

## TEXTBOOKS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING – STUDY INVOLVING CHINESE LEARNERS

## MANUAIS PARA O ENSINO DE LÍNGUAS ESTRANGEIRAS – UM ESTUDO COM APRENDENTES CHINESES

Ana Margarida Belém Nunes\*  
ananunes@um.edu.mo

Maria Isabel Matos\*\*  
isamatos@um.edu.mo

According to the new pedagogies, respecting the cultural identity of learners is a way of ensuring success in learning. The challenge for textbook designers is to align them with the most recent approaches to foreign language teaching and second language acquisition, while respecting the cultural identity of the students.

This article presents the results of a survey conducted with a group of Chinese learners, with a traditional background of education based on the grammar and translation model. The objective is to identify their personal experiences and ‘evaluation’ of textbooks for the teaching and learning of Portuguese as a foreign language. The results indicated a strong attachment to traditional practices, but also revealed receptiveness and openness to new pedagogical models.

**Keywords:** textbooks. Second language learning. Chinese learner. Portuguese language.

De acordo com as novas teorias pedagógicas, para garantir o sucesso da aprendizagem é importante respeitar a identidade cultural dos aprendentes. Quem prepara um manual didático procura enquadrar as novas abordagens de ensino e aquisição de língua estrangeira/segunda, respeitando a identidade cultural dos alunos. Neste artigo apresentam-se resultados de um questionário apresentado a jovens chineses aprendentes de Português língua estrangeira, que estão habituados a um método tradicional de ensino com foco na gramática e tradução. Procurámos saber qual a avaliação que fazem dos manuais adotados para o ensino de português língua estrangeira. Regra geral, pode dizer-se que apesar de gostarem do método tradicional de ensino, estão bastante recetivos a novos modelos pedagógicos.

**Palavras-chave:** Manuais didáticos. Aquisição de língua segunda. aprendentes chineses. Português.

•

---

\* Department of Portuguese, University of Macao, Macao SAR.  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6003-872X>

\*\* Department of Portuguese, University of Macao, Macao SAR.

## 1. Introduction

For many language teachers in formal education systems, the textbook is an “inevitable teaching partner”, the basis of daily teaching, and “the visible heart of any [...] program” (McGrath 2002, p. 3). Textbooks are psychologically indispensable, since learning progress can be more easily assessed from a textbook (Haycroft 1998). Textbooks, as commercial products, do not always meet the specific requirements of learners and the increase of publications is not always synonymous with quality: sometimes the textbooks are “masses of rubbish skilfully marketed” (Brumfit 1980, p. 30). At the present time, the commercial interests of publishers or institutions often overlap with pedagogical interests and the real needs of learners (Tomlinson 2013) and publishers do not take into account the limitations of some teaching contexts (Sheldon 1988). To respond to market criteria and to generate profit for publishers, the textbooks are designed with very artificial dialogues (Sheldon 1988), lacking samples of authentic language.

Modern trends in foreign language teaching support the need to adopt methodologies and didactic materials that are harmonised with local sensitivities and contexts. The choice of textbooks raises the question of their relevance to the needs and profiles specific groups of learners. Textbooks must be sensitive to the particularities of the target group of students (McGrath 2002) and take into account the differences of individual learners (Littlewood 2013). Different criteria apply to different circumstances, so priorities must be identified (Cunningsworth 1995). The criteria for selecting a textbook should be local, because no textbook designed for the global market is truly ideal for a specific group of learners (McDonough *et al.* 2013). In addition, to support teachers and educational institutions (Tomlinson 2010), the material must be designed according to empirical evidence on the nature of language teaching and use (Nunan 1991).

In teacher-centred learning, the teacher focuses his or her attention on what learners learn, how they learn, and how they can use the knowledge they acquire (Weimer 2002, cited in Blumberg 2009). Textbooks must reflect the realities of the students, encouraging and guaranteeing an effective learning experience. It is at the crossroads of perspectives and demands that conflicts arise. Respecting learners’ backgrounds must bear in mind the importance of their culture and familiar teaching and learning models, and must also provide them with the most effective means of learning. The greatest challenge for those preparing teaching and learning materials and syllabuses is to know how to reconcile different perspectives, respecting learners’ identities and pedagogical and socio-cultural backgrounds, without ever losing sight of the empirical evidence regarding the nature of language and learning that should support the preparation of textbooks and guide classroom practice. Only by reconciling the two realities will a positive environment and the best conditions for teaching and learning be created.

For a Chinese student, textbooks are a source of knowledge (Hu 2002); hence, they must be adapted to the context and effectively fulfil their role as a pedagogical tool. Often, a consequence of choosing an inadequate textbook is the use of photocopied material which, for Asian learners, as Sheldon (1987) points out, may indicate disorganisation or inadequate guidance and cause disillusionment among Chinese students, who value textbooks and the reassurance they offer in terms of content control. Chinese students

learn a foreign language following the traditional pattern of grammar and translation prevalent throughout China, where grammar has a central place in learning. The model of presentation, practice, and production is deeply ingrained. Carrying out exercises to mechanise procedures and internalise specific elements of language is, from the perspective of Chinese learners and teachers, the best way to learn.

The textbook, as a basic tool for work, must inspire the confidence of the users, harmonise with their beliefs and practices, teach the language, and stimulate its use. As Hu (2002) pointed out, to speak of a Chinese culture of learning is to speak of a set of expectations, beliefs, attitudes, values, perceptions, preferences, experiences, and behaviours characteristic of Chinese society in relation to what it is to teach and to learn.

## **2. The cultural profiles and educational backgrounds of Chinese learners**

As Richards and Rodgers (2001) have pointed out, a typical mid-nineteenth century textbook was organised into chapters and lessons around grammatically-selected content, with explanations of the grammar rules. It included a handful of exercises using isolated sentences that were unrelated to each other, constituting a sort of appendix to the rules.

From a communicative perspective, what distinguishes language teaching from more traditional pedagogical methodologies is communicative competence as the main objective of the teaching and learning process (Brown 2001). Communicative teaching has brought a new paradigm into the classroom and, for language teaching, new objectives regarding what should be taught and learned. The range of materials used has expanded, and new roles have been defined for teachers and students. As Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) presented, teaching a language is equivalent to developing in the learner the ability to take part in spontaneous communication in different contexts and with different goals.

Although the communicative approach (CA) has spread and been implemented as a teaching practice throughout the world, traditional methods continue to be deeply rooted in Asia. The communicative approach faces cultural obstacles (the identities, perceptions, and expectations of students and teachers in relation to the role that each group should assume, in relation to what is taught and how to teach and assess learning), but also logistical difficulties – technical means of teaching and number of students per class. In Chinese schools and universities that teach foreign languages, although many teachers are aware of the importance of involving the students to ensure learning success, there still seems to be great resistance to change. The traditional teacher-centred model and unilateral communication predominate (Weimer 2002), with complaints that the courses are too long and there is too much content to teach. The focus of learning is on the grammatical structure of the language. Within this model, learning a language means learning its formal structures (Larsen-Freeman 2000): grammar is taught in an organised way and according to an established sequence and the students' mother tongue is the language used to teach the new language – it is used to explain the formal aspects of grammar and to allow comparisons between the target language and the mother tongue (Richards & Rodgers 2001).

According to Hu (2002), education in Chinese culture is something very serious that requires a great deal of dedication, commitment, and sacrifice. The CA proposes for the classroom a diversity of activities that offer the learner opportunities to communicate and to use the language in realistic situations and contexts. When a teaching approach uses classroom games, simulation activities, and an apparently more casual ethos, this tends to be regarded by Chinese learners as frivolous, with the activities being too light-hearted to promote learning. As Rao (1996), quoted in Hu (2002, p. 97), defended: “the Chinese tend to associate games and communicative activities in class with entertainment exclusively and are sceptical of their use as learning tools”. It can be seen that, in this different socio-cultural context, there is widespread misunderstanding about pedagogies so profoundly different from those traditionally practiced and accepted in Western countries.

When the moment comes to make decisions and choose the most appropriate textbook – the one that effectively fulfils the objectives of teaching the new language – these questions are of great relevance. The teaching material, which contains an underlying teaching methodology, should not ignore the cultural identity of the relevant actors in the process, and should not ignore the beliefs, principles, and values that impart identity and determine a perspective within the classroom. As Kumaravadivelu (1994, 2003, 2006) argued, a teaching methodology must be sensitive and adapted to the cultural context of learners and teachers. Disillusioned teachers and students condemn modern practices as leading to failure.

### **3. The present study and its objectives**

The present study reflects on the design of a textbook to prepare learners for the development of L2 communicative competence, while simultaneously being adapted to Chinese learners in a teaching and learning context heavily influenced by traditional methods, which emphasise knowledge of grammar and attach little importance to the use of the language. The aim of the study is to understand the sensitivity, perceptions, and preferences of a group of Chinese learners about what they consider to be a good textbook for learning a second language.

The sample for this study was a group of first year undergraduate Chinese students of Portuguese Studies at the University of Macao, who had recently arrived at the University after attending secondary schools in Macao or Mainland China, where traditional methods are predominant and form an important part of the identities and the educational backgrounds of learners. These students were, on average, 18 or 19 years old and were mostly full-time students. Cantonese or Mandarin was their mother tongue. All the students had approximately 12 years’ experience of learning English as a foreign language.

### **4. Methodology**

In order to understand the degree of preference of the students concerning the different components of an L2 textbook, a survey was distributed to a group of 42 Chinese first

year students of Portuguese Studies, corresponding to 65% of the students enrolled in the first semester of the 2018/2019 school year.

The instrument selected for data collection was a questionnaire, using 19 statements scored with a four-point Likert scale, and mostly inspired by the checklist of Cunningsworth (1995) which, among other aspects, highlights the factors to be considered when designing a textbook, such as the design and layout, the content, the development of the four competencies (oral and written production and comprehension), the topics, and the underlying teaching methodology. In addition, because the group of students had school backgrounds deeply marked by traditional methods, items also covered the students' mother tongue, grammar teaching, vocabulary lists, and the importance of structural exercises.

The initial statements were more related to the textbooks design in terms of images, colors and organization; followed by the grammar and communicative practice and exercises; ending with some declarations about the internet use during class time, audio materials, the use of ludic and more playful learning activities and the addition of more Portuguese culture aspects.

The questionnaire items were presented in Chinese and Portuguese to ensure that they were well understood by the participants. The survey was previously applied to a group of six learners as a means of pilot testing their effectiveness and clarity and eliminating ambiguity. Subsequently, it was distributed to the sample group. The data obtained was analysed and presented in graphical form.

## 5. Analysis of results

The first item of the survey was intended to evaluate the importance given to the design and layout of a textbook—the textbook should “be attractive and have beautiful and modern pictures”. 88% of the students valued the appearance and the visual quality of the textbook. In the case of ‘image-age’ young people, who are skilful users of new technology, one would expect them to be more concerned with the visual aspects of a textbook; however, in a culture that values education as a serious endeavour that requires sacrifice (Hu 2002), the design and layout of the textbook may be less important when learning a new language. The conclusion was that, first of all, and regardless of their cultural profile, these students were young people of the twenty-first century, more demanding than previously, and shaped by the aesthetic standards that new technology encourages.

Another survey item was: the textbook “must be organised and followed page by page”. For this statement, all the respondents agreed on the idea of organisation as something crucial to structuring and controlling knowledge, and perceiving and evaluating progress in learning. The textbook is the source of knowledge and the place where it is organised for acquisition. Concerning this point, 100% of the students agreed that the textbook should be followed page by page.

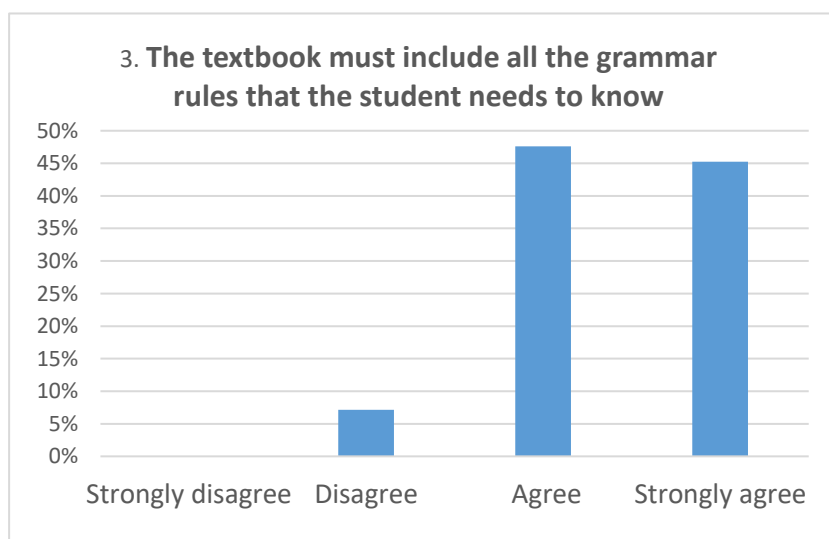
In daily teaching practice with Chinese students, it is very clear that they establish a strong attachment to the textbook – which they never forget to bring to class. The intention was to assess the importance and centrality of the textbook for these learners. In

traditional Chinese teaching culture, acquiring knowledge involves a great deal of reading. This probably explains the key role of textbooks in Chinese classrooms (Hu 2002). On this point, the students' responses confirmed the respect and importance they gave to textbooks in their school practice. For most Western teachers it is seen as natural not to strictly follow a textbook's content. A more flexible and critical attitude to what is taught is common for an experienced Western teacher who is already familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook.

For Chinese teachers, following a textbook is a way to control the lesson and the content being taught. In addition, the adopted textbook is essential in preparing for the national examinations, and changes in pedagogical practices are a major obstacle (Hird 1995). In China, few teachers have the courage to omit parts of the (officially adopted) textbook, because this could disadvantage the students in the examinations.

The statement that the textbook should “present all the grammar rules that the student needs to know” also raised a brief comment. The advantage of the Likert scale, as a data collection instrument, is its ability to assess the degree of importance, sympathy, and agreement with the particular factor that is being evaluated. In this case, it was expected that great importance would be attached to the presence of explicit rules in the textbook, at the level of 100%.

The results showed that, for 93% of the students, the presence of explicit grammatical rules was very important and 7.14% of the respondents said that they disagreed with the statement. Because these students were familiar with a teaching model in which the explicit rules of language must be presented very clearly, it was expected that they would select the level of agreement on the scale as *completely agree*. A teaching method in which the formal aspects of the language are not made explicit can generate dissatisfaction and frustration in the students (Tsui 2007); however, in this respect, the values were divided between *agree*, (47.61%) and *completely agree* (45.23%), as it is possible to verify in graph 1.



**Graphic 1. Results for question number 3**

These results suggested some change and more flexibility regarding learning methodologies and strategies might be appropriate. It seems that the new generation of students also deals well with new ways of learning such as, for example, the possibility of discovery and establishing their own hypotheses of the way the language works.

The results for the statement “must have grammar rules explained in Chinese” were also surprising. This statement aimed to evaluate the importance for these students of using their mother tongue. In the traditional method, everything is taught using the learners’ mother tongue (Larsen-Freeman 1997, Richards & Rodgers 2001) as a way to study the language, analyse its rules in a detailed and meticulous manner, and understand its lexicon. A high valuation of the learners’ mother tongue was expected, since it was a basic resource for grammar and translation. 80% of respondents considered that translation into the mother tongue was important; however, emphatic agreement was expected, with an incidence at the *completely agree* level. Instead, only 38% of respondents selected this option, while 43% selected the *agree* option and 19% said they disagreed. The same was true for the statement “must have vocabulary lists translated into Chinese”, to which 57.14% of the respondents agreed and 33.33% said they completely agreed: only 10% said they disagreed.

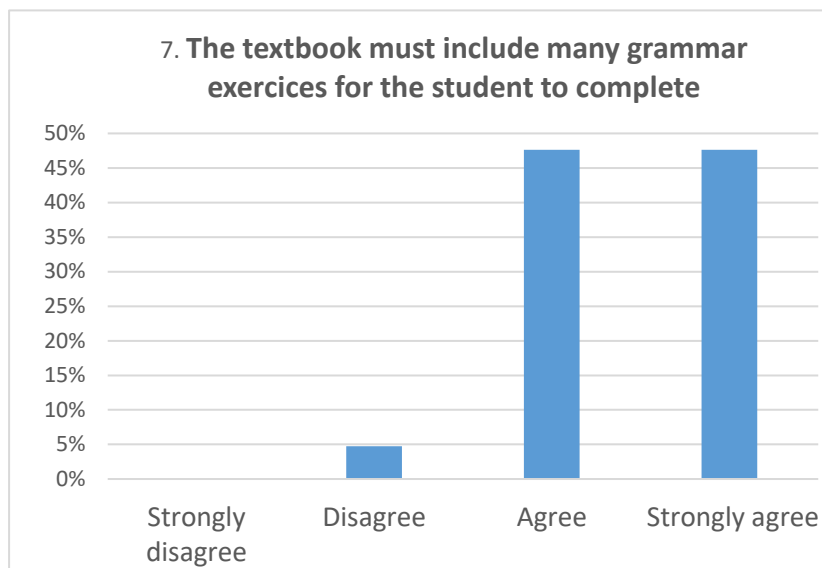
Regarding this point, it was concluded that translation into Chinese was indeed very important for these students; however, the data also suggested the possibility of less dependence on the use of the mother tongue. This could be explained by the ease of access to the Internet and online translators for vocabulary and short or long sentences. Definitely, the textbook is no longer the only learning resource. New technology tends to change perspectives and approaches, even in more traditional contexts.

Regarding whether the textbook “must include vocabulary lists for the student to memorise”, about 98% of the respondents considered it important, but the agreement was almost evenly divided between *agree* (45.23%) and *completely agree* (52.38%). In traditional methodologies, the lexicon is taught through vocabulary lists (with meanings in the mother tongue), by memorisation, and with the help of a dictionary (Richards & Rodgers 2001).

Modern pedagogical trends point to other ways of acquiring the language’s vocabulary. Learning the lexicon through reading, for example, is considerably more beneficial than through decontextualised word lists. Maley (2013) suggested massive amounts of extensive reading, rather than massive amounts of vocabulary, for memorisation; however, this is a very widespread learning strategy among Chinese learners who, even at the initial level of learning, are sometimes required to memorise extensive lists of isolated words.

Since this activity is highly demanding, it may no longer have as many followers as in the past; however, the results did not support this assumption. 98% of students agreed that a textbook should provide vocabulary lists for memorisation. This pronounced result reflected the fact that, in certain areas of learning, students were strongly shaped by the practices used throughout their years in school, which defined them as learners. A good student not only tries to memorise the lexicon proposed in each unit of the textbook; in the traditional format, he or she prepares and develops, semester by semester, a personal list, which will assist him or her for a long period of time.

The seventh survey item referred to the inclusion of grammar exercises: the textbook “must include many grammatical exercises for the student to complete”. This statement generated 95% agreement (*cf.* Graphic 2). There is no doubt that, for Chinese learners, this is also a crucial activity in learning a foreign language. On this point, it was also interesting to note that this agreement was divided between 47% of respondents who said they agreed and 47% who claimed to strongly agree.

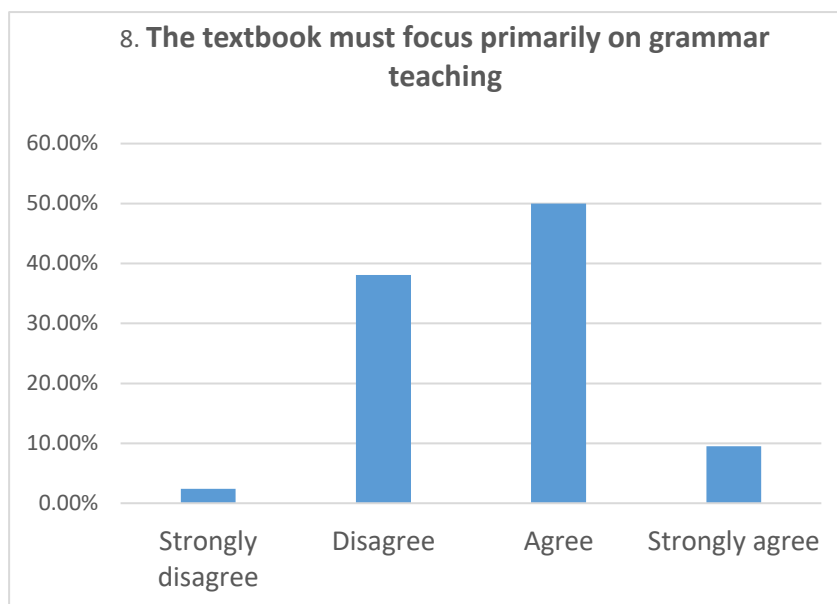


**Graphic 2. Seventh survey answers**

The percentage of agreement was as expected, and conformed to a learner profile shaped by traditional forms of grammar teaching: for such learners, learning a language means learning the formal structures of that language (Larsen-Freeman 2000). Grammar is studied in a deductive way; that is, the teacher presents the rules, clarifies their use in the student's mother tongue, and the student applies them in sequences of structured, repetitive, substitution exercises until the mechanism is internalised and used successfully. It should be noted that, in a traditional teaching model, the role of the student is to listen carefully to the teacher's explanations and, subsequently, complete the associated exercises. Studying grammar involves memorising rules and completing structural exercises. This format is so deeply rooted in the practices of Chinese students that abandoning it implies incomplete and imperfect study.

It is worth mentioning the result obtained for the statement the textbook “must focus mainly on the teaching of grammar”. As already mentioned, for a Chinese learner, grammar has a prominent place (95% of the respondents consider that it is important for a textbook to include a large number of grammar exercises, 93% valued the presence of explicit grammar rules in a textbook, and 95% considered that it was important for the textbook to have a supplementary grammar exercise book); however, when they were asked whether the textbook should focus primarily on grammar teaching, the level of disagreement was very high as it can be seen on Graphic 3.



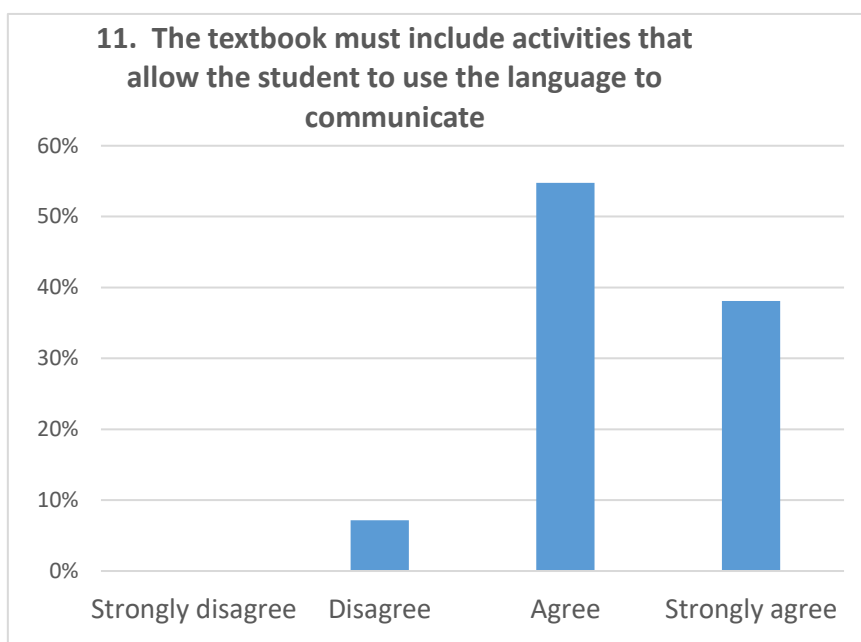


**Graphic 3. Results for question number 8**

Observing the graph, about 40% of students disagreed with this statement, 54.5% agreed, and only 4.5% agreed completely. Of all the statements that were included in the survey, this was the one that attracted the lowest percentage for the option *I completely agree*.

This result was interesting because, for these students, the focus of textbooks should no longer be on grammar. The level of disagreement with this aspect is very significant, possibly indicating a change of perspective. This new generation of learners already seems to share a conception of language as a means to communicate, so activities that aim to develop skills in listening and speaking are also important.

Statements 11 (the textbook “must include activities that allow the student to use the language to communicate”), 12 (“must have oral comprehension activities”), 13 (“must have written comprehension exercises”) and 14 (“must include activities that help the student to practice writing”) were intended to evaluate the degree of receptivity of learners to activities aimed towards using the language and developing communicative competence.



**Graphic 4. Students opinion's regarding statement 11**

Regarding statement 11 (the textbook “must include activities that allow the student to use the language to communicate”), and according to the presented graph about 55% of the respondents do agree with this idea and only 17% disagree.

These results showed the receptivity of students to activities that develop skills: about 93% of respondents considered it important that the textbook included activities that facilitated language use. About 98% thought that it was important for the textbook to include activities for practicing language usage, and for increasing oral and written comprehension. Although the traditional ways of learning grammar were not questioned, it seems very clear that the students felt the need for other activities that would provide them with competence and proficiency in using the language.

To the statement about whether a textbook “must have a supplementary book with texts for extensive reading”, 79% of informants were receptive to the idea of authentic texts as a possible learning resource. Although 22% of the students say they disagreed, it seems likely that introducing changes in the format of textbooks, and including texts from authentic sources, would simultaneously promote knowledge of the associated culture. The results for this statement were not entirely surprising, since the use of classical texts as a way of learning a language is fundamental to the traditional model and underpins the imaginary and methodological references of learners.

Regarding the level of agreement expressed by respondents concerning playful activities, 100% considered these activities important and 52.38% fully agreed with the inclusion of playful activities in the textbook as a fun way to learn, which was somewhat surprising. Again, a possible conclusion is that, although they were familiar with a teaching model that expects students to remain silent and concentrate intently on what the teacher says, and in which playful activities are seen as frivolous (Chang 2011), the results of this survey point to a learner profile that is more open and receptive to other teaching and learning paradigms, in which communication in the target language is very important.

Statement 17, that the textbook “must provide students with more knowledge about the culture of the target language”, was intended to assess the degree of receptivity of the students to aspects of the target culture. About 97% of the informants considered it important that textbooks provide more knowledge about the culture of the target language. On the one hand, learners had some awareness that a new language conveys something about another culture; on the other hand, in the case of two cultures that are so different, the students revealed, perhaps more than mere interest, definite curiosity about the culture. For statement 18, that the textbook “must give an indication of websites for students to supplement their study”, 81% of students considered the Internet to be a relevant resource, but 19.04% disagreed. In the case of students for whom new technology is already an integral part of their lifestyles, greater receptivity, and perhaps no disagreement, was expected. This resource, as a supplement to textbooks, is something new that, naturally, raises some doubts and reservations; however, the students were open to the idea of learning from the Internet and new models for a textbook.

## 6. Discussion of results

The results of this study confirmed the importance of cultural heritage in the teaching and learning of these students. They confirmed the prominence given to grammar and the mother tongue as supports for L2 teaching and also highlighted a learner profile that values communicative activities as a learning resource. The students naturally accepted playful activities as somewhat frivolous, but they were receptive to learning about the target language’s associated culture and using literary texts, or other authentic texts, to complement learning.

The results of the questionnaire revealed that the mother tongue is an absolutely necessary support that the learners cannot do without. As Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) pointed out, translation should be used whenever students need it. There was also a strong conviction about the place of grammar in language teaching. A textbook that does not explicitly teach grammar and its rules does not generate sympathy or confidence in these learners. It will probably not be taken seriously, consequently disrupting learning and compromising results. A didactic manual for these learners must make a significant investment in the grammar of the language. A textbook that invests mainly in tasks and playful activities, and does not embody clear pedagogical benefits, may not be well received by Chinese students.

Teaching the grammar of the target language is fundamental, especially when the structure of the language is completely different from that of the students’ mother tongue. The knowledge of the grammar of a language is absolutely necessary. As Swan (1985) points out, languages are complex systems, and it is neglectful not to teach grammar when it is desirable. A knowledge of grammar is necessary for effective communication to take place, so a language course should provide classes that explicitly work with grammar and its rules, but this does not mean reverting to traditional methods (Thompson 1996).

With groups of learners in a specific cultural context, imposing teaching models radically opposed to their common beliefs and practices is not desirable; however, because grammar cannot be the sole focus of learning, and because the pedagogical value

of massive amounts of structural exercises is questioned by modern pedagogies, the textbook can be supplemented by material for download prepared by a team and negotiated with the publisher. In this way, textbooks could make use, with enormous pedagogical benefits, of the new technology, thereby modernising the traditional pedagogical model. In this way, textbooks could be made more flexible and adaptable to the individual styles and preferences their users. A student who considers it important to carry out extensive structural exercises can do so freely, according to the availability of time and his intrinsic beliefs, but having access to different study options, whether reading or grammar, is essential in promoting the students' desired autonomy.

A textbook that comprises a balance of approaches is also more flexible; thus, it is more easily adaptable to the different styles and perspectives of its users. Nowadays, teaching cannot use a single method; on the contrary, it should emphasise the variety of different methods that have changed the role of the teacher from that of an information provider to that of a facilitator of learning or provider of a positive learning environment (Blumberg 2009).

It is possible to make some concessions regarding linguistic content—the teaching of grammar and vocabulary. The inclusion of grammatical content in a contextualised, perceptible, and salient way should be the first step. It may have benefits for the learner to perceive, for himself, some important features of the language; thus, instead of providing all the rules of, or information about, a certain linguistic feature or some specificities of a text, it may be more productive to propose that the student to make his own discoveries (Tomlinson 2010). Perceiving for themselves how a particular linguistic structure works means that students learn more consistently and enduringly; however, giving students explicit rules can also be convenient and saves time. A hybrid approach, in which the inductive and deductive practices complement each other, is desirable and may be the most flexible approach for students and teachers.

Considering the results of our survey, it was noticed that there was great openness to activities that facilitate the development of comprehension and oral and written production. These activities were very well accepted, won the sympathy of the respondents, and are considered crucial by current pedagogies, which establish the development of competence in communication as the ultimate goal of teaching; in this sense, our results were in agreement with Nunan (1999), showing that individuals must understand language as communication, and not merely as a list of facts to be memorised. Grammar is one of the components that give an identity to each language. Knowing a language involves understanding its grammar and vocabulary; however, something is wrong when a student has studied a language for seven years and cannot express everyday notions or perform basic communicative functions, such as asking for a glass of water or a hiring a taxi (Swan 1985). Such deficiencies mean that learners have not acquired the elementary competence to communicate in the basic situations of daily life. This situation requires deep reflection and a radical change in the approach to language teaching.

Acquiring communicative competence in a language means acquiring linguistic competence; however, linguistic competence alone is not enough. One of the basic principles of learning, according to Tomlinson (2010), is rich experience in the use of a language. Not encouraging the students to communicate delays the whole process

significantly. It is the responsibility of the teacher and the textbook to guide learners in the adventure of discovering the most complex or peculiar structures of each language and its use.

The results of this survey of Chinese learners showed that they were open to the idea of including literary texts in the target language. Although these might be more difficult to understand, students were willing to meet the challenge. Such acceptance is very important and should be considered when designing textbooks. Teaching materials should contain many and varied written and spoken texts that provide extensive linguistic experience (Tomlinson 2010). Authentic texts (literary and otherwise), carefully selected according to the level of the learners, facilitate language practice and the dissemination of culture. In pedagogical terms, these materials can fill the gaps that result from texts that are too simple or specifically focus on vocabulary or grammatical features. Authentic materials in textbooks may be a desirable means of providing learners with rich input through natural language samples, promoting knowledge of, and reflection on, the target language's associated culture.

Nowadays, according to Blumberg (2009), the teacher cannot be the sole source of knowledge, since new technology is an important information resource. With Chinese learners, some changes must be introduced gradually regarding, for example, the use of the Internet as a complement to a textbook, and the results of the questionnaire showed that students still have reservations about using this technological resource. Chinese students are familiar with a traditional teaching model in which the lesson proceeds according to the teacher's instructions, with the support of textbooks and dictionaries; however, in the case of young people for whom the Internet is vital, it is possible to implement new teaching and learning models and to familiarise students with the new sources of knowledge, such as the Internet.

Again, the challenge will be to strike a balance that does not disrespect or violate learners' convictions, or create disruptive situations or lack of confidence in the learning process. In fact, this discovery of new paradigms must be made by everyone involved—educational institutions, teachers, and students.

The integration of modern language teaching trends with the best contributions of traditional methods is desirable. According to Nunan (1999), contemporary practice represents an evolution that incorporates the best of traditional pedagogy, rather than rejecting it, and for this reason, current textbooks must evolve.

## **7. Conclusions**

The results of this study revealed the strong influence of the traditional culture of respondents' education. From the perspective of these students, textbooks should provide knowledge of target language's grammar, and grammatical rules and vocabulary should be translated into Chinese; however, there was also an awareness that a language learning does not depend only on a knowledge of grammar, and that the communicative activities are very important if the learner is to become a proficient user of the language. The students were completely open and receptive to new teaching approaches that complemented their usual learning practices.

In a time of global relationships and interactions, teaching has to be active and collaborative, preparing students and citizens for action and interaction in life, work, and relationships with others. People no longer study to know about a language's morphosyntactic structure, lexicon, and phonological features: they invest time, money, and effort in learning a language as a utilitarian tool – a way to get to know others, make friends, and be part of the global world.

To respect learners' convictions, textbooks should involve students in the language, raise awareness, stimulate participation in a globalised world, and promote the conviction that learners need a language in order to act and to express opinions and feelings. Textbooks are also partly responsible for preparing young people (today's students; tomorrow's active citizens) for the challenges of the twenty-first century and promoting their success. For textbooks to effectively fulfil their function, they must meet the goals and expectations of the users. Involving students in communicative activities that facilitate knowledge of multiple aspects of the language is necessary for learners who want to be successful professionals in the future – teachers, translators, and interpreters (Belchior 2011; Cheong & Wong 2017). They, like all young people of the twenty-first century, want to be prepared for responding to the challenges of the new millennium.

## References

- Belchior, M. J. (2011, June). Chineses aprendem mais português. *Revista Macau*, 23. Retrieved from <http://www.revistamacau.com/2011/06/05/chineses-aprendem-mais-portugues>
- Blumberg, P. (2009). *Developing learner-centered teaching: A practical guide for faculty*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. New York: Longman.
- Brumfit, C. J. (1980). Seven last slogans. *Modern English Teacher*, 7(1), 30–31.
- Celce-Murcia, M., & Larsen-Freeman, D. (1999). *The grammar book: An ESL/EFL teacher's course* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
- Chang, S.C. (2011). A contrastive study of grammar translation method and communicative approach in teaching English grammar. *English Language Teaching*, 4(2), 13–24. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v4n2p13>
- Cheong, E., & Wong, S. (2017). How Portuguese skills benefit UM graduates' career development. *Umazine*, 16, 20–25.
- Cunningsworth, A. (1995). *Choosing your Coursebook*. Oxford: Macmillan Heineman.
- Finocchiaro, M., & Brumfit, C. (1983). *The functional-notional approach: From theory to practice*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Haycroft, J. (1998). *An introduction to English language teaching*. London: Longman.
- Hird, B. (1995). Teaching English communicatively in China – Educating teachers is not enough. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 20(2), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.1995v20n2.1>
- Hu, G. (2002). Potential cultural resistance to pedagogical imports: The case of communicative language teaching in China. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 15(2), 93–105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07908310208666636>
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (1994). The postmethod condition: (E)merging strategies for second/foreign language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28(1), 27–47.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2003). Problematizing cultural stereotypes in TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly*, 37(4), 709–719.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2006). Tesol Methods: Changing tracks, challenging trends. *Tesol Quarterly*, 40(1), 59–81.

- Larsen-Freeman, D. (1997). Chaos/complexity science and second language acquisition. *Applied Linguistics* 18(2), 141–65.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and principles in language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Littlewood, W. (2013). Developing a context-sensitive pedagogy for communication-oriented language teaching. *English Teaching*, 68(3), 3–25. <https://doi.org/10.15858/engtea.68.3.201309.3>
- Maley, A. (2013). Vocabulary. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Applied linguistics and materials development*. London: Bloomsbury.
- McDonough, J., Shaw, C., & Masuhara, H. (2013). *Materials and methods in ELT: A teacher's guide*. (3.<sup>a</sup> ed.). Maine: Wiley-Blackwell.
- McGrath, I. (2002). *Materials evaluation and design for language teaching*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Nunan, D. (1991). Communicative task and language curriculum. *TESOL Quarterly*, 25(2), 279–295. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587464>
- Nunan, D. (1999). *Second language teaching and learning*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sheldon, L. E. (1987). Introduction. In L. E. Sheldon (Coord.), *ELT textbooks and materials: Problems in evaluation and development*. ELT Documents, 126. London: Modern English Publications/ The British Council.
- Sheldon, L. E. (1988). Evaluating ELT textbooks and materials. *ELT Journal*, 42(4), 237–246. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/42.4.237>
- Swan, M. (1985). A critical look at the communicative approach (1). *ELT Journal*, 39(1), 2–12. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/39.1.2>
- Thompson, G. (1996). Some misconceptions about communicative language teaching. *ELT Journal*, 50(1), 9–15. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/50.1.9>
- Tomlinson, B. (2010). Language acquisition and language learning materials. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *English language learning materials: A critical review*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Tomlinson, B. (2013). Introduction: Applied linguistics and materials development. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Applied linguistics and materials development*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Tsui, A. B. M. (2007). Complexities of identity formation: A narrative inquiry of an EFL teacher. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41(4), 657–680. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1545-7249.2007.tb00098.x>
- Weimer, M. (2002). *Learner-centered teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

[Submitted on February 19, 2020 and accepted for publication on May 19, 2020]