS mean score was also the lowest (2.9) among the interviewees.

Another extreme case is Yvonne and she represents another group of students taking this course. Yvonne did not know any Chinese before enrolling in this course but she loved Chinese movies and was fascinated by Chinese culture. She had some Chinese

friends in Sweden. As compared to the other interviewees, she emphasized the importance of studying culture in a language course and she paid attention to the cultural similarities and differences between Chinese and Swedish. During the interview, she demonstrated a higher level of intercultural communicative competence when analyzing the scenarios in the interview. Apparently, her interests in learning Chinese culture helped develop her intercultural communicative competence.

Kristine represents a group of students who love learning foreign languages. Kristine felt that Chinese was a beautiful language and regarded it as a real challenge when taking this course. Kristine was also interested in culture as well and she commented that learning the cultural questions was very useful, in particular if the learner was going to visit China. The researcher observed that Kristine had clear explanations when discussing the cultural differences in scenario A and the case study. Her previous experiences in learning foreign languages helped her in identifying these cultural differences as well.

Lina is representative of students who have lived in China for a period of time. It seemed that a Chinese language environment had a positive influence on Lina. As compared to the other interviewees, she was more aware of the cultural differences in the dialogues and she utilized her own experiences in China to solve the tasks in the interview.

In summary, when examining the data collected in the interviews, it was difficult to draw any conclusions that certain personal and external experiences of the interviewees would directly affect their performance in part 4 of the interview. For instance, Matt



had many advantages over the others in the course since he had studied Chinese prior to enrolling in this class. He had been to China and studied a semester there. Besides Chinese, he also knew other foreign languages. Furthermore, he had a Chinese girlfriend. From the researcher's observation, Matt was motivated and he followed the course with good results. Despite his advantages, Matt's intercultural communicative competence was no better than the other students' levels of competence (Joe's, for example).

### *5.5.2 VT14 EXPERIMENTAL GROUP 1*

There were 23 subjects who participated in the experimental group 1. In order to collect as many data as possible, all the subjects were invited to the interviews via email. In the end, 10 students agreed to participate. The average mean score of the ISS scale of this group of subjects was 4.15, a bit higher as compared to the HT13 control group (3.94).

#### **Part 1-Personal and External Factors**

The analysis began with the interviewees' personal factors that might affect their study results. When checking Table 8 below, there were four of the interviewees (Otto, Lilly, Max and Ada) who had studied the Chinese language before taking the course while another four (Simon, Lars, Otto and Cindy) studied related subjects earlier. Billy, Peter and Pia were the remaining students who did not have any previous knowledge of the Chinese language or other related subjects. Half of the interviewees (Pia, Lars, Lilly, Max and Ada) had been to China and Pia and Lilly studied there for a short period of time. Both Peter and Lilly had Chinese friends. Because of their work, Max and Ada had Chinese colleagues.

Billy, Simon, Pia and Lilly were fascinated by Chinese culture and this motivated them to take this course. Peter, Simon, Max and Cindy were language lovers. The most common reasons for taking the course were career oriented. Peter and Lars were going to continue their studies in China. Billy and Simon planned to become professional interpreters and language teachers. Lilly, Max and Ada would like to work in China in the near future.

**TABLE 8. VT14 EXPERIMENTAL GROUP 1 - PERSONAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS OF STUDYING CHINESE**

Interviewee	Prior Chinese knowledge	Other Related knowledge	Visited China before	Lived in China	Chinese Culture	Future career	Other Languages	Chinese friends, etc.
Billy					1	1		
Peter						1	1	1
Simon		1			1	1	1	
Pia			1	1	1			
Lars		1	1			1		
Otto	1	1						
Lilly	1		1	1	1	1		1
Max	1		1			1	1	1
Cindy		1					1	
Ada	1		1			1		1
Total	4	4	5	2	4	7	4	4

Note. 1 =student had this factor.

## Part 2-Major Concerns regarding Language Studies

What is the main difference between Chinese and English? Pia, Otto and Cindy said no comparison is possible since the two languages are completely different. Four of the interviewees (Billy, Peter, Max and Ada) pointed out that pronunciation was a significant distinction between these two languages. Simon was the only one who stated that Chinese culture was the main difference in the languages.

When discussing what the motivation for their decision to study Chinese was, half of the interviewees (Peter, Otto, Lilly, Max and Ada) focused mostly on the development of linguistic competence. Billy and Pia were interested in the course in general and

treated all parts of the course as equally important. Lars and Cindy, on the other hand, would like to develop their communication skills in particular. Simon was the only one who showed a great desire to study culture in this language course.

As for the assignments, the main difficulties the interviewees encountered were linguistic problems, such as Chinese pronunciation, grammar and writing.

In examining the data of the control group and VT14 experimental group 1, it is apparent that the interviewees in the control group mainly focus on linguistic practice. However, in VT14 experimental group 1, more students (Simon, Lars and Cindy) were interested in learning culture and communication skills. All of the data is presented in Table 9.

**TABLE 9. VT14 EXPERIMENTAL GROUP1 - MAJOR CONCERNS REGARDING LANGUAGE STUDIES**

Interviewee	Differences between Chinese vs English	Most interested parts	Most difficult parts
Billy	Pronunciation	All aspects	Pronunciation
Peter	Pronunciation	Pronunciation	Writing
Simon	Culture	Culture	Pronunciation
Pia	All aspects	All aspects	Pronunciation
Lars	Characters	Communication	---
Otto	All aspects	Grammar	Writing
Lilly	Grammar	Pronunciation	Grammar
Max	Pronunciation	Grammar	Pronunciation
Cindy	All aspects	Communication	Grammar
Ada	Pronunciation	Pronunciation	Pronunciation

### Part 3-Integrated Cultural Questions

The questions in the third part of the interview were modified for the experimental groups due to the implementation of the revised course materials and the seven scalable tasks. Did the interviewees find the scalable tasks useful for their Chinese language learning? All of the interviewees commented that the scalable tasks were very good, useful and relevant for their studies.

Except for Pia, all of the interviewees stated that the cultural questions integrated in their assignments and on the exam were easy as they could find the answers in their textbook as well as in the scalable tasks. Pia, however, claimed that some tasks were more demanding and required knowledge separate from the course. She also stated that it took a long time to search for answers on the Internet. Billy also commented that some questions in the scalable tasks were difficult as it was not easy to find relevant information that was required to complete the tasks.

The length of the scalable tasks was a point of controversy since some students, such as Peter, would have preferred shorter but more intensive videos for the tasks while others, such as Lars and Otto, would have preferred more in-depth knowledge regarding the cultural differences and intercultural communication skills.

#### **Part 4-Revealing ICC through the Scenarios and Case Study**

During the discussions of the scenarios and case study, the interviewees in VT14 experimental group 1 demonstrated a higher level of competence in intercultural communication as compared to the control group (Table 10). One critical sign was their ability to identify the implicit turn-taking mechanism in the written dialogues. In addition, their responses to the case study were more “culturally correct” than the control group.

**TABLE 10. VT14 EXPERIMENTAL GROUP1 –SCENARIOS AND CASE STUDY**

Interviewee	Scenario A	Scenario B	Scenario C	Case study	Researcher's comments
Billy	Inappropriate A1	Inappropriate B1	Inappropriate C1	CS1 – C CS2 – C (?)	R4
Peter	Inappropriate A1	Inappropriate B1	Inappropriate C1	CS1 – C CS2 – C	R5
Simon	Inappropriate A1, A3	Inappropriate B2	Inappropriate C1	CS1 – D CS2 – C	R5

Pia	Appropriate A3, A4	Inappropriate B1	Inappropriate C1	CS1 – A CS2 – B	R3
Lars	Inappropriate A1	Inappropriate B1	Inappropriate C1, C2	CS1 – C CS2 – C (?)	R4
Otto	Inappropriate A1	Appropriate	Appropriate	CS1 – C CS2 – Not sure	R2
Lilly	Inappropriate A2, A3	Inappropriate B1	Inappropriate C1	CS1 – C CS2 – C	R5
Max	Inappropriate A1, A3	Inappropriate B1	Inappropriate C1	CS1 – C CS2 – C	R5
Cindy	Inappropriate A1	Inappropriate B1	Inappropriate C1	CS1 – C CS2 – C	R5
Ada	Inappropriate A3, A4	Inappropriate B1	Inappropriate C1	CS1 – C CS2 – C	R5

*Note.* A1= Wrong turn taking; A2= phrase “gui xing”; A3= the topic about “age”; A4= Others.  
B1= Wrong order of introduction; B2=use of “nin”; B3=Surname of Meili; B4= Others.  
C1= Western style phone call; C2=Surname of the teacher; B3= Others.  
CS1= Giving response as a Swedish; CS2=Giving responses as a Chinese.  
R=Intercultural communicative competence (1 is the lowest level; 5 is the highest).

The weakest performance in this interview was from Otto who could only identify the incorrect turn-taking sequence in scenario A. He claimed that scenarios B and C were polite and appropriate dialogues as he could not see anything wrong in them. He chose answer C, “不客气。Bù kèqi - Not at all.”, in the case study as he remembered what he had learned from the course. However, he was uncertain when he was asked to explain the answer from the Chinese perspective.

Pia was placed in level 3. Pia misjudged the dialogue in scenario A as she thought that the speakers were similar in age and the dialogue should be informal in manner. However, she was very clear when describing the cultural differences in the dialogues of scenarios B and C. It was a bit disappointing when she explained her reply regarding the case study. She chose two different answers but both were examples of the Western style of responding to an invitation.

Billy and Lars were categorized as level 4 as they demonstrated higher competence in intercultural communication than Otto and Pia. They managed to identify most of the cultural differences in the dialogues, such as the turn-taking mechanism in scenario A, the wrong order of introduction in scenario B and the Western style phone call in scenario C. Lars was even able to point out that the surname of the teacher should be stated in the dialogue. However, when discussing the case study, both Billy and Lars were a bit unsure of how a Chinese person would respond. They told the interviewer that they would pick “C (不客气。Bù kèqi - Not at all.)” as the answer since they had an impression that it should be the right respond to an invitation.

The remainder of the interviewees (Peter, Simon, Lilly, Max, Cindy and Ada) were categorized as level 5 since they could identify most of the cultural differences in the dialogues and give polite responses with regard to the case study. Except for Ada, all of the members of this group were able to identify the improper turn-taking in scenario A. Simon, Lilly and Max also commented on the sudden introduction of the “age” question in the dialogue was inappropriate in this scenario. Ada shared a similar opinion regarding this issue while commenting that the dialogue was not as formal as it should be. Nonetheless, she was not able to further explain her reasons to the interviewer. As for scenario B, all these students with the exception of Simon were aware of the wrong introduction order utilized in the dialogue. In fact, Simon was aware of the introduction order but he was uncertain as to who should be introduced first. However, he pointed out to the interviewer other minor errors in the dialogue, such as the lack of using the proper phrase, “我介绍一下 Wǒ jièshào yīxià – lets me introduce you”. He was also the only one in the group who remembered the need to use the polite form of “you” -

“您 nín” in this dialogue. Regarding scenario C, the interviewees were all certain that this telephone conversation was in the Western style and differed from an authentic telephone conversation between native Chinese speakers. When discussing the case study, all of the interviewees chose the Chinese style answer “C (不客气。Bù kèqi - Not at all.)” as a reply to an invitation. Simon’s own answer - “小事，不用请。Xiǎoshì, bù yòng qǐng. – It’s just a small matter, no need to treat me (for the dinner).” – was similar to answer “C”. From the researcher’s observation, it was clear they had no doubts about the correct answer from the Chinese perspective.

#### **VT14 Experimental Group 1 - Cases Analyses**

According to the researcher’s observations, despite the diverse backgrounds of the interviewees, the study of the scalable tasks had a positive effect on the students’ performance and motivation for learning Chinese. For instance, all the interviewees found the scalable tasks valuable and would like to have this kind of cultural instruction in future courses. The higher number of students in this group who placed culture and communication as the first priority of their studies could be a result of this modification to the course. Consequently, the interviewees in VT14 experimental group 1 demonstrated a higher level of intercultural communicative competence as compared to the control group when analyzing the scenarios and case study during the interviews.

However, it could be rash to conclude that the scalable tasks could help every student develop intercultural communicative competence. The performance of Otto and Pia were not as satisfactory as the others in the interviewee group. The case of Pia was understandable. Pia did not have prior knowledge of Chinese but she had stayed in

China for 2 months and she was particularly interested in Chinese culture. Despite all her hard work, her illness affected her study greatly in the second half of the course. The case of Otto was especially interesting. Otto, who received the lowest level from the interview, had learned some Chinese and Chinese characters before taking the course. During the interview, Otto told the researcher that he was attracted to Chinese culture during his study of the scalable tasks. He was aware of the cultural differences between Chinese and the Western languages but he admitted that he knew too little about the Chinese culture. From the researcher's observation, Otto worked quite hard in the course. What were the factors that could hinder the students like Otto from developing intercultural communicative competence? This question is crucial in this study.

### *5.5.3 HT14 EXPERIMENTAL GROUP 2*

There were 34 subjects recruited in the experimental group 2. Unlike the previous group, the researcher randomly selected 16 interviewees and personally invited them to join the interviews right after their oral exams on Adobe Connect. Although all the selected students accepted the invitation, only 13 actually participated in the interviews. Due to some technical problems, three interviews were cancelled. In the end, 10 interviews were successfully conducted.

The average mean score of the ISS scale for this group of subjects was 4.06 (out of 5), which is similar to VT14 experimental group 1 and is slightly higher than the HT13 control group (3.94).

## **Part 1-Personal and External Factors**



Table 11 has summarized the data analysis of the interviewees' personal factors. There were five interviewees (Lucy, Vicky, Oscar, Elin and Ray) who had already studied some Chinese and three (Dan, Sofia and Chris) who had studied other related subjects before participating in this course. Only Gina and Brian did not have any prior knowledge of this subject. More than half of the interviewees (Lucy, Gina, Dan, Oscar, Elin and Chris) had previously visited China but none of them had lived there. Vicky had a Chinese girlfriend and Ray had a Chinese wife. Dan had some Chinese friends while Chris had some business partners from China.

Due to their visits to China, Gina, Dan and Chris were attracted to Chinese culture. Brian, a language lover, regarded learning Chinese as a challenge. Four interviewees (Sofia, Oscar, Elin and Chris) utilized this course as a preparation for their future career development. For instance, Sofia planned to study in Beijing as an exchange student. Oscar and Elin were going to work in China. Chris did business in China and he would like to learn its language and culture.

**TABLE 11. HT14 EXPERIMENTAL GROUP 2 - PERSONAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS OF STUDYING CHINESE**

Interviewee	Prior Chinese knowledge	Other Related knowledge	Visited China before	Lived in China	Chinese Culture	Future career	Other Languages	Chinese friends, etc.
Lucy	1		1					
Gina			1		1			
Dan		1	1		1			1
Sofia		1				1		
Vicky	1							1
Oscar	1		1			1		
Elin	1		1			1		
Ray	1							1
Chris		1	1		1	1		1
Brian							1	
Total	5	3	6	0	3	4	1	4

Note. 1 =student had this factor.

## Part 2-Major Concerns regarding Language Studies

As indicated in Table 12, five of the interviewees (Gina, Sofia, Oscar, Ray and Brian) stated that the main difference between Chinese and English was the Chinese pronunciation, such as pinyin and intonations. Two of them (Vicky and Elin) found the Chinese characters were unique as compared to the Western languages. Lucy, Dan and Chris claimed that it was the culture that made the languages different.

While taking this course, only four interviewees in this experimental group placed the highest priority on Chinese grammar and pronunciation. For the rest of them, three (Oscar, Elin and Chris) focused mainly on the development of communication skills while the other three (Gina, Dan and Ray) were more interested in learning Chinese culture.

Which kind of assignments did the interviewees find difficult? Elin, Ray and Chris did not give an answer to this question since they could complete the tasks with ease. For the others, linguistic problems, such as the Chinese pronunciation, grammar and Chinese characters, were the most difficult parts in their assignments.

To compare the interviewees' interests of study in this course, it is apparent that this group was similar to VT14 experimental group 1 but different greatly from the HT13 control group. More students in the experimental groups were conscious of the influence of culture on the language and were interested in studying Chinese culture and communication skills in this course.

**TABLE 12. HT14 EXPERIMENTAL GROUP 2 - MAJOR CONCERNS REGARDING LANGUAGE STUDIES**

Interviewee	Differences between Chinese vs English	Most interested parts	Most difficult parts
Lucy	Culture	Grammar	Listening
Gina	Pronunciation	Culture	Pronunciation

Dan	<b>Culture</b>	<b>Culture</b>	Grammar
Sofia	Pronunciation	Grammar	Pronunciation
Vicky	Characters	Pronunciation	Reading
Oscar	Pronunciation	<b>Communication</b>	Characters
Elin	Characters	<b>Communication</b>	---
Ray	Pronunciation	<b>Culture</b>	---
Chris	<b>Culture</b>	<b>Communication</b>	---
Brian	Pronunciation	Grammar	Characters

### Part 3-Integrated Cultural Questions

In this part of the interview, the researcher utilized the same questions as in VT14 experimental group 1. All of the interviewees in this group were satisfied with the scalable tasks and found that learning Chinese culture was very interesting and meaningful for their language studies.

More than half of the interviewees found that the cultural questions integrated in the assignments and exam were not difficult since they could find the answers in the textbook or the scalable tasks. Dan commented that these questions should not be easy since it is necessary for the students to understand them when studying the Chinese language. Oscar, Elin and Brian thought that some of the cultural questions were more difficult than others. For instance, Brian found it hard to understand the levels of Chinese politeness in different social situations and wished more information could be provided. Elin found the last two assignments difficult since the information from the book and the scalable tasks was not enough to solve the tasks. She had to search for the answers on the Internet. Oscar did not know much about the Chinese hierarchy and had problems in correctly completing the tasks. Besides studying the textbook and scalable tasks, he tried to compare the cultural differences between Chinese and English/Swedish when looking for the answers to the cultural questions.

How could the scalable tasks be improved? Unlike VT14 experimental group 1, no interviewees in this group complained about the length of the scalable tasks. On the contrary, a few of them would have liked to have more information. For instance, Vicky pointed out that the “face” issue was a crucial element in Chinese culture and language and thus more information should have been given to the students. Like Vicky, Oscar also wanted the teacher to provide more text-based information, for example, on the historical origins of the cultural elements discussed in the tasks. Brian suggested that the researcher could provide an index to the scalable tasks so that it would be easier for the students find the information they needed.

#### **Part 4-Revealing ICC through Scenarios and Case Study**

Three interviewees (Dan, Oscar and Elin) in this group were categorized as level 3 in intercultural communicative competence (Table 13, p.259). They understood some cultural differences in the dialogues and could explain it to the interviewer. For instance, Dan could identify the incorrect turn- taking mechanism in scenario A and was able to explain his choice of answer “B - Great, I like US food.” in the case study and changed his answer to “C – 不客气。Bù kèqi. – Not at all.” in order to give a proper response from a Chinese perspective. Unlike Dan, Oscar could see the inappropriateness in scenario B and C, such as the wrong order of the introduction and the need to use the polite form of “您 nín” in scenario B, as well as the Western style telephone conversation in scenario C. However, he failed to decipher the intercultural issues in dialogue A and could not differentiate between the answers provided in the case study. Elin was more interculturally sensitive with regard to scenario C and the case study. She managed to describe the incorrect turn-taking mechanism in the

dialogue in scenario C and she was very clear about the polite response to an invitation in the case study. Nonetheless she had problems in identifying the cultural issues in the first two scenarios.

Lucy, Vicky and Brian were placed in level 4 as they demonstrated higher levels of intercultural communicative competence than Dan, Oscar and Elin. They missed only one important intercultural issue in the scenarios. For example, Lucy and Brian failed to identify the intercultural inappropriateness in scenario B even though both of them suggested using the honorific pronoun, “您 nín”. Vicky was not able to discover the incorrect turn-taking in scenario A. She argued that the dialogue was appropriate since the speakers were both students.

Gina, Sofia, Ray and Chris were aware of most of the intercultural differences in the scenarios and the case study. They were placed at the highest level of intercultural communicative competence in this group – level 5. When explaining his answer for the case study, Chris commented that the Chinese appropriate option, C “不客气。Bù kèqi. – Not at all.” was uncomfortable for most Swedish people since it was a very short answer. Perhaps due to this, many of the students tended to add another phrase or sentence, such as “谢谢。Xièxie. - Thanks.”, and thus chose more a complex and hybrid answer.

**TABLE 13. HT14 EXPERIMENTAL GROUP 2 –SCENARIOS AND CASE STUDY**

Interviewee	Scenario A	Scenario B	Scenario C	Case study	Researcher's comments
Lucy	Inappropriate A1	Appropriate B2	Inappropriate C1	CS1 – B CS2 – C	R4
Gina	Inappropriate A1	Inappropriate B1, B2	Inappropriate C1	CS1 – C/A CS2 – C	R5
Dan	Inappropriate	Appropriate	Appropriate	CS1 – B	R3

	A1			CS2 – C	
Sofia	Inappropriate A1, A3	Inappropriate B1, B2	Inappropriate C1	CS1 – B CS2 – C	R5
Vicky	Appropriate A2, A3	Inappropriate B1, B2	Inappropriate C1	CS1 – B CS2 – C	R4
Oscar	Appropriate A1	Inappropriate B1, B2	Inappropriate C1	CS1 – A CS2 – C/A	R3
Elin	Appropriate A4	Appropriate B2	Inappropriate C1, C3	CS1 – C CS2 – C	R3
Ray	Inappropriate A1	Inappropriate B1	Inappropriate C1	CS1 – C CS2 – C	R5
Chris	Inappropriate A1	Inappropriate B1, B2	Inappropriate C1	CS1 – B CS2 – C	R5
Brian	Inappropriate A1, A2	Appropriate B2	Inappropriate C1	CS1 – C CS2 – C	R4

*Note.* A1= Wrong turn taking; A2= phrase “gui xing”; A3= the topic about “age”; A4= Others.  
B1= Wrong order of introduction; B2=use of “nin”; B3=Surname of Meili; B4= Others.  
C1= Western style phone call; C2=Surname of the teacher; B3= Others.  
CS1= Giving response as a Swedish; CS2=Giving responses as a Chinese.  
R=Intercultural communicative competence (1 is the lowest level; 5 is the highest).

### HT14 Experimental Group 2 - Cases Analyses

From the data analysis and the researcher’s observation, the performance of experimental group 2 was similar to VT14 experimental group 1. The interviewees demonstrated higher levels of intercultural communicative competence as compared to the control group. The influence of scalable tasks was more significant in this group as more interviewees indicated that culture and communication should be the first priority of their studies. Once again, the interviewees’ prior Chinese knowledge seemed to have a limited influence on their intercultural communication skills. For instance, Gina, who did not have any prior knowledge of Chinese, was able to identify most of the cultural differences in the scenarios and she was categorized in level 5.

One interesting phenomenon in this group was identified by the researcher. Dan, Elin and Chris had previously interacted with Chinese people in different forms. During the interview, Dan told the researcher that he had made some Chinese friends in China. The knowledge he learned from the scalable tasks could well apply to older people in China

but it did not match the young people’s behavior there. He was thus uncertain regarding how to respond to different social situations. Elin also knew some Chinese people due to her previous studies and her experience might have affected her judgments when analyzing the dialogues in the scenarios. For example, she claimed that scenario A was appropriate as she had witnessed this kind of dialogue among young people in China. She also commented that the dialogue in scenario C was outdated. However, she could not explain why it was so. Chris visited China often because of his work and he had a significant experience working with Chinese people. Chris told the researcher that he was very interested in Chinese culture and he read books regarding the cultural differences between the Chinese and the West. He found the scalable tasks very valuable as the cultural information provided by the tasks was very relevant and useful for the Chinese language learners. From the researcher’s observation, having contacts with Chinese people and their culture might not always generate a positive outcome. The learners still needed proper guidance in order to develop their intercultural communicative competence.

#### 5.5.4 COMPARISONS BETWEEN GROUPS

The results of the interview with the three groups have been previously presented. Were there any similarities or differences among the groups? Table 14 summarizes the findings of the interviews and more in-depth analysis is presented as follows.

**TABLE 14. A SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS**

	HT13 control group	VT14 experimental group 1	HT14 experimental group 2
No. of interviewees	10	10	10
Mean score of ISS	3.94	4.15	4.06
Personal factors	29	34	26
Interested in culture	1	3	6

Culture is relevant in CL	9	10	10
Easiness of the cultural questions	Easy - 10	Easy - 9 Difficult - 1	Easy - 6 Difficult - 4
Intercultural Competence	Level 5 – 0 Level 4 – 0 Level 3 – 3 Level 2 & 1 - 7	Level 5 – 6 Level 4 – 2 Level 3 – 1 Level 2 & 1 - 1	Level 5 – 4 Level 4 – 3 Level 3 – 3 Level 2 & 1 - 0

## Part 1-Personal and External Factors

During the interviews, the researcher attempted to find out eight factors that might affect the development of the interviewee’s intercultural competence in the course. Among these eight factors, three were related to the interviewee’s personal learning experience; two were about the interviewees’ motivations for studying; another two examined the influence of visiting or living in China while the last one investigated the possible influence that Chinese family members, friends and/or colleagues might have on their studies. It was assumed that all eight factors might facilitate the development of intercultural competence. The more factors the learners had, then the better their chances for developing intercultural communicative competence. In order to review these results from another perspective, the ISS mean score of the interviewees was examined.

From an analysis of the results of the interviews, interviewees in the HT13 control group demonstrated low intercultural competence in recognizing the cross-cultural elements integrated in the scenarios and the case study. Moreover, they had the lowest ISS mean score (3.94) among the groups.

Having studied the modified course contents and scalable tasks, both experimental groups demonstrated a higher level of intercultural awareness and had better ability in



identifying the problems in the assigned tasks as compared to the HT13 control group. Yet VT14 experimental group 1, which had six interviewees obtained the highest level of intercultural competence, had slightly better results than HT14 experimental group 2, which had only four participants who achieved the highest level. This result was consistent with the total score of the eight factors obtained by the interviewees in the VT14 group (34) and the HT14 group (26) (see Table 14 in p.261). The ISS mean scores of the interviewees in these two groups also suggested similar results as the mean score of the VT14 group was 4.15 and 4.06 for the HT14 group, showing that the interviewees in the VT14 group had a slightly higher degree of sensitivity regarding intercultural communication.

Yet intercultural competence is a complex and holistic ability. When analyzing which specific factor or factors had the greatest influence on the acquisition of intercultural competence, no consistent conclusions could be drawn. According to the researcher's observations, even though the student's personal learning experience might help them develop their linguistic competence in the early stages of the course, it did not guarantee that it would further facilitate their acquisition of intercultural competence. Typical examples were Otto in VT14 experimental group 1, as well as Oscar and Elin in HT14 experimental group 2. This was also the case in relation to the motivation of the interviewees for studying Chinese. Even though there were examples in each group showing a positive correlation between the students' intercultural competence and their interests in Chinese culture and/or future career development, there were also cases suggesting contradictory results.

Other external factors, such as the influence of visiting or living in China and the influence of Chinese family members, friends and colleagues, could also have a strong impact on student learning. Since China is a large country with significant regional differences, there are diverse life styles, food preferences and language dialects. The cultural background of the student's Chinese friends and colleagues might reflect regional cultures in China which vary from the standard cross-cultural information provided in the course. For instance, during the interview, Dan from HT14 experimental group 2 expressed his concern regarding the invisible cultural rules which govern the Chinese system of address. Dan had visited China and observed that the cross-cultural information presented in the course could be applied to older people in China while it did not always match the behavior of young people in the cities. Due to this confusion, even though Dan was very interested in Chinese culture and was motivated in his studies, he did not always manage to identify the cross-cultural elements integrated in the scenarios. Elin is another example that is worth noting. Although she completed the scalable tasks, she did not apply the knowledge but followed her own personal experiences in China when answering the questions in the interview. For example, she insisted that younger people in China would talk to each other as in the dialogues written in scenario A and B. The cases of Dan and Elin illustrate that having contact with the target culture for a short period of time might generate a risk for students of Chinese who have limited knowledge as that can cause bias and confusion, thus affecting their intercultural learning.

The analysis of the interviews and the cultural questions indicates that students with higher ISS mean scores might also have more favorable personal and external factors

for learning Chinese. However, the development of the student's intercultural competence is a complicated process. It differs from student to student and no specific factor or factors could be identified as the key for enhancing this competence. For example, even though some students, such as Matt in the HT13 control group and Otto in HT14 experimental group 2, had more favorable factors than others, they still could not identify the cross-cultural elements in the tasks as well as their classmates.

## **Part 2 - Major Concerns regarding Language Studies**

The first question in this area aimed to determine the perception of the interviewees with regard to the differences between Chinese and Western languages. Another two questions were used to investigate which parts of the course the interviewees found the most interesting and which types of assignments were difficult for them. Their attitudes towards learning Chinese and their interests of study in the course could inevitably affect their ability to develop intercultural competence. As shown in Table 6 (in p.240), most of the interviewees in the HT13 control group focused on the linguistic aspects of Chinese and they concentrated on developing their pronunciation and grammatical skills, which they found difficult to master.

As compared to the HT13 control group, more interviewees in the two experimental groups regarded culture as the main difference between the Chinese and Western languages and they were most interested in studying aspects of culture and communication. According to the researcher's observation, the scalable tasks connected cultural learning to the grammar-oriented Chinese language course and helped inspire the students. Some interviewees found the cultural information provided in the tasks to

be very useful and relevant to their Chinese study and it reminded them of the important role of culture in language learning.

### **Part 3 - Integrated Cultural Questions**

In this part of the interview, the researcher wanted to determine the students' opinions regarding the cultural questions integrated into the assignments and the written exam.

With the exception of Joe, the rest of the interviewees in the HT13 control group believed that these cultural questions were relevant to their Chinese studies. Even though the control group did not study the scalable tasks, the interviewees commented that the cultural questions were easy as they could find most of the answers in their textbook. Some students also looked for information on the Internet and others may have consulted their Chinese family members, friends or colleagues.

All the interviewees in the two experimental groups agreed that the cultural questions were highly valuable with regard to their language learning. Unlike the HT13 group, Pia from VT14 experimental group 1 and four others from HT14 experimental group 2 pointed out that some cultural questions were difficult even though they had completed the scalable tasks. From the researcher's observation, these interviewees were not interculturally incompetent since they had a clear understanding of the issues. In reality, because they understood the complexity of the cultural elements, they found it difficult to apply their knowledge appropriately in the tasks (see Table 14, p.261).

A few additional questions regarding the scalable tasks were included for the two experimental groups. The implementation of the scalable tasks was greatly appreciated by the interviewees in these two groups. When they were encouraged to give

suggestions for improving the scalable tasks, the interviewees in the VT14 group had differing opinions about the length of the tasks while almost half of the HT14 group would like to have more information about some topics that they found interesting. For instance, Oscar would like to have learned more about the historical background of Chinese culture while Vicky would like to better understand the Chinese concept of “face”.

#### **Part 4 - Scenarios and Case Study**

There were three scenarios and one case study that the researcher discussed with the interviewees in the last part of the interview. The researcher assessed the students' intercultural competence as they were responding to the questions and attempting to explain the tasks. As presented in the section, only three interviewees in the HT13 control group understood the implicit Chinese turn-taking mechanism featured in the dialogues and only two of those who understood the mechanism were able to select and explain the Chinese appropriate answer in the case study (see Table 7, p.241).

Consequently, six interviewees in this group were ranked at level 1 on the intercultural competence scale which is the lowest level. As compared to the control group, the two experimental groups performed much better in this part of the interviews (see Table 14 in p.261). Many of the interviewees in these groups could identify the cross-cultural differences in the scenarios and explained their answers in the case study. For instance, Chris in HT14 experimental group 2 explained why many Swedish students tended to add an extra phrase or sentence after the proper reply, “不客气 Bù kèqi - Not at all”. His opinion helped the researcher understand the reasons behind the hybrid answers given in response to the cultural questions. After the interviews, six students in the

VT14 group were ranked at level 5, the highest level of the intercultural competence while two were placed at level 4. Similar results were found in HT14 experimental group 2 in which four students were categorized as level 5 and three were placed at level 4.

When examining the answers given to the scenarios, there was one issue that none of the students were able to properly identify. In scenario B, a Swedish student had to introduce his Chinese teacher to his Chinese classmate. Even though many students in the two experimental groups could identify the incorrect order of the introduction, no one was aware that the Swedish student had to address his Chinese classmate, in this social situation, using with her full name. Another difficult issue was the proper form of address for the teacher in scenario C. In this telephone call, only one interviewee in the HT13 control group and one in HT14 experimental group 2 were able to point out that the teacher's surname needed to be mentioned at the beginning of the conversation.

In summary, the findings from the interviews corresponded to the previous analysis of the cultural questions. The findings also shed light on some specific issues that were more difficult for students to understand and apply. For instance, in what degree the Swedish first-name basis and individualistic culture affect the Swedish student acquisition of intercultural competence in the CFL education is worth discussing in future research studies.

## CHAPTER SIX: RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

In light of the findings described in the previous chapter, this chapter will summarize the study and offer perspectives for future work in this academic field.

### 6.1 THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION THEORY IN CFL EDUCATION

Although the importance of enhancing intercultural communicative competence has been advocated in CFL education for more than a decade, research regarding teaching and acquiring intercultural competence in actual classrooms is still limited. The fundamental research question of this study is how to implement intercultural communication theory into an existing beginning-level university Chinese course. What are the challenges and limitations this study would encounter in attempting to achieve this educational goal?

#### *6.1.1 PROBLEMS WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION THEORY IN CFL EDUCATION*

Based on the findings and the researcher's personal working experience in CFL education, this study summarizes several crucial problems that can hinder educators from attempting the integration of intercultural communicative competence in Chinese language courses in Sweden.

Firstly, current beginning-level Chinese courses have their own syllabuses and curricula that must be followed. In order to modify the course contents so that the focus is placed

on intercultural communication, the teachers must obtain approval from the academic board in the institution. The administrative procedures might discourage educators from taking even the very first step.

Secondly, many beginning-level Chinese courses in Sweden have limited resources that can be directed toward intercultural studies. As discussed in Chapter Five, many beginning-level Chinese courses utilize grammar oriented textbooks (for instance, the DU, UX and UY textbooks) as the basis for the entire course. Even though the latest versions of both the DU and UY textbooks place more emphasis on cultural studies, information regarding Chinese culture is included at the end of the lessons as a supplement note. As observed by the researcher, this introductory approach of introducing Chinese culture appears to be insufficient with regard to developing the students' intercultural competence.

Thirdly, in order to add intercultural components to a grammar-oriented course, significant amount of additional work will be generated. This includes studies of the course contents, adjustments to the curriculum and modification of the teaching materials. Since most teachers in Sweden are not paid for research hours, they may not have the time or official authorization to make such changes.

Fourthly, the limited lecture time for each course in Sweden might discourage the teachers from attempting to integrate new components for to the course. For example, the beginning-level Chinese courses offered at the three universities included in this study (DU, UX and UY) include only two 90-minute lectures per week for full-time students. Consequently, the beginning-level Chinese students have very limited contact



with their teachers. Due to these limitations, most lectures are structured to emphasize linguistic training, the dominant component of the course, such as language structure, pronunciation drills and grammar. Time allocated for lectures at UX and UY must also include the teaching of reading and writing Chinese characters.

In addition to the above administrative considerations, both the limitations in research and practical examples might discourage educators from implementing any changes. The researcher observed, during visits to other universities, that the beginning-level Chinese courses are basically grammar oriented and that the concept of intercultural communicative competence in foreign language education is not widely recognized.

Unlike the courses offered by other universities, the Chinese language courses offered at DU are Internet-based distance education courses and do not require students to be physically present at the university. This unique characteristic of the courses increases the difficulty of implementing intercultural communication theory in the target course since the main interactions between students and teachers occur in a virtual synchronized classroom.

### *6.1.2 THE FLIPPED CLASSROOM APPROACH AND SCALABLE TASKS*

The researcher – who is also the teacher of the target Chinese 1 course - overcame these challenges and the inherent limitations in current CFL education. Firstly, permission for conducting an action research study in the Chinese 1 course was granted by the Chinese Department at DU. Secondly, the course contents were analysed by applying the modified Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor's framework. The course contents and materials were then revised to include training in intercultural competence. Unlike the

introductory approach suggested in the textbook, the components of intercultural competence were not simply added at the end of each lesson, but rather integrated into the entire language learning process. In fact, how to integrate the cross-cultural components without invalidating the original course curriculum or significantly increasing the student workload was the key challenge in this research study.

To overcome this challenge, a flipped classroom approach was utilized in this study. A flipped classroom approach aims to enhance student learning by altering the traditional educational settings where information and tasks are given to students outside class through different media (i.e., online video lessons) and then the students review and discuss the tasks in class. One of the advantages of the flipped classroom approach is the ability to utilize lecture time for additional active learning activities. Time limitations were one of the main constraints affecting this action research study, thus a new approach was required in order to integrate intercultural information and case studies successfully in the Chinese 1 course without significantly altering the original syllabus. Based on the flipped classroom approach, seven online pre-class lessons – called scalable tasks – were designed and produced while the curriculum was carefully adjusted so that the course would work in concert with the scalable tasks. After the modification, the revised course followed the original syllabus while the tasks were added as supplementary assignments.

Nonetheless the inclusion of the tasks would inevitably increase the workload for both teacher and students. Thus correctly balancing the workload became the researcher's second crucial challenge. The utilization of an interactive flipped classroom online

platform - [www.scalable-learning.com](http://www.scalable-learning.com) (hereafter referred to as Scalable-learning) – helped maintain a reasonable workload for both teachers and students and minimize any disruptions to the original course. Due to the fact that the scalable tasks were not included in the regular lectures and Scalable-learning enabled self-monitoring, no additional work was required of the teacher. For the students, the workload from the scalable tasks was not as demanding as other assignments since the only options were a “passing” or “failing” grade. As long as the students finished watching the videos and answered all the related questions, they would receive a passing grade.

The next challenges were how to define the concept of “culture” in the Chinese 1 course and how to integrate the intercultural elements into the course contents. As discussed in Chapter Two, the concept of “culture” in CFL education is difficult to define. The practical concept of “communicative culture” proposed by Zhang, Z. (1990, 1994) was utilized in this research study since this study endeavoured to enhance student intercultural competence in the target course. In practice, since the cross-cultural differences among the Chinese, Western and Swedish languages and their cultures can easily cause communication problems for learners, a new set of intercultural learning materials called scalable tasks was introduced and integrated into the target course. The scalable tasks were the major component of intercultural competence in the revised Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006) theoretical framework.

Since there were no practical studies regarding this implementation, the researcher first analysed the cross-cultural knowledge included in the textbook and identified the eight cultural elements which could affect effective intercultural communication. Then more

in-depth investigations were conducted to clarify the intercultural components that are implicit in course content for linguistic competence, such as the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic culture of the Chinese language.

After analysing the findings of the documentary data, the next step was to produce the scalable tasks – the tasks that were utilized to deepen student understanding of the eight cultural elements inherent in the textbook. Unlike other assignments for the Chinese 1 course, the scalable tasks were online video lessons that students were required to complete online. In the design of the scalable tasks, one important question concerned the amount of content that should be included. How detailed should the cross-cultural information be? How many questions should be included in each task? Since the attention span for many students is generally around 10-15 minutes, the researcher tried to keep the length of the scalable tasks within this time frame. Because the Chinese 1 course is a beginning-level course, the objective of the tasks is to provide an introduction to the Chinese cultural elements integrated into the course. The diverse regional differences in Chinese culture, unfortunately, could not be included due to the limited time requirements for each task. Based on the specific contents, two to seven questions including case studies were assigned to each task. After completing the questions, the students could check their comprehension of the cross-cultural information that was introduced in the task. If they still could not determine the correct answer, they could submit their questions for the teacher to answer or discuss in class.

### *6.1.3 A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE AT DU*

A short questionnaire was included in one of the assignments during the thirteenth week (out of 16 weeks in the term); the purpose of this questionnaire was to determine if, after adding the scalable tasks, the students perceived the workload in the course to be at the appropriate level. Since the Chinese 1 course is designed for part-time study, students are required to spend about 20 hours on course work each week. If they were required to work more than 25 hours per week, then the workload of the course would be regarded as overwhelming. The statistics showed that only 13% of the students in the HT13 control group worked more than 25 hours per week while only 6% of the students in VT14 experimental group 1 and 5% of the students in HT14 experimental group 2 expressed that they felt overworked. These findings suggest that even though the scalable tasks were given to the students in the experimental groups as supplementary tasks, their workload was not increased.

Besides the workload, it was also important to verify whether the level of difficulty and the length of the scalable tasks were correctly set. For this reason, a short questionnaire was added at the end of each task. According to the results of the questionnaires, 43% of the students in the VT14 group commented that the level of the difficulty was right and 33% found the tasks easy to complete. Similar statistics were found for the HT14 group where 44% of the students found the scalable tasks at the right level while 26% of the respondents thought the tasks were quite easy. Regarding the length of the tasks, more than 70% of the students in the VT14 group commented that the tasks were an acceptable length and 13% thought the tasks were a bit long. As for the HT14 group, 60% agreed that the length was at the right level and 17% thought it was a bit long. In light of the student comments, perhaps the level of difficulty should be modified and

the length slightly reduced. Despite a few negative comments, about 88% of the VT14 group and 78% of the HT14 group found the scalable tasks relevant and useful. The statistics obtained from the questionnaires correspond to the findings of the student interviews presented in Chapter Five.

To summarize, the findings, based on the interviews and student questionnaires, suggest that the implementation of the flipped classroom approach and scalable tasks was appreciated by the students in the experimental groups. Based on these positive results, this study could serve as a model for the implementation of intercultural communication theory into an existing course without requiring dramatic changes in the course content and syllabus. The cross-cultural knowledge and intercultural components were integrated throughout the entire course and not just added on as supplementary information.

## 6.2 ACHIEVING IMPROVED LEARNING OUTCOMES IN THE REVISED COURSE

As discussed above, most of the students in the two experimental groups were satisfied with the scalable tasks and found them valuable. Regardless, did these added resources help the students achieve better results in the course as compared to the HT13 control group?

As explained in Chapter Four, all of the subjects who participated in this action research study had limited or no previous knowledge of the Chinese language. However, there were two variables which might affect their learning of intercultural communication. The first critical factor was the students' intercultural sensitivity, such as their desire or motivation for learning, understanding, appreciating and accepting cultural differences.

Since the Chinese 1 course is a distance course, the synchronized online lectures made it difficult for the researcher to assess student affective ability. Due to this limitation, the ISS questionnaire was utilized. As noted in the findings regarding the ISS which is examined in Chapter Five, there was no significant difference in the mean scores between the groups, suggesting that the subjects enrolled in all three groups had a similar level of affective ability of intercultural communication.

The second variable was the revised course content and the supplementary scalable tasks. The basic difference between the control group and the experimental groups was that the experimental groups worked with the revised course. To assess the effect of this variable, the researcher computed a series of SPSS independent-samples t-tests to examine the mean scores the control group and the two experimental groups received on the cultural questions. These results suggest that there was no significant difference in the mean scores between the two experimental groups on the cultural questions.

When compared the experimental groups to the control group, a significant difference was found in the mean scores on the cultural questions since the experimental groups received 9 (from a total of 66) points more than the control group. Similar results were found when analysing the 46 cultural questions included in the assignments and the 20 additional questions integrated into the final written exam.

To conclude, the subjects in all of the groups shared common characteristics in their language learning objectives. As shown in Table 15, the significant difference between the groups was generated by the second variable in which the beginning-level Chinese

learners who studied the revised intercultural communication syllabus did achieve improved learning outcomes as compared to students in the traditional course.

**TABLE 15. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AMONG GROUPS**

	VT13 pilot group	HT13 control group	VT14 experimental group 1	HT14 experimental group 2
No. of Subjects	21	34	23	34
ISS (variable 1)	4.06	4.04	4.04	4.09
All Cultural Questions (variable 2)	---	36.18	45.43	45.09
- Assignments	---	26.32	32.91	33.24
- Exam	9.48	9.85	12.52	11.85

### 6.3 DEVELOPING HIGHER INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN THE REVISED COURSE

The higher mean score on the cultural questions obtained by the two experimental groups indicates a better ability in answering the questions. In order to assess whether the students in the experimental groups really had a higher intercultural competence in navigating a diverse set of social situations in a culturally appropriate manner than the control group, a more in-depth analysis was then conducted to examine the answers provided by the three groups of students.

In general most students do not have problems understanding the cross-cultural knowledge that is “visible” or explained in their textbook and thus they can apply this knowledge directly to the tasks. When checking the results of the data analysis, about 33% of the cultural questions were properly answered by all the groups and high mean scores were recorded. Nonetheless due to the implementation of the scalable tasks, the two experimental groups received higher mean scores than the control group.



As for the remaining 67% of cultural questions, students in the control group did not provide appropriate answers. Scalable tasks were thus produced to explain the implied intercultural knowledge to the two experimental groups. After studying the more in-depth explanations for the identified eight cross-cultural elements integrated throughout the course, the experimental groups were able to obtain high mean scores with regard to 29% of these remaining cultural questions. For instance, they were more aware of the Chinese kinship appellation system and could introduce their family members in a culturally correct order. They were also more sensitive to the Chinese “mutual reciprocity principle” and many students provided more modest responses to compliments.

Nevertheless, the experimental groups had difficulties similar to those encountered by the control group when answering the remaining 38% of the cultural questions. All the cultural questions in this category were more abstract and subtle thus requiring more careful responses. For example, the culturally appropriate manner in which to address a Chinese friend and a Chinese teacher in different social settings; the culturally correct manner in which native Chinese speakers alternate between roles of speaker and hearer; the culturally appropriate way to respond to an invitation; and correctly writing a letter in Chinese, these are not simple tasks for beginning-level students of Chinese.

In addition to the scalable tasks, there are other factors that could affect student performance with regard to the cultural questions. For instance, many students in the research groups did not perform as well as possible due to the time constraints during the final written exam. In addition, the interviews revealed that having direct contact

with the target culture, such as staying in China for a period of time or having Chinese relatives, friends and colleagues, could produce both positive and negative effects with regard to language learning. According to the researcher's observations, students who had stayed in China or had contact with Chinese people outside of class were often more sensitive to cross-cultural situations and more interested in discussing the intercultural differences between languages and cultures. However, some of them would question the cross-cultural knowledge introduced in the textbook or the scalable tasks since they had different personal experiences. Sometimes this negative influence could be substantiated since the students simply refused to make use of the knowledge provided in the course. This phenomenon was confirmed in the student interviews conducted at the end of the course.

Yet the influence of these factors does not invalidate the overall results of the student performance among the groups. Both the findings based on the data analyses of the cultural questions and the student interviews confirmed that the beginning-level Chinese students in the experimental groups, who followed the revised syllabus, had a higher competence level in appropriately navigating intercultural interactions as compared to the control group (see Table 7, 10 and 13 in pp.241, 250 and 259).

#### 6.4 FUTURE RESEARCH PLANNING

As a research methodology, one of the strengths of action research is to allow the researcher, who is also the teacher or participant of the study, to solve practical problems in a real situation. As illustrated by the results in the previous sections, this research study successfully enriched intercultural knowledge, helping students achieve

a higher level of language proficiency in intercultural communications and develop higher intercultural competence. During this process, the researcher has summarized some difficulties encountered in each research cycle. Thanks to the cyclical nature of action research, the researcher has the opportunities to develop and improve her teaching by analysing the results at each stage. Through constantly reviewing and modifying the present Chinese 1 course, the researcher has become more confident in implementing intercultural communicative theory into CFL education. After the successful completion of the third cycle in this action research study, the researcher has two future research plans.

The first plan endeavours to further improve the present implementation of the intercultural communicative theory in the present Chinese 1 course. To continue with the five phases of the fourth cycle, the researcher will begin by modifying the course contents and scalable tasks based on the data analysis findings and student recommendations.

As presented earlier, the responses to the questionnaires on the scalable tasks indicated that about 30% of all of the students felt that the tasks were too easy and 15% thought the video lessons were slightly too long. Nonetheless, since about 15% of the students enrolled in the course were advanced Swedish learners of Chinese and another 15% were ethnically Chinese students, they might have found the scalable tasks too simple and possibly too long. Consequently, their comments need to be carefully analysed for future course improvements. Furthermore, it is essential for the researcher to revise and to modify the most difficult cultural concepts, such as the Chinese address system, turn-

taking mechanism, and modest responses and so on. In practice, the related cross-cultural differences need to be clarified with better explanations and examples. The hybrid answers to some questions are valuable resources for the teaching as they offer insight into possible cross-cultural misconceptions that Swedish students might have.

Along with revision of the scalable tasks, additional active learning activities should be implemented in class. The research interviews revealed that previous personal experiences, such as trips to China or relationships with Chinese people, could have a strong influence on the student responses to the scalable tasks and their perception of intercultural communication in the Chinese language. In order to correct any bias or misunderstandings of Chinese culture, interactive activities in class, such as case studies and problem solving tasks, are needed to encourage discussions of cross-cultural differences between Chinese and the Western cultures.

It is important to note that culture is dynamic and not static in nature. Due to the rapid development of information technology, global marketing and increased worldwide mobility, an increasing number of Western ideas and concepts have begun to influence Chinese culture and society, especially since the early 1980's. This phenomenon is more apparent in the large cities than the rural areas as young people in the cities are exposed to foreign movies, music and arts through the mass media. This Western influence has also added to the complexity of regional cultures and widened the gap between cities and rural areas in China. Thus, these changes generate a challenge to the current CFL curriculum since the cultural topics included in the textbooks are generally "traditional" and may not be representative of contemporary Chinese society. For

instance, the widespread use of computers and cellular phones allows people to communicate by email and text messages rather than by letters. Despite these changes, not all CFL textbooks provide information, for example, on how to write emails in Chinese. Among the three textbooks analysed in this dissertation, only the latest edition of the DU textbook discusses this topic. Thus balancing modern and traditional Chinese culture is a crucial aspect of any future modifications to the course.

The second future research plan will be devoted to intermediate and advanced levels of CFL education. As compared to the beginning-level courses, more “communicative culture” is inherent in higher levels of CFL education and thus more efforts are needed to include the components of intercultural competence as proposed by the modified theoretical framework. The findings of this action research for the beginning-level course could provide a good reference for designing future action research studies for higher level courses.

## 6.5 FINAL CONCLUSIONS

In the course of this action research study, the difficulties for promoting intercultural competence in CFL education in Sweden have become clear.

First of all, many institutions that offer CFL education in Sweden follow traditional teaching methods and currently are not motivated to make a change. Since the ICCLE (Hanban, 2008) perspectives for CFL education is a suggested theoretical framework, universities have the right to decide the specific curricula. Nevertheless, due to the increasing demand calling for the promotion of intercultural communication, the researcher believes that in the near future, more and more institutions will begin to offer

intercultural teacher training and curricula revisions which are designed to encompass this new trend in CFL education.

As educators teaching in Swedish institutions, many Chinese language teachers are not yet prepared for this educational reform. Although most teachers understand that CFL education should be a bridge linking Chinese and Swedish culture and that culture is an essential part of the language, their teaching focuses mainly on developing linguistic competence. Cross-cultural knowledge is just a supplementary part of the course. After visiting two other Swedish universities, this study confirmed that traditional grammar oriented courses are still dominant in this academic field. Despite the fact that the promotion of intercultural competence in CFL, and other foreign language courses, has been advocated by the ICCLE (Hanban, 2008) in China and the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) in Europe, intercultural competence is still a new concept to many teachers. As a first step, there is a need to introduce the concepts and theories of intercultural competence to the teachers. Only after these concepts have been understood will teachers begin to evaluate their teaching from an intercultural perspective and eventually modify their teaching for this educational purpose.

Even though the ICCLE (Hanban, 2008) has provided some guidelines regarding which cultural elements and topics that should be included in each CFL educational level, the lack of practical examples and reference materials present a large challenge to educators attempting such a change. To help close this research gap, this action research study endeavours to serve as an empirical investigation verifying the possibility of implementing intercultural communicative theory into a present distance CFL course

and evaluating its effectiveness. The positive results obtained from this research study illustrate that when “culture” is not regarded as a separate language skill and is integrated in language learning through the introduction of the component of intercultural competence, student communication skills can be enhanced and developed. Therefore, this research study could be a reference for educators who are interested in this new educational focus. For instance, the application of the flipped classroom approach and scalable tasks could be practical examples for designing more cultural relevant teaching materials in this academic field. In addition, since the research subjects were Swedish students and the study was conducted at a Swedish University, the Swedish socio-cultural background and content in this study reflects an important European perspective. Being one of the empirical studies in this academic arena, it can serve as a reference for comparative studies of CFL education in China and other countries around the world.

Last but not least, owing to the fact that there are limited resources and examples for implementing intercultural competence theory in CFL education, the researcher suggests that a research corpus in this academic field is needed to encourage the sharing of resources among scholars. As more and more educators, researchers and teachers contribute their experiences in this newly established academic domain, progress will be facilitated. Consequently, the data collected in this corpus will be a valuable resource for the future development of CFL educational curricula, course materials and methodologies for the acquisition of intercultural competence.

## APPENDIX ONE: ISS QUESTIONNAIRE

# QUESTIONNAIRE FOR KI1024 RESEARCH *ARE YOU INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVE?*

Below is a series of statements concerning intercultural communication. There are no right or wrong answers. Please work quickly and record your first impression by indicating the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement. Thank you for your cooperation.

5 = strongly agree

4 = agree

3 = uncertain

2 = disagree

1 = strongly disagree

Please put the number corresponding to your answer in the blank before the statement.

(    ) 1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.

Jag tycker om att träffa människor från andra kulturer.

(    ) 2. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.

Jag tycker människor från andra kulturer är trångsynta.

(    ) 3. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.

Jag känner mig ganska säker på mig själv när jag träffa människor från andra kulturer.

(    ) 4. I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures.



Jag tycker det är svårt att tala inför människor från andra kulturer.

- ( ) 5. I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures.

Jag vet alltid vad jag ska säga när jag träffa människor från andra kulturer.

- ( ) 6. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.

Jag kan vara precis så sällskaplig som jag vill när jag träffa människor från andra kulturer.

- ( ) 7. I don't like to be with people from different cultures.

Jag vill inte vara tillsammans med människor från andra kulturer.

- ( ) 8. I respect the values of people from different cultures.

Jag respekterar värderingar som människor från andra kulturer har.

- ( ) 9. I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.

Jag blir lätt upprörd när jag träffa människor från andra kulturer.

- ( ) 10. I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.

Jag känner mig säker på mig själv när jag träffa människor från andra kulturer.

- ( ) 11. I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally-distinct counterparts.

Jag brukar vänta ett tag innan jag bildar mig en uppfattning om en person med tydligt märkbara kulturella värderingar.

( ) 12. I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.

Jag tappar ofta modet när jag är tillsammans med människor från andra kulturer.

( ) 13. I am open-minded to people from different cultures.

Jag är rak och öppen mot människor från andra kulturer.

( ) 14. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.

Jag är mycket observant när jag träffa människor från andra kulturer.

( ) 15. I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.

Jag känner mig ofta värdelös när jag träffa människor från andra kulturer.

( ) 16. I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.

Jag respekterar det sätt på vilket människor från andra kulturer uppför sig.

( ) 17. I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.

Jag försöker få fram så mycket information jag kan när jag träffa människor från andra kulturer.

( ) 18. I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.

Jag är inte benägen att acceptera de åsikter människor från andra kulturer har.

( ) 19. I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.

När jag samtalar med en person med tydligt märkbara kulturella värderingar är jag uppmärksam på underförstådda åsikter.

( ) 20. I think my culture is better than other cultures. Jag anser att min kultur är bättre än andra kulturer.

( ) 21. I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interaction.

Jag ger ofta positiva svar när jag samtalar med någon från en annan kultur.

( ) 22. I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons. Jag undviker situationer där jag måste ha att göra med personer med tydligt märkbara kulturella värderingar.

( ) 23. I often show my culturally-distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues.

Jag visar ofta förståelse för personer med tydligt märkbara kulturella värderingar genom verbala eller icke-verbala signaler.



( ) 24. I have a feeling of enjoyment towards differences between my culturally-distinct counterpart and me.

Jag känner glädje när jag upplever kulturellt skillnader mellan mig och en person från en annan kultur.

## Appendix Two: Sample of Textbook materials with Culture element A

### – The Chinese kinship appellation system

**LESSON 2**      **Family**  
第二课      家庭  
Dì èr kè      Jiā tíng



**◆ LEARNING OBJECTIVES**  
In this lesson, you will learn to use Chinese to

- Employ basic kinship terms;
- Describe a family photo;
- Ask about someone's profession;
- Say some common professions.

**◆ RELATE AND GET READY**  
In your own culture/community—

1. What is the typical family structure?
2. Does an adult consider his/her parents' house his/her home?
3. Do adults live with their parents?
4. Do people mention their father or mother first when talking about family members?
5. Is it culturally appropriate to ask about people's professions upon first meeting them?

Semantic culture: the usage of prefix 大, and no. before kinship term

Intercultural competence: 1. the difference between Chinese and Swedish family, 2. the proper order for introducing individuals or family members

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### Dialogue I: Looking at a Family Photo



(Wang Peng is in Gao Wenzhong's room and points to a picture on the wall.)

高文中，那是你的<sup>①</sup>照片吗？

(They both walk toward the picture and then stand in front of it.)

是。这是我爸爸，这是我妈妈。

这<sup>②</sup>个<sup>③</sup>女孩子是谁<sup>④</sup>？

她是我姐姐。

这个男孩子是你弟弟吗？

#### LANGUAGE NOTES

① In colloquial Chinese, 这 can also be pronounced as zhè and 那 as nài if followed by a measure word or a numeral and a measure word.



不是，他是我大哥的儿子。



你大哥有女儿吗？



他没有女儿。

(Wang Peng is in Gao Wenzhong's room and points to a picture on the wall.)



Gāo Wénzhōng, nà shì nǐ de zhàopiàn ma?

(They both walk toward the picture and then stand in front of it.)



Shì. Zhè shì wǒ bàba, zhè shì wǒ māma.



Zhè ge nǚ hái zi shì shéi?



Tā shì wǒ jiějie.



Zhè ge nán hái zi shì nǐ dìdi ma?



Bú shì, tā shì wǒ dàgē de érzi.



Nǐ dàgē yǒu nǚ'ér ma?



Tā méiyǒu nǚ'ér.

② "Son" in Chinese is 儿子 (érzi), and 儿子 (érzi, son) cannot be replaced by 男孩子 (nán hái zi, boy). "Daughter" is 女儿 (nǚ'ér), and 女儿 (nǚ'ér) cannot be interchanged with 女孩子 (nǚ hái zi, girl).



### VOCABULARY

1. 那	nà	pr	that
2. 的	de	p	(a possessive or descriptive particle) [See Grammar 1.]
3. 照片	zhàopiàn	n	picture; photo
4. 这	zhè	pr	this
5. 爸爸	bàba	n	father, dad
6. 妈妈	māma	n	mother, mom
7. 个	gè/ge	m	(measure word for many common everyday objects) [See Grammar 2.]
8. 女	nǚ	adj	female

## Grammar

### 1. The Particle 的 (de) (I)

To indicate a possessive relationship, the particle 的 appears between the “possessor” and the “possessed.” To that extent, it is equivalent to the “’s” structure in English. For example: 老师的名字 (lǎoshī de míngzì) = teacher’s name. The particle 的 (de) is often omitted in colloquial speech after a personal pronoun and before a kinship term. Therefore, we say “王朋的妈妈” (Wáng Péng de māma, Wang Peng’s mother) but “我妈妈” (wǒ māma, my mother). See also Grammar 3 in Lesson 3.

### 2. Measure Words (I)

In Chinese a numeral is usually not followed immediately by a noun. Rather, a measure word is inserted between the number and the noun, as in (1), (2), and (3) below. Similarly, a measure word is often inserted between a demonstrative pronoun and a noun, as in (4) and (5) below. There are over one hundred measure words in Chinese, but you may hear only two or three dozen in everyday speech. Many nouns are associated with special measure words, which often bear a relationship to the meaning of the given noun.

个 (gè / ge) is the single most common measure word in Chinese. It is also sometimes used as a substitute for other measure words.

① 一个人

yí ge rén  
(a person)

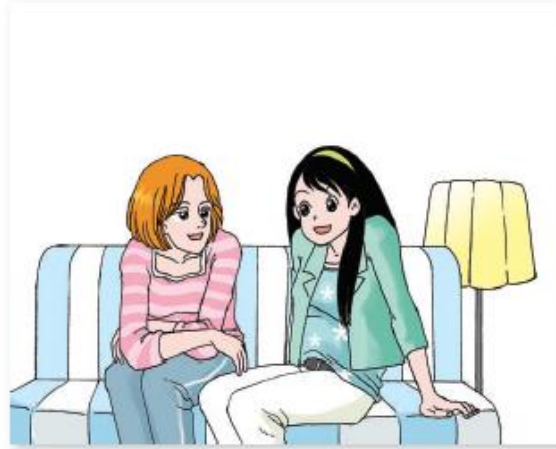
② 一个学生

yí ge xuésheng  
(a student)

③ 一个老师

yí ge lǎoshī  
(a teacher)

## Dialogue II: Asking about Someone's Family



白英爱，你家<sup>①</sup>有<sup>②</sup>几<sup>③</sup>口<sup>④</sup>人？

我家有六口人。我爸爸、我妈妈、一<sup>⑤</sup>个哥哥、两<sup>⑥</sup>个妹妹和我<sup>⑦</sup>。李友，你家有几口人？

我家有五口人。爸爸、妈妈、大姐、二姐和我。你爸爸妈妈做什么工作？


### LANGUAGE NOTES


① In Chinese, 家 (jiā) can refer to one's family as well as one's home. So one can point to his or her family picture and say “我家有四口人” (Wǒ jiā yǒu sì kǒu rén; There are four people in my family), and one can also point to his or her house and say “这是我家” (Zhè shì wǒ jiā; This is my home).

② 口 (kǒu) is the idiomatic measure word in northern China for the number of family members. In the south, people say 个 (gè /ge) instead.


See next page.





 我爸爸是律师，妈妈是英文老师，哥哥、妹妹都<sup>②</sup>是大学生。


 我妈妈也是老师，我爸爸是医生。

 Bào Yīng'ài, nǐ jiā<sup>①</sup> yǒu<sup>②</sup> jǐ kǒu<sup>③</sup> rén?

 Wǒ jiā yǒu liù kǒu rén. Wǒ bàba, wǒ māma, yǐ<sup>④</sup> ge gēge, liǎng<sup>⑤</sup> ge mèimei hé<sup>⑥</sup> wǒ<sup>⑦</sup>. Lǐ Yǒu, nǐ jiā yǒu jǐ kǒu rén?

 Wǒ jiā yǒu wǔ kǒu rén: bàba, māma, dàjiě, èrjiě hé wǒ. Nǐ bàba māma zuò shénme gōngzuò?

 Wǒ bàba shì lǚshī, māma shì Yīngwén laoshī, gēge, mèimei dōu<sup>⑧</sup> shì dàxuéshēng.

 Wǒ māma yě shì laoshī, wǒ bàba shì yīshēng.

- ① The numeral 一 (yī, one) is pronounced in the first tone (yī) when it stands alone or comes at the end of a phrase or sentence. Otherwise, its pronunciation changes according to the following rules:
  - (a) Before a fourth-tone syllable, it becomes second tone: 一个 (yí gè).
  - (b) Before a first-, second- or third-tone syllable, it is pronounced in the fourth tone, e.g., 一张 (yì zhāng, a sheet), 一盘 (yì pán, one plate), 一本 (yì běn, one volume).
- ② Unlike *and*, 和 (hé) cannot link two clauses or two sentences: 我爸爸是老师，\*和我妈妈是医生 (Wǒ bàba shì laoshī, \*hé wǒ māma shì yīshēng).
- ③ The pause mark, or series comma, 、 is often used to link two, three or even more parallel words or phrases, e.g., 爸爸、妈妈、两个妹妹和我 (bàba, māma, liǎng ge mèimei hé wǒ; dad, mom, two younger sisters and I). For further discussion of this punctuation mark, see Language Note 1 for Dialogue I in Lesson 4.



### VOCABULARY

1.	家	jiā	n	family; home
2.	几	jǐ	nu	how many; some; a few
3.	口	kǒu	m	(measure word for number of family members)
4.	哥哥	gēge	n	older brother
5.	两	liǎng	nu	two; a couple of [See Grammar 6.]

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B: 王先生没有弟弟。

Wáng xiānsheng méiyǒu dìdì.

(Mr. Wang doesn't have any younger brothers.)

② A: 我有三个姐姐，你呢？

Wǒ yǒu sān ge jiějie, nǐ ne?

(I have three older sisters. How about you?)

B: 我没有姐姐。

Wǒ méiyǒu jiějie.

(I don't have any older sisters.)

## Language Practice

### A. 谁 (shéi, who)

Look at the pictures, and work with a partner to find out who they are.

EXAMPLE:



A: 这个人/男孩子是谁？ A: Zhè ge rén/nán hái zi shì shéi?

B: 这个人/男孩子是王朋。 B: Zhè ge rén/nán hái zi shì Wáng Péng.



### B. 有/没有 (yǒu/méiyǒu, have/do not have)

Ask and answer the following questions based on the text of Lesson 2 and your own situation.

EXAMPLE:

高大哥◇女儿

Gāo dàgē ◇ nǚ'ér

## Culture Highlights

① In pairing up kinship terms, the Chinese customarily say the term for the male before that for the female: 爸爸妈妈 (bàba māma, dad and mom), 哥哥姐姐 (gēge jiějie, older brothers and sisters), and 弟弟妹妹 (dìdi mèimei, younger brothers and sisters). People seldom say 妈妈爸爸 (māma bàba, mom and dad), 姐姐哥哥 (jiějie gēge, older sisters and brothers), 妹妹弟弟 (mèimei dìdi, younger sisters and brothers). In pairing up kinship terms for the same gender, the one with seniority is mentioned first: 哥哥弟弟 (gēge dìdi, older and younger brothers), 姐姐妹妹 (jiějie mèimei, older and younger sisters). People seldom say 弟弟哥哥 (dìdi gēge, younger and older brothers) or 妹妹姐姐 (mèimei jiějie, younger and older sisters).

② Siblings are 兄弟姐妹 (xiōng dì jiě mèi). 你有兄弟姐妹吗? (Nǐ yǒu xiōng dì jiě mèi ma?) is the way to ask, “Do you have any siblings?” Eldest siblings are called 大哥 (dàgē, eldest brother) and 大姐 (dàjiě, eldest sister); the youngest are 小弟 (xiǎodì, youngest brother) and 小妹 (xiǎomèi, youngest sister). The rest are ranked according to their birth order using numerals, e.g., 二姐 (èrjiě, second eldest sister), 三弟 (sāndì, third oldest younger brother). Younger siblings generally do not refer to their elder brothers and sisters by their names but use the appropriate kinship terms instead.



一家八口人  
yì jiā bā kǒu rén

## APPENDIX THREE: SAMPLE OF SCALABLE TASK – FAMILY

### - The Chinese kinship appellation system

This task is the contents of intercultural competence for lesson 2. It gives in-depth cultural knowledge of the Chinese kinship appellation system. The task was created as a video and can be accessed through the link below.

<http://users.du.se/~whi/ScalableMovies-VT14/IC-02-Fronter/IC-02-Fronter.html>



## Family Structure and Kinship Terms

### Compare Chinese to your own culture

1. What is the typical family structure?
2. Does an adult consider his/her parents' house as his/her home?
3. Do adults live with their parents?
4. Do people mention their father or mother first when talking about their family members?

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## About Chinese Family



1. Chinese family is patriarchal
  - Children are given their father's surname
  - Father is dominant in the family
2. Concept of home
  - All family members live together
  - Their parents' house is their home before marriage
3. Adults live with their parents
  - If they can afford to buy/rent an apartment they will move out, usually when they get married.

4

## About Chinese Family

4. Introducing family members – immediate family

- Single men/women: parents and siblings
- Married men/women: your spouse and children
- *Pay attention: married men/women will most likely introduce their parents as well if they were asked to introduce all family members in their patrilineal/ matrilineal descent line.*

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## About Chinese Kinship Terms

- Immediate family

**Example 1**

The diagram illustrates a family unit. At the top, a man and a woman are shown. Below them are five children, each with a label box containing their name in Chinese characters, Pinyin, and English translation.

Family Member	Chinese Characters	Pinyin	English Translation
Daughter	贝贝 (贝贝)	Bèibèi	1st child
Son	贝贝 (贝贝)	Bèibèi	2nd child
Wang Zhipeng	王智鹏 (王智鹏)	Wáng Zhìpéng	4th child
Daughter	贝贝 (贝贝)	Bèibèi	3rd child
Daughter	贝贝 (贝贝)	Bèibèi	5th child

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## About Chinese Kinship Terms

- Immediate family

**Example 2**

Diagram illustrating Chinese kinship terms for Example 2:

- Grandfather (爷爷) / Geyeye (geye)
- Grandmother (奶奶) / Nainai (nainai)
- Father (爸爸) / Baba (baba)
- Mother (妈妈) / Mama (mama)
- Son (儿子) / Erzi (erzi)
- Daughter (女儿) / Nvzi (nvzi)
- Uncle (叔叔) / Shushu (shushu)
- Aunt (阿姨) / Aayi (aayi)
- Brother (兄弟) / Xiongdi (xiongdi)
- Sister (姐妹) / Jiejie (jiejie)
- Wang Zhipeng (王智朋) / Wang Zhipeng (Wangzhipeng)
- Li Xing (李兴) / Li Xing (Lixing)
- Li Xiang (李响) / Li Xiang (Lixiang)
- Li Xing (李兴) / Li Xing (Lixing)
- Li Xing (李兴) / Li Xing (Lixing)

## About Chinese Kinship Terms

- Immediate family

**Example 3**

Diagram illustrating Chinese kinship terms for Example 3:

- Grandfather (爷爷) / Geyeye (geye)
- Grandmother (奶奶) / Nainai (nainai)
- Father (爸爸) / Baba (baba)
- Mother (妈妈) / Mama (mama)
- Son (儿子) / Erzi (erzi)
- Daughter (女儿) / Nvzi (nvzi)
- Uncle (叔叔) / Shushu (shushu)
- Aunt (阿姨) / Aayi (aayi)
- Brother (兄弟) / Xiongdi (xiongdi)
- Sister (姐妹) / Jiejie (jiejie)
- Li Xiaohong (李晓红) / Li Xiaohong (Lixiaohong)
- Li Xing (李兴) / Li Xing (Lixing)
- Li Xiang (李响) / Li Xiang (Lixiang)
- Li Xing (李兴) / Li Xing (Lixing)
- Li Xing (李兴) / Li Xing (Lixing)

## Case Study 1



- Look at the introduction made by Elin:
  - Wǒ jiā yǒu liù gè rén, māma, bàba, mèimei, jiějie, gēge hé wǒ.
  - 哥，姐姐，妹妹，爸爸，妈妈，人个六有家我  
我和哥。 *There are 6 people in my family, mother, father, little sister, elder sister, elder brother and me.*
- What was wrong in this introduction?
  - Chinese custom when introducing kinship terms:
    - Male members before female
    - Elder members before younger

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## Case Study 2



- Look at the introduction made by John:
  - Wǒ jiā yǒu qī gè rén, māma, bàba, bàba de nǚ péngyǒu, dìdì hé wǒ. Wǒ yǒu yī zhī gǒu, BōBō.
  - 我家有七个人，妈妈，爸爸，爸爸的女朋友，  
弟弟和我。我有一只狗，BōBō。  
*There are 7 people in my family, mother, father, father's friends, little brother and me. I have one dog, BōBō.*
- What was wrong in this introduction?
  - According to Chinese custom, the follow categories are not as family members:
    - Boyfriend/girlfriend
    - Living partners (Sambo)
    - Pets in Chinese family

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## Intercultural Communication Talking about Chinese Family

### Summary

- Chinese family is patriarchal
- Adult children live with their parents
- Single men/women: parents –siblings
- Married men/women: spouse - children

### Remember

1. Include yourself when counting your family members
2. Introduce male members before female
3. Introduce elder members before younger
4. boyfriend, girlfriend, living partner (Sambo) and pets are NOT counted as family members

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## Thank You for Watching

- Welcome to give me your comments about this slide presentation.

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## APPENDIX FOUR: CULTURAL QUESTIONS INTEGRATED IN ASSIGNMENTS AND FINAL WRITTEN EXAM

### Cultural Question Integrated in Assignments

#### **Spoken Assignment 2**

##### **An introduction to myself and my family**

Please write a short script to introduce yourself and your family with what you've learned so far. Things that you can talk about are:

- Your surname and full name
- Your profession, or whether you are a student or a teacher, or neither
- Your nationality
- How many people are there in your family, who are they (father, mother, elder brothers and sisters, etc.)
- Your family members' nationality & professions

For example, you can begin your introduction as the following:

Lǎoshī, nǐ hǎo! Wǒ xìng ...  
老师, 你好! 我姓。。。

#### **Written Assignment 4**

##### **Fråga 1.17. Qíng3 wén4, nǐ3 jiā1 yǒu3 jǐ3 ge rén2?**

- Please write down how many family members in YOUR family.
- Please write down your answer in pinyin + tone mark.

For example:

Wǒ3 jiā1 yǒu3 sì4 ge rén2. Wǒ3 bà4ba, mā1ma, dì4dì he2 wǒ3.

#### **Written Assignment 10**

##### **4. Qíngjǐng duìhuà 情景对话 (45 分)**

Read the text and complete the dialogues in Chinese according to the scenarios.

(This exercise is a review of some topics you have learned from this course so far.)

David Karlsson (大卫·卡森 Dàwèi·Kǎsēn) is a Swedish. He is now 23 years old and studying Chinese language in Dalarna University (达拉纳大学 Dálānà dàxué) in Falun (法伦 Fǎlún).

David's parents do not live in Falun. They live in Borlänge (伯朗格 Bólǎnggé). His father is an English teacher; his mother is a nurse. He has one elder brother and one elder sister. They

both work in the library in Falun. David's little sister is a university student. She studies German in Stockholm (斯德哥尔摩 Sīdégē'ěrmó).

David has a girlfriend and her name is Lina (琳娜 Línà). David also has a dog which is called Bosse (波瑟 Bōsè).

David got to know a Chinese classmate in the university. Her name is Chen Mei-Li (陈美丽 Chén Měili). Mei-Li is 22 years old and she studies English and Swedish. She came from Beijing (北京 Běijīng), China. Mei-Li is the only child at home. Her father is a doctor. Her mother does not work.

Mei-Li introduced two of her Chinese classmates to David. One is called Zhang Da-Ming (张大明 Zhāng Dàmíng). He is 28 years old and has a son, Peter (彼得 Bǐde), who is 4 years old. Another is called Wang Xiao-Ting (王晓婷 Wáng Xiǎotíng). She is 20 years old.

**Scenario A:** At the first day of school David met Mei-Li and they introduced themselves to each other in Chinese. Write the dialogues between David and Mei-Li. You can prolong the dialogue if it is necessary. (15 分)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**Scenario B:** Mei-Li and David talked about their family, such as who they are, their occupation, etc. (12 分)

美丽: 你家有几个人?

6. 大卫:
7. 美丽:
8. 大卫:
9. 美丽:

**Scenario D:** David wanted to treat Mei-Li to dinner tonight. Mei-Li asked David ... (3 分)

美丽: 为什么你请客?

10. 大卫:

**Scenario C:** Mei-Li praised David that he speaks Chinese very well. (3 分)

美丽: 你说中文说得很好!

11. 大卫:

**Scenario E:** David asked Mei-Li to help him reviewing Chinese grammars and Chinese characters on Sunday. (6 分)

12. 大卫:  
    美丽: 好的。但是你得请我喝咖啡。  
13. 大卫:

**Scenario G:** Mei-Li introduced David to her friend, Wang Xiao-Ting (王晓婷 Wáng Xiǎotíng). (6分)

15. 美丽:  
    大卫(to Wang): 你好! 认识你, 很高兴!  
16. 王晓婷:

### 5. Xiězuò liànxí 写作练习 (15 分)

You have some questions regarding your Chinese study and you want to see your teacher tomorrow. Therefore, you make a phone call to your teacher. Write a dialogue between you and your teacher on the phone. \*Please answer with Chinese characters.

## Written Assignment 13

### 6. Qíngjǐng duìhuà 情景对话 (45 分)

Read the text and complete the dialogues in Chinese according to the scenarios.  
(This exercise is a review of some topics you have learned from this course so far. In addition, it was designed to examine how much you know about the Chinese language and its culture. Information regarding this part can be found in [scalablelearning.com](http://scalablelearning.com))

David Karlsson (大卫·卡森 Dàwèi·Kǎsēn) is a Swedish and he is now studying Chinese language at Dalarna University (达拉纳大学 Dálānà dàxué) in Falun (法伦 Fǎlún). David has a Chinese teacher. She is called 何月清 (Hé Yuèqīng).

David knows three Chinese students. They are Chen Mei-Li (陈美丽 Chén Měilì), Zhang Da-Ming (张大明 Zhāng Dàmíng) and Wang Xiao-Ting (王晓婷 Wáng Xiǎotíng). The Chinese students are studying English and Swedish there. Here is the information of the Chinese students.

陈美丽: 女, 22 岁, 中国人(北京), 大学生。 爸爸: 50 岁, 医生。 妈妈: 50 岁, 家庭主妇。 Jiāting zhǔfù (house wife)	大卫·卡森: 男, 23 岁, 瑞典人, 大学生。 爸爸: 60 岁, 工人。 Gōngrén (worker) 妈妈: 58 岁, 工人。 哥哥: 30 岁, 在图书馆工作。 姐姐: 26 岁, 在图书馆工作。 妹妹: 21 岁, 大学生。
王晓婷: 女, 20 岁, 中国人(北京), 大学生。	张大明: 男, 28 岁, 中国人(香港), 大学生。

爸爸：54岁，大学教授。Dàxué jiàoshòu (University Professor) 妈妈：52岁，工程师。Gōngchéngshī (engineer) 奶奶：75岁，家庭主妇。	太太：27岁，老师。 儿子：4岁。
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**Scenario A:** Chen Mei-Li had some questions about her studies, so she called her friend, Wang Xiao-Ting for help. When the call went through, she heard ... (3 分)

王晓婷: 喂?

1. 陈美丽:

**Scenario B:** David met Zhang Da-Ming and his son in the supermarket. He wonders how old his son is. He asked Zhang Da-Ming's son ... (3 分)

2. 大卫:

张大明的儿子: 我 4 岁。

**Scenario C:** David invited Mei-Li's family to have dinner on the weekend. David kindly offered Mei-Li's mother something to drink. David asked her ... (6 分)

3. 大卫:

4. 陈美丽的妈妈:

**Scenario D:** Mei-Li's mother is a talkative person and she was eager to chat with David. If you were Mei-Li's mother, what would you like to chat with David? Please write down this question in Chinese. (3 分)

For example: 你今年多大?

5. 陈美丽的妈妈:

**Scenario E:** After dinner, Mei-Li showed David some of her calligraphy. David was amazed by Mei-Li beautiful Chinese handwriting. (3 分)

大卫: 你写汉字写得太好了!

6. 陈美丽:

**Scenario F:** Mei-Li helped David prepare his test a few days ago. David wanted to thank her and said ... (3 分)

大卫: 谢谢你帮助我复习。我请你吃晚饭吧!

7. 陈美丽:

**Scenario G:** In an academic conference, how would David introduce Zhang Da-Ming to the others in Chinese? (3 分)

8. 大卫:

**Scenario H:** One day when David was having a tea break with Mei-Li in the common room, his Chinese teacher came by. David then introduced his Chinese teacher to Mei-Li. Write a dialogue among these three persons. (9 分)

9. 大卫:

10.

11.

**Scenario I:** When David reviewed lesson no. 8, he did not understand some vocabulary and grammar. Therefore he went to his Chinese teacher to seek help. However, his teacher was not in her office. David then wrote a note to her and told her that if it is convenient to her, he will wait for her after class tomorrow. (12 分)

_____:	_____ (The writer)
	_____ (Date, time)

### 5. Xiězuò liànxí 写作练习 (20 分)

Assume that you are 陈美丽 Chén Měili and you write a letter to 王晓婷 Wáng Xiǎotíng, your very good friend. In this letter you told her about your experience of learning Swedish. For example:

My Swedish class is hard, but I think it is pretty interesting. My Swedish friend often helps me, and that is the reason my Swedish improved rapidly. In addition to practicing speaking Swedish, I also make Swedish food and go to movies with my friend. Both friend and I are happy.

Pay attention to the format of a Chinese letter. Read “A Letter” in your course book, p.215 - 216 as a reference.

### **Written Assignment 15**

#### 5. Qíngjǐng duìhuà 情景对话 (21 分)

Read the text and complete the dialogues in Chinese according to the scenarios.

(This exercise is a review of some topics you have learned from this course so far. In addition, it was designed to examine how much you know about the Chinese language and its culture. Information regarding this part can be found in [scalablelearning.com](http://scalablelearning.com))

David Karlsson (大卫·卡森 Dàwèi·Kǎsēn) is a Swedish. He has three Chinese friends. They are Chen Mei-Li (陈美丽 Chén Měili), Zhang Da-Ming (张大明 Zhāng Dàmíng) and Wang Xiao-Ting (王晓婷 Wáng Xiǎotíng). They all study at Dalarna University (达拉纳大学 Dálānà dàxué) in Falun (法伦 Fǎlún).

大卫·卡森: 男, 23 岁, 瑞典人, 大学生。 爸爸: 60 岁, 工人。Gōngrén (worker) 妈妈: 58 岁, 工人。 哥哥: 30 岁, 在图书馆工作。 姐姐: 26 岁, 在图书馆工作。 妹妹: 21 岁, 大学生。	王晓婷: 女, 20 岁, 中国人(北京), 大学生。 爸爸: 54 岁, 大学教授。Dàxué jiàoshòu (University Professor) 妈妈: 52 岁, 工程师。Gōngchéngshī (engineer) 奶奶: 75 岁, 家庭主妇。
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**Scenario A:** Wang Xiao-Ting practiced speaking Swedish with David every Wednesday. However, David could not make it this Wednesday. Therefore, he called her. When the phone went through, someone answered ... (3 分)

Someone: 喂?

1. 大卫:

**Scenario B:** Wang Xiao-Ting invited David to have dinner this weekend. (3 分)

王晓婷: 这个周末我请你到我家吃饭, 怎么样?

大卫: 你为什么请我吃饭?

2. 王晓婷:

**Scenario C:** After dinner, Xiao-Ting kindly offered David something to drink. David wanted to have a bottle of cola. However, Xia-Ting did not have a cola. She offered him other things to drink ... (6 分)

3. 王晓婷:

4. 大卫:

**Scenario D:** David had a nice time chatting with Xiao-Ting's family. He was asked how old he was. In his curiosity, he wanted to ask how old Xiao-Ting's grandmother was. (3 分)

5. 大卫:

晓婷的奶奶: 我今年 75 了。

**Scenario E:** Which topic(s) do you think Mei-Li's father would like to chat with David? Please give one suggestion and write it down in Chinese. (3 分)

For example: 你今年多大?

6. 晓婷的爸爸:

**Scenario F:** In an academic conference, how would David introduce Wang Xiao-Ting's father to the others in Chinese? (3 分)

7. 大卫:

### 6. Xiězuò liànxí 写作练习 (30 分)

Assumed that you are David and you are going to write an email to 张大明 Zhāng Dàmíng, telling him about your plan of your winter vacation. In this email you should include at least the following sentences:

Winter vacation starts next week. During winter vacation I will go home to see my mom and dad. My dad bought me a train ticket. My mom called me yesterday. She told me that she had bought me three new shirts - a blue one, a red one, and a green one. Dad will drive to the train station, and my elder brother will go with him. Yesterday I talked to Mei-Li in Chinese. She said that my Chinese have improved. I was very happy.  
What will you do in the winter vacation? Will you go back to Hong Kong with your family?

An email to your friend (Pay attention to the format of the Chinese email, p.264-265):

## Cultural Question Integrated in Final Written Exam

### 5. Duihuà 对话 (24 分)

Complete the dialogues below according to the scenarios provided. (Please use Chinese characters.)

Hanna Svenson is a Swedish student. She studies Chinese language at Dalarna University. Her Chinese name is 范汉娜 (Fàn Hànnà).

**Scenario A:** One day she met a Chinese student, Chen Da-Hong (陈大宏 ChénDàhóng) in the campus. They introduced to each other in Chinese.

陈大宏: 你好! Nǐ hǎo!

5.1 范汉娜:

5.2 陈大宏:

5.3 范汉娜:

**Scenario B:** Chen wanted to treat Hanna for dinner on Saturday night. Hanna asked

范汉娜: 你为什么请我吃饭? Nǐ wéi shén me qǐng wǒ chī fàn?

5.4 陈大宏:

**Scenario C:** Hanna asked Chen Da-Hong to give her a ride to the airport on Sunday.

5.5 范汉娜:



陈大宏：好的。但是你得请我喝咖啡。Hǎo de. Dàn shì nǐ děi qǐng wǒ hē kā fēi.

5.6 范汉娜：

**Scenario D:** Hanna wanted to thank Chen Da-Hong for helping her buying the air tickets.

范汉娜：谢谢你帮助我买机票。我请你吃美国饭，怎么样？

Xiè xie nǐ bāng zhù wǒ mǎi jī piào. Wǒ qǐng nǐ chī Měi guó fàn, zěn me yàng?

5.7 陈大宏：

**Scenario E:** Hanna made a phone call to her Chinese teacher, Hu Xin-Long (胡新龙 Hú Xīnlóng). When the call was through, she heard her teacher saying

胡新龙：喂，哪位？Wèi. Nǎ wèi?

5.8 范汉娜：

**Scenario F:** One day when Hanna and Chen Da-Hong had lunch in school, they met Hanna Chinese teacher, Hu Xin-Long. Hanna introduced Chen to her teacher.

5.9 范汉娜：

胡新龙：你好！认识你，很高兴！Nǐ hǎo! Rèn shi nǐ, hěn gāo xìng!

5.10 陈大宏：

**Scenario G:** Chen Da-Hong praised Hanna's dress.

陈大宏：小范，你的裙子非常漂亮！Xiǎo Fàn, nǐ de qún zi fēi cháng piāo liang!

5.11 范汉娜：

**Scenario H:** Hanna was amazed that Chen Da-Hong could speak Swedish quite well.

范汉娜：小陈，你说瑞典语说得不错。Xiǎo Chén, nǐ shuō Ruì diǎn yǔ shuō de bù cuò.

5.12 陈大宏：

## 6. Xiězuò 写作 (15 分)

(Please use Chinese characters.)

Assume that you are 范汉娜 (Fàn Hànnà) and you would like to invite your friend, 陈大宏 (Chén Dàhóng), to eat dinner because of your birthday. Therefore, you write 陈大宏 a letter.

In this letter you tell 陈大宏 the following information:

- When is your birthday
- Ask 陈大宏 to join the dinner at your home
- Who will and who will not join the dinner in your family (father, mother, elder brother and sister, as well as your little brother)
- What you and your family will probably do before and after the dinner
- What you plan to eat and drink. Ask what 陈大宏 may or may not want to eat and drink
- Tell 陈大宏 to call you back. You are at home after 6 p.m. Your telephone no is 12345678.

\_\_\_\_\_ : (Who will receive this letter?)

你的朋友，

\_\_\_\_\_ (who are you?)

五月六日

## APPENDIX FIVE: THE 66 UNITS OF CULTURAL INFORMATION FOR DATA ANALYSIS

Cultural Element	Cultural Questions	Integrated in
<b>A – kinship system</b>	<b>A1:</b> introducing family members at home <b>A2:</b> introducing family members at home <b>A3:</b> introducing the assigned Character’s family members based on scenario <b>AE1:</b> introducing the assigned Character’s family members based on scenario	Written ex. 4 Spoken ex.2 Written ex.10  Exam
<b>B – respect of age</b>	<b>B1:</b> Asking a 4-years old boy’s age <b>B2:</b> Asking a 75-years old lady’s age	Written ex.13 Written ex.15
<b>C – address system</b>	<p><b><u>C1 – addressing teachers</u></b>  <b>C101:</b> addressing the teacher in a 3<sup>rd</sup> person introduction  <b>C102:</b> addressing the teacher on a phone call dialogue  <b>C103:</b> addressing the teacher on a note  <b>CE101:</b> addressing the teacher in a 3<sup>rd</sup> person introduction  <b>CE102:</b> addressing the teacher on a phone call dialogue</p> <p><b><u>C2 – application of “nin”</u></b>  <b>C201:</b> using “nin” in a 3<sup>rd</sup> person introduction  <b>C202:</b> using “nin” in a phone call dialogue  <b>C203:</b> using “nin” in a note  <b>CE201:</b> using “nin” in a 3<sup>rd</sup> person introduction</p> <p><b><u>C3 – addressing friends</u></b>  <b>C301:</b> addressing a Chinese friend in a phone call dialogue  <b>C302:</b> addressing a Chinese friend in a phone call dialogue  <b>C303:</b> addressing a close Chinese friend in a letter  <b>C304:</b> addressing the sender (a Chinese) in a letter  <b>CE301:</b> addressing a close Chinese friend in a letter  <b>CE302:</b> addressing the sender (a Chinese) in a letter</p> <p><b><u>C4 – 1<sup>st</sup> meeting introduction</u></b>  <b>C401:</b> using the phrases “gui xing” and “jiao shenme mingzi”</p>	Written ex.13  Written ex.10  Written ex.13 Exam  Exam    Written ex.13 Written ex.10 Written ex.13 Exam  Written ex.13 Written ex.15  Written ex.13 Written ex.13 Exam Exam   Written ex.10

	<p><b>C402:</b> correctly addressing the Chinese name in the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting introduction  <b>C403:</b> correct turn-taking of the introduction  <b>CE401:</b> using the phrases “gui xing” and “jiao shenme mingzi”  <b>CE402:</b> correctly addressing the Chinese name in the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting introduction  <b>CE403:</b> correct turn-taking of the introduction</p> <p><b><u>C5 – 3<sup>rd</sup> person introduction</u></b>  <b>C501:</b> using a proper title in a 3<sup>rd</sup> person introduction  <b>C502:</b> introducing a professor in a conference  <b>C503:</b> introducing a Chinese classmate in a conference  <b>C504:</b> correctly addressing the Chinese name in a 3<sup>rd</sup> person introduction  <b>C505:</b> correctly addressing the Chinese name in a 3<sup>rd</sup> person introduction  <b>C506:</b> correct order of introduction  <b>C507:</b> correct order of introduction  <b>CE501:</b> using a proper title in a 3<sup>rd</sup> person introduction  <b>CE502:</b> correctly addressing the Chinese name in a 3<sup>rd</sup> person introduction  <b>CE503:</b> correct order of introduction</p>	<p>Written ex.10  Written ex.10  Exam  Exam  Exam</p> <p>Written ex.10  Written ex.13  Written ex.15  Written ex.10  Written ex.13  Written ex.13  Exam  Exam  Exam</p>
<b>D – collective culture</b>	<p><b><u>D1 – reasons for a treat</u></b>  <b>D101:</b> giving reasons for a treat  <b>D102:</b> giving reasons for a treat  <b>DE101:</b> giving reasons for a treat</p> <p><b><u>D2 – response to a request for a treat</u></b>  <b>D201:</b> giving a response to a request for a treat  <b>DE201:</b> giving a response to a request for a treat</p> <p><b><u>D3 – response to a treat of dinner</u></b>  <b>D301:</b> giving a response to a treat of dinner  <b>DE301:</b> giving a response to a treat of dinner</p>	<p>Written ex.10  Written ex.15  Exam  Written ex.10  Exam  Written ex.13  Exam</p>
<b>E – Chinese modesty</b>	<p><b>E1:</b> a Swede responded to a compliment  <b>E2:</b> a Chinese responded to a compliment  <b>EE1:</b> a Swede responded to a compliment  <b>EE2:</b> a Chinese responded to a compliment</p>	<p>Written ex.10  Written ex.13  Exam  Exam</p>
<b>F – respect of privacy</b>	<p><b>F1:</b> possible questions a Chinese mother would ask a Swedish guest</p>	<p>Written ex.13  Written ex.15</p>

	<b>F2:</b> possible questions a Chinese father would ask a Swedish guest	
<b>G – phone call &amp; letter</b>	<p><b><u>G1 – etiquette in making phone call</u></b>  <b>G101:</b> making a phone call in appropriate manner – a long dialogue  <b>G102:</b> making a phone call in appropriate manner – a short dialogue  <b>G103:</b> making a phone call in appropriate manner – a short dialogue  <b>GE101:</b> making a phone call in appropriate manner – a short dialogue</p> <p><b><u>G2 – application of “wei” and “you shir ma”</u></b>  <b>G201:</b> using “you shir ma” appropriately  <b>G202:</b> using “wei” appropriately  <b>G203:</b> using “wei” appropriately  <b>G204:</b> using “wei” appropriately</p> <p><b><u>G3 – etiquette in writing letters</u></b>  <b>G301:</b> using the correct format of a note  <b>G302:</b> using a proper sender name  <b>G303:</b> writing the note in appropriate manner  <b>G304:</b> writing the Chinese letter in correct format  <b>GE301:</b> writing the Chinese letter in correct format</p>	<p>Written ex.10  Written ex.13  Written ex.15  Exam</p> <p>Written ex.10  Written ex.10  Written ex.13  Written ex.15</p> <p>Written ex.13  Written ex.13  Written ex.13  Written ex.13  Exam</p>
<b>H – tea drinking custom</b>	<p><b>H1:</b> a Swedish host offered drink to a 75 years-old Chinese lady gust  <b>H2:</b> a Chinese host offered drink to her Swedish classmate  <b>HE1:</b> what a Swedish host would offer to her Chinese guest</p>	<p>Written ex.13  Written ex.15  Exam</p>

## APPENDIX SIX: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

### KI1024 Research Interview

**Confidential Statement:** *This interview is for research purpose. All the answers provided by the interviewees will be kept confidentially and what they say will not affect any of their study results.*

#### 1. Basic information about yourself

- a) Nationality: Swedish \_\_\_\_\_ Chinese \_\_\_\_\_
- b) How long have you been study Chinese?
- c) How many University credit points you have got from studying Chinese?
- d) Besides Chinese language, have you studied other subjects that are related to Chinese culture, history, etc.?

#### 2. What are the main differences between Chinese and Swedish or English?

- a) Pronunciation
- b) Grammar
- c) Culture
- d) Others

#### 3. What parts of the course did you focus/were you interested in at most?

- e) Pronunciation – speaking and listening
- f) Grammar – reading and writing
- g) Culture
- h) Others

#### 4. What are the most difficult parts when doing your assignment?

- a) Pronunciation
- b) Grammar
- c) Cultural questions
- d) Others

#### 5. There are some cultural questions in the assignments, what do you think about them?

- a) Do you think they are relevant to your language study?
- b) Are they easy?
- c) How do you find the answers of this kind of questions?

#### 6. What do you think about the scalable tasks?

- a) Are they useful to your Chinese language learning?
- b) Can it help you find appropriate answers in your written assignments and final exam?
- c) Is there anything I can do to improve scalable tasks?

**7. Read the following information and decided if it is an appropriate conversation. Please explain your answer.**

**Scenario A:** At the first day in school David met Mei-Li and they introduced themselves to each other in Chinese. Write the dialogues between David and Mei-Li. The first line is provided to you. You can prolong the dialogue if it is necessary.

1. 陈美丽 Chén Měili: 你好! Nǐ hǎo!
2. 大卫·卡森 Dàwèi· Kǎsēn: 你好! 我姓卡森, 叫大卫, 你叫什么名字? Nǐ hǎo! Wǒ xìng Kǎsēn, jiào Dà-wèi, nǐ jiào shén me míngzì?
3. 陈美丽 Chén Měili: 我叫陈美丽, 我二十二岁, 你呢? Wǒ jiào Chén Měi-lì. Wǒ èrshíèr suì. Nǐ ne?
4. 大卫·卡森 Dàwèi· Kǎsēn: 我二十三岁。Wǒ èr shí sān suì.

I think this conversation is **appropriate/ inappropriate**.

The reason is:

**Scenario B:** One day when David was having a tea break with Mei-Li in the common room, his Chinese teacher came by. David then introduced his Chinese teacher to Mei-Li. Write a dialogue among these three persons. You can extend the dialogue if necessary.

1. 大卫·卡森 Dàwèi· Kǎsēn: 美丽, 这位是我的中文老师, 何月清。Měi-lì, zhè wèi shì wǒ de Zhōng wén lǎoshī, Hé yuè qīng.
2. 何月清 Hé Yuèqīng: 你好, 美丽, 很高兴认识你。Nǐ hǎo, Měi-lì, hěn gāo xìng rèn shí nǐ.
3. 陈美丽 Chén Měili: 你好, 何老师, 我也很高兴认识你。Nǐ hǎo, Hé lǎo shī, wǒ yě hěn gāo xìng rèn shí nǐ.

I think this conversation is **appropriate/ inappropriate**.

The reason is:

**Scenario C:** David has some questions regarding Chinese study and he wants to see his teacher tomorrow. Therefore, you make a phone call to his teacher. The dialogue begins like this:

1. 大卫·卡森 Dàwèi· Kǎsēn: 喂。老师,您好! 我是大卫。Wèi. Lǎoshī, nín hǎo! Wǒ shì Dà-wèi.
2. 何月清 Hé Yuèqīng: 大卫, 你好。你有什么问题? Dà-wèi, nǐ hǎo. Nǐ yǒu shén me wèntí?
3. 大卫·卡森 Dàwèi· Kǎsēn: 我有几个问题想问老师。。。Wǒ yǒu jǐ gè wèn tí xiǎng wèn lǎo shī ...

I think this conversation is **appropriate/ inappropriate**.

The reason is:

**9. How could you respond to this conversation?**

Your Chinese friend wanted to thank you for helping her buying the air tickets and said:

Your friend: 谢谢你帮助我买机票。我请你吃美国饭，怎么样？ Xiè xie nǐ bāng zhù wǒ mǎi jī piào. Wǒ qǐng nǐ chī Měi guó fàn, zěn me yàng?

You:

- a) 谢谢，我明天有空。 Xièxie, wǒ míngtiān yǒu kōng. /Thank you, I'm free tomorrow.
- b) 太好了，我喜欢吃美国饭。 Tài hǎo le, wǒ xǐhuān chī Měiguó fàn. /Great, I like US food.
- c) 不客气。 Bù kèqi. Not at all/You are welcome!
- d) Others

I choose\_\_\_\_\_.

The reason is:



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