

Research on the Presentation of Chinese Culture in College German Textbooks: Taking “Neue Generation von Hochschuldeutsch” As an Example

Zishuang Zhu*, Zuhang Liu

Tianjin Foreign Studies University, Tianjin 300204, China

**Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.*

Copyright: © 2026 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

Abstract: Against the backdrop of globalization and educational reform, foreign language textbooks have emerged as vital media for language learning and cultural dissemination. This study takes the “Neue Generation von Hochschuldeutsch” series as its research object and employs a qualitative and quantitative text analysis approach based on the cultural presentation analysis framework for foreign language textbooks. It analyzes the presentation of Chinese culture in the textbooks from two dimensions: content and method. The findings reveal that the textbooks primarily focus on traditional and modern culture, with limited coverage of revolutionary culture. The presentation forms are diverse, with cultural products and practices being more prevalent than cultural figures, concepts, and communities. The presentation methods combine explicit and implicit approaches, with traditional culture being more richly and evenly presented, while modern culture tends to be presented implicitly.

Keywords: Presentation of Chinese culture; College German; German textbooks; Textbook analysis

Online publication: March 26, 2026

1. Introduction

With changes in the international landscape and the enhancement of China’s comprehensive national strength, “foreign language learners” in the new era are tasked with a new mission: introducing China to the world and enabling the world to understand China. Xie Biyan and Wen Qiufang (2022) argue that, based on changes in the international landscape and China’s growing comprehensive strength, the content of current foreign language textbooks should incorporate elements that cultivate students’ ability to tell Chinese stories in foreign languages ^[1]. As a core tool in foreign language teaching, foreign language textbooks carry both language and culture, enabling the presentation and integration of culture through content arrangement. This helps learners understand cultural connotations during language learning and enhances their cross-cultural communication skills. The Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China (2018a, 2018b) explicitly states, in the “National Quality Standards for Undergraduate Teaching in General Higher Education Institutions” released in 2018, the need to cultivate high-quality talents with Chinese sentiment, an international perspective, and cross-cultural communication skills, placing “Chinese sentiment” at the forefront as an important foundational goal of foreign language education in China ^[2,3]. In May 2020, the “Teaching Guidelines for Undergraduate German Majors in

General Higher Education Institutions” further clarified this direction in the field of German studies, emphasizing the equal importance of German language and cultural knowledge and Chinese language and cultural knowledge, while also focusing on cultivating the cross-cultural communication skills of German talents. Based on this, the scientific and rational integration of Chinese culture into foreign language textbooks has become an important way to enhance students’ cultural identity and confidence.

However, a review of existing literature reveals that most related studies focus on the presentation of Chinese culture in German major textbooks (such as “Contemporary College German”), with significantly less attention given to college German textbooks for non-German majors. Given this, this study selects the “Neue Generation von Hochschuldeutsch” (three volumes) series and conducts a textual analysis of the presented Chinese culture content, systematically examining its presentation characteristics. The aim is to provide targeted suggestions for the compilation of college German textbooks regarding the integration of Chinese culture and for classroom teaching practices.

2. Literature review

Since the 1960s, cultural analysis research in the field of foreign language textbooks abroad has gradually emerged ^[4], especially in the past decade, when it has become a focal point of academic attention. Related studies have delved into the multidimensional cultural elements contained in textbooks, covering values ^[5], cultural forms ^[6], etc. Keles and Yazan (2020), for example, often adopt a national perspective and assess cultural proportions by quantifying the frequency of different cultural content occurrences ^[7]. For German textbooks, cultural content analysis originated in the 1980s. Ammer (1998) and Zhang (2019) initially focused on the portrayal of Germany and its national image ^[8,9]; subsequently, research expanded to comparative analyses of the cultural reflections of German-speaking countries in textbooks ^[10].

Research on foreign language textbooks in China began in the late 1970s, with the number of related studies increasing annually until 2005, with English textbooks accounting for the highest proportion. Zhang Hong and Li Xiaonan (2022) constructed a systematic cultural presentation analysis framework for foreign language textbooks through empirical research on the cultural presentation in English textbooks, providing detailed classifications and weightings for cultural content and presentation methods ^[11]. Several scholars have conducted cultural presentation research on textbooks in various languages based on this framework ^[12-14]. Research on German textbooks mainly involves surveys on the use of local German textbooks in China ^[15], comparative analyses of the language content between imported and local textbooks ^[16], and studies on the cultural presentation in local German textbooks. In recent years, the cultural content of German textbooks has become a research hotspot. From the perspective of research objects, most related studies focus on professional German textbooks such as “Contemporary College German” ^[17,18], with insufficient research on college German textbooks.

In summary, current research has the following shortcomings: the academic community has significantly lower attention to college German textbooks from the perspective of cultural presentation (especially the presentation of Chinese culture), with related studies being relatively rare. Therefore, this study selects the “Neue Generation von Hochschuldeutsch” series as samples and adopts a combined qualitative and quantitative approach to deeply explore the presentation of Chinese culture.

3. Research design

3.1. Research methodology

This study is conducted based on the analytical framework for cultural representation in foreign language textbooks (hereinafter referred to as the “framework”) constructed by Zhang Hong and Li Xiaonan (2022) ^[12]. This framework comprises two primary dimensions: cultural representation content and cultural representation methods. Within the dimension of cultural representation content, the original framework is further divided into two sub-dimensions: one

is categorized by region into target language country culture, learners' native culture, cultures of other countries, and international culture; the other is categorized by form into cultural products, cultural practices, cultural concepts, cultural communities, and cultural figures^[19].

Since this study focuses on a single cultural type, Chinese culture, and does not involve comparisons between cultures of different countries, the "region" sub-dimension from the original framework is not utilized. Building upon the original framework, this study retains the "form" sub-dimension and adds "types of Chinese cultural representation" as another sub-dimension of cultural representation content. Thus, the analytical framework of this study encompasses the following three dimensions:

In terms of the cultural representation form dimension, which corresponds to the "form" sub-dimension in the original framework, it is divided into cultural products, cultural practices, cultural concepts, cultural communities, and cultural figures^[19]. Regarding the types of Chinese cultural representation dimension, referring to the practices of Zhang Hong and Yu Rui (2020)^[20], Chinese culture is categorized into three types: traditional culture, revolutionary culture, and modern culture. In terms of the cultural representation method dimension, there are primarily five methods: cultural texts, cultural knowledge sections, pictures/quotations, background cultural information, and activities/exercises, each further refined into different carriers. Based on this, the framework assigns different weights to each representation carrier, allocating scores ranging from 1 to 10 according to different cultural representation methods. The proportion of cultural representation is primarily reflected through intensity ($\text{intensity} = \text{weight} \times \text{frequency}$), as this approach can not only demonstrate the differences in representation methods but also more scientifically determine the proportion and role of different regional cultures in the textbooks^[11].

In this study, the cultural content presented in the textbooks was first identified and searched page by page, and the cultural items were then coded in Excel. At the beginning of coding, two authors conducted back-to-back coding independently. If there were no disagreements, the coding was finalized; if there were discrepancies, timely communication ensued. If a consensus was not reached, a third party was invited for discussion, and the final decision was made through consultation among the three. Finally, different weights were assigned to each representation carrier, and the coding was statistically analyzed to calculate the intensity.

3.2. Research subjects

This study selects the "New Generation College German" series of textbooks as the research subjects. Compiled in accordance with the latest "College German Teaching Guidelines" (2021 edition) issued by the Ministry of Education, this series of textbooks extensively covers and caters to the teaching needs of non-German majors at the undergraduate and graduate levels in various fields such as science and engineering, humanities and social sciences, and management in domestic higher education institutions. It aims to deeply cultivate students' cultural confidence and strengthen their ability to narrate Chinese stories in German and promote cross-cultural communication. Therefore, an in-depth analysis of the "New Generation College German" series of textbooks holds significant referential value for the compilation of college German textbooks in China.

3.3. Research questions

This study primarily revolves around the following questions:

First, what types of Chinese culture are presented in the "New Generation College German" series of textbooks?

Second, in what methods and forms does the "New Generation College German" series of textbooks present Chinese culture?

4. Research findings

Through analysis and calculation, this study finds that the "New Generation College German" series of textbooks exhibits

the following characteristics in terms of the types, forms, and methods of Chinese cultural representation.

4.1. Cultural representation content

4.1.1. Types of Chinese cultural representation

Through coding analysis, it is found that a total of 188 items related to Chinese culture are presented across the three textbooks. Among them, traditional Chinese culture has the highest representation intensity, with a total of 148 items, an intensity of 822 points, accounting for 79.35%; followed by modern culture, with a total of 35 items, an intensity of 172 points, accounting for 16.60%; revolutionary culture has a lower representation intensity, with a total of 2 items, an intensity of 42 points, accounting for 4.05% (Table 1).

Table 1. Intensity of different types of chinese cultural representation

Type	Intensity	Proportion
Traditional Culture	822	79.35%
Revolutionary Culture	42	4.05%
Modern Culture	172	16.60%
Total	1036	100.00%

It can thus be seen that the textbooks emphasize the presentation of traditional culture (such as Chinese numerals, traditional Chinese virtues, famous landmarks like the Great Wall and the Forbidden City) and modern culture (healthy living, advancements in modern technology, etc.) in terms of Chinese cultural representation, aiming to elucidate Chinese culture and showcase China's image. For instance, in Exercise 2 of the Projekt section in Unit 3 of the first textbook, centered around the theme of the traditional Chinese virtue of "saving food," students are directly presented with this traditional virtue of the Chinese nation and guided to engage in cultural expression regarding it, thereby deepening their understanding and recognition of traditional Chinese culture.

4.1.2. Cultural representation forms

In terms of cultural representation forms, cultural practices have the highest intensity across the three textbooks, totaling 627 points and accounting for 60.52%; followed by cultural products, with a total of 215 points and accounting for 20.75%. Cultural concepts and cultural figures account for relatively low proportions, with 100 points (9.65%) and 84 points (8.11%), respectively. Cultural communities have the lowest representation intensity, totaling 10 points and accounting for 0.97% (Table 2).

Table 2. Intensity of different forms of chinese cultural representation

Form	Cultural Type			Total Intensity	Percentage(%)
	Traditional Culture	Revolutionary Culture	Modern Culture		
Cultural Products	208	-	7	215	20.75
Cultural Concepts	71	-	29	100	9.65
Cultural Figures	84	-	-	84	8.11
Cultural Practices	449	42	136	627	60.52
Cultural Communities	10	-	-	10	0.97
Total	822	42	172	1036	100.00

From the perspective of the types of Chinese cultural presentations, traditional culture places greater emphasis on

the presentation of cultural practices (such as traditional Chinese festivals, traditional virtues like diligence and thrift) and cultural products (such as tea and traditional Chinese medicine), while modern culture primarily presents its cultural practices (such as mobile payments and waste sorting) and cultural concepts (such as modern attitudes towards keeping pets in families). Revolutionary culture, on the other hand, only involves the presentation of cultural practices (such as the founding of the Republic of China and the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression).

According to data analysis, textbooks tend to effectively convey Chinese culture by presenting it through tangible material forms and behavioral activities, helping students intuitively perceive the richness and profound heritage of Chinese culture. At the same time, they closely integrate Chinese culture with real-life situations, enabling students to recognize the dynamic nature and real-world relevance of culture. For example, in Unit 6, *Das mobile Bezahlen in China*, of the second textbook, the content centers around the specific practice of “mobile payment methods in China.” It includes exercises such as listening comprehension and fill-in-the-blanks, and utilizes visual aids like pictures to help students better understand relevant cultural phenomena.

4.2. Cultural presentation methods

In terms of cultural presentation methods, cultural texts have the highest intensity across the three textbooks, totaling 412 points and accounting for 39.77% of the total; followed by cultural expression exercises, totaling 198 points and accounting for 19.11%. Pictures/quotations in exercises (140 points, 13.51%), language exercises (74 points, 7.14%), and background cultural information in exercises (74 points, 7.14%) also occupy a certain proportion. Cultural knowledge sections (26 points, 2.51%), pictures/quotations (10 points, 0.97%), and background cultural information (2 points, 0.19%) have relatively low proportions (Table 3).

Table 3. Intensity of different Chinese cultural presentation methods

Method	Cultural Type			Total	Percentage (%)
	Traditional Culture	Revolutionary Culture	Modern Culture		
Cultural Discourse	312	30	70	412	39.77%
Cultural Knowledge Section	26	-	-	26	2.51%
Explicit Images/Quotations	10	-	-	10	0.97%
Explicit Background Cultural Information	-	-	2	2	0.19%
Exercises					
Cultural Discourse in Exercises	40	-	16	56	5.41%
Cultural Expression	133	12	53	198	19.11%
Cultural Understanding	42	-	2	44	4.25%
Language Practice	58	-	16	74	7.14%
Images/Quotations in Exercises	136	-	4	140	13.51%
Background Cultural Information in Exercises	65	-	9	74	7.14%
Total	621	42	159	1036	100.00%

Through data analysis, the following characteristics of the presentation methods for different types of Chinese culture have been identified:

Firstly, traditional cultural content is covered in all presentation methods, with a relatively balanced intensity between explicit and implicit presentations. This indicates that the series of textbooks not only emphasizes the recognition and

understanding of traditional culture but also values its narration and dissemination. Through these textbooks, students are helped to comprehend the connotations of Chinese culture and effectively tell traditional Chinese stories.

Secondly, modern culture tends to be presented more implicitly, encouraging students to actively engage in Chinese culture through exercises. For example, in Unit 8, “Environmental Protection: We Think Together,” of the third volume, Exercise 3 in Section B requires students to observe pictures and reflect on the current environmental situation in contemporary China, providing suggestions for improvement. This not only enhances students’ understanding of China’s contemporary environmental culture but also stimulates their subjective thinking and promotes cultural reflection and practical expression in a foreign language, thereby effectively improving their cultural awareness and expressive abilities.

Thirdly, revolutionary culture is presented both explicitly and implicitly, but with relatively low intensity in both cases.

5. Discussion

This study selected the “New Generation College German” series of textbooks and conducted quantitative statistics and qualitative analysis on the cultural types, cultural content, and presentation methods within the textbooks based on a specific framework. The study found that these textbooks incorporate a significant amount of Chinese cultural elements, particularly outstanding in traditional culture, but fall short in covering revolutionary culture. Chinese culture is predominantly presented in the form of cultural products and practices, while cultural concepts and figures are less represented, and cultural communities are rarely depicted.

Based on these research findings, the author proposes two recommendations: Firstly, college German textbooks should present cultural types in a balanced manner. Chinese revolutionary culture, rich in revolutionary spirit and fine traditions, is a unique and timeless common spiritual wealth of the Chinese nation. Strengthening revolutionary culture education and enhancing revolutionary cultural identity in the new era helps inspire young people to strengthen their cultural confidence, cultivate socialist core values, and carry forward the spirit of struggle and practical action ^[21]. Therefore, textbook compilation should strive to balance the presentation of traditional, revolutionary, and modern cultures, particularly by enhancing the exploration and integration of revolutionary culture. Through vivid cases, the traditional virtues, historical context, scientific and technological achievements, humanistic essence, and fruits of revolutionary victory of the Chinese nation should be showcased to inspire young students, guide values, and set behavioral examples.

Secondly, college German textbooks should diversify the forms of cultural presentation. The presentation of outstanding Chinese cultural communities, along with their products, practices, and figures, in textbooks helps learners clarify their own Chinese cultural community affiliation in foreign language learning and cross-cultural practice, nurture a deep-rooted Chinese cultural identity, and cultivate a sense of patriotism and national pride ^[22]. Compared to the overt cultural layer of cultural products, the hidden cultural layer of cultural concepts is more crucial for understanding cultural content ^[23]. Therefore, textbook compilers should focus ^[23] on creating a balanced and diverse range of cultural presentation forms, strengthening the depiction of cultural communities, concepts, and figures across different cultural types to promote students’ cognitive and respectful understanding of cultural diversity, enhance their in-depth comprehension of cultural content, and solidify their cultural identity and confidence.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Xie BY, Wen QF, 2022, An Interview with Professor Wen Qiufang. *Frontiers in Foreign Language Education Research*, 5(2): 23–28.

- [2] Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2018a, National Standards for Teaching Quality of Undergraduate Majors in General Higher Education Institutions, Beijing.
- [3] Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2018b, Teaching Guidelines for Undergraduate German Majors in General Higher Education Institutions, Beijing.
- [4] Risager K, 2022, Analysing Culture in Language Learning Materials. *Language Teaching*, 56(1): 1–21.
- [5] Puspitasari D, Widodo HP, Widyaningrum L, et al., 2021, How Do Primary School English Textbooks Teach Moral Values? *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 70: 1–11.
- [6] Davidson R, Liu YC, 2020, Reaching the World Outside: Cultural Representation and Perceptions of Global Citizenship in Japanese Elementary School English Textbooks. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 33(1): 32–49.
- [7] Keles U, Yazan B, 2020, Representation of Cultures and Communities in a Global ELT Textbook: A Diachronic Content Analysis. *Language Teaching Research*, 27(5): 1325–1346.
- [8] Ammer R, 1998, Das Deutschlandbild in den Lehrwerken für Deutsch als Fremdsprache. In Kast B, Neuner G (Eds.), *Zur Analyse, Begutachtung und Entwicklung von Lehrwerken für den fremdsprachlichen Deutschunterricht*. Langenscheidt: 31–41.
- [9] Zhang X, 2019, Eine Empirische Studie zur Stereotypisierung der Deutschen Kultur in DaF-Lehrwerken des Chinesischen Germanistikstudiums. *Informationen Deutsch als Fremdsprache*, 46(2): 326–351.
- [10] Voerkele JP, Huang Z, 2020, Plurizentrik und DACH-Bezug bei Lehrwerken in Brasilianischen Deutschstudiengängen: Eine Bilanz. *Pandaemonium Germanicum*, 23(41): 24–50.
- [11] Zhang H, Li XN, 2022a, Development of an Analytical Framework for Cultural Presentation in English Textbooks. *China's Foreign Languages*, (2): 78–84.
- [12] Zhang H, Li XN, 2022b, Research on Cultural Presentation in Senior High School English Textbooks. *Frontiers in Foreign Language Education Research*, 5(4): 42–52.
- [13] Tan J, Zhang L, 2022, Research on Cultural Presentation in French (Revised Edition). *Frontiers in Foreign Language Education Research*, 5(4): 53–60.
- [14] Ge NN, 2022, Research on Cultural Presentation in Chinese German Textbooks: Taking Studienweg Deutsch as an Example. *Frontiers in Foreign Language Education Research*, 5(4): 61–68.
- [15] Du R, 2019, Investigation Results and Analysis of the Usage of the Chinese German Major Textbook Studienweg Deutsch. *German Humanities Research*, 7(2): 35–43.
- [16] Xue J, 2017, A Comparative Analysis of the German Textbooks for Chinese Universities. *Think Tank Era*, (5): 126–128.
- [17] Hou JH, 2021, The Cultivation of Students' Cross-Cultural Understanding Ability in Foreign Language Teaching. *Modern Communication*, (8): 185–187.
- [18] Lu JY, 2023, An Exploration of Cultural Introduction Issues in Basic German Textbooks: Taking Studienweg Deutsch as an Example. *Science Consulting*, (3): 114–116.
- [19] Moran PR, 2001, *Teaching Culture: Perspectives in Practice*. Heinle & Heinle, Massachusetts.
- [20] Zhang H, Yu R, 2020, A Study on the Presentation of Chinese Culture in College English Textbooks. *Foreign Language Education in China*, (3): 42–48.
- [21] Zhang YJ, Zhang Y, 2022, Research on Young People's Revolutionary Cultural Identity in the New Era. *School Party Building and Ideological Education*, (2): 85–87.
- [22] Gao R, Cai SJ, 2024, The Presentation of Chinese Culture in Chinese Italian Textbooks: A Diachronic Analysis Based on Intensive Reading Materials. *European Language and Culture Studies*, (2): 22–41.
- [23] Zhang H, Chang WZ, Su XL, 2024, A Comparative Study of Cultural Presentation in Chinese and German English Textbooks. *Foreign Language Research*, (2): 72–79.

Publisher's note

Whoice Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.