

Time and history in lyrics: A unique approach to teaching culture and civilization

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Abstract

This paper describes an alternative and unique format to the customary culture and civilization course taught at the upper levels in a university foreign language curriculum. The semester-long course employed a content-based design that combined language instruction and learning with authentic music generated during distinct historical eras in China. Song lyrics representing different epochs were the lens through which students investigated the target culture, its historical, social, and political background. Employing music as the major vehicle and organizing principle of the course proved to be highly motivational for students, as shown in pre- and post-test survey results and end-of-course questionnaire responses.¹ This format is easily generalizable across languages and target cultures.

Introduction

Language and culture are undeniably and inextricably intertwined. Language learning is absolutely more than the sum of its (grammatical and lexical) parts and cannot stand alone without the surrounding support of the culture it represents

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NECTFL Review, Number 81, March 2018, pp. 45-65. © 2018 by Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

(Díaz, 2016). Indeed, this belief is confirmed in the World-Readiness Standards handbook: "... the true content of a language course or program is not discrete elements of grammar and vocabulary, but rather the cultures expressed through the language" (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015, p. 68). Thus, the ubiquitous culture and civilization course, generally taught at advanced levels of language instruction, takes on paramount importance in the development of students' linguistic and cultural proficiency. Nearly all tertiary institutions with language majors include at least one such course in the curriculum; often these courses are organized around a textbook based on geographic regions of target language countries. The course curriculum described here takes a unique and fresh approach to the study of culture and civilization by using historical time periods and their concomitant representation in music and songs of the eras as its organizing principle. This paper presents a rationale for employing such a format, a detailed description of the development and content of the course, and methods of assessment of student activity during the course. Students took a pre- and post-test survey involving cultural knowledge. They also responded to an end-of-course questionnaire in which they expressed their opinions about the efficacy of this new format and content vis-à-vis their interest, motivation, and overall learning¹. These results are discussed below.

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Rationale for content-based instruction

Using a content-based instructional (CBI) approach was the first decision made for the course. Rather than concentrate on decontextualized language bits and pieces, a focus on cultural content—specifically historical and political occurrences as reflected through the music and songs of each era—was determined. Met offers quite a detailed explanation of all facets of CBI and provides a continuum against which various hybrids of this approach can be measured and categorized (Met, 1999). At one end (to the left) of the continuum are the variations falling under the label of content-driven instruction. At the other end (to the right) of the continuum are those under the rubric of language-driven instruction. Theme-based courses fall on the right-hand side of this line, as they are frequently courses conceived to facilitate foreign language (FL) instruction but also incorporate a theme around which the curriculum is organized. Themes are selected for a variety of reasons, including their potential to contribute to growth in the learner's linguistic and cultural acumen. Chinese 495 (Time and History in Lyrics) is such a theme-based course, having an underpinning of cultural history and politics through music as its premise.

A CBI curricular method was selected for several reasons. First, CBI is well-supported by second language acquisition (SLA) research (Cammarata, 2009; Channa & Soomro, 2015; Corrales, 2011; Heinz, 2010; Kong, 2009). Next, CBI is viewed as a method in which students focus more on content than form, leading

Time and history in lyrics

to a deeper level of the language-learning process (Abrudan, 2016; Met, 1999; Rodgers, 2014; Stryker & Leaver, 1997). A CBI methodology can be effective in teaching advanced language-level classes (Larsen-Freeman & Freeman, 2008) and can be used across divergent instructional contexts, depending on program goals (Lyster & Ballinger, 2011). This pedagogical approach has also proved successful in promoting critical thinking in the target language (Heinz 2010). Often CBI focuses on real-life issues and topics, and as such engenders higher student motivation (Channa & Soomro, 2015; Corrales, 2011; Met, 1999; Stryker & Leaver, 1997). No inconsequential variable in successful language learning, motivation in CBI can be augmented by careful selection of themes of high interest to students. Topics that are relevant, meaningful, interesting, and even controversial can capture student attention and increase student motivation (Corrales, 2011; Heinz, 2010; Iaccarino, 2012; Kern, 2008; Liu, 2013; Met, 1999).

Once the CBI decision is taken, the next step is to decide on themes for the course. This choice is crucial as it will set the stage for the rest of course development and has the potential to “make or break” the course in terms of student interest, motivation, and application. Students viewing subject content as useful and interesting to them are more disposed to positive engagement with the course. The World-Readiness Standards include the goal area of Connections, a purposeful effort to connect the FL curriculum with the rest of students’ academic lives and foment an inward and outward flow of information and ideas. The additional knowledge gained through these connections provides students with broader learning experiences leading to acquisition of 21st- century skills for success (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). The Connections standards involve linking the FL and culture to other disciplines; students gain insight into other viewpoints that is only possible to obtain through the target language and culture (Díaz, 2016; Heinz, 2010; Kern, 2008). Chinese 495 is a culture and civilization course that teaches about history, politics, and modern Chinese culture during sequential time periods in the 20th century. The connections to other disciplines made by this immersion course are obvious, powerful, and potentially long-lasting as they are made through the medium of music.

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Song lyrics as an organizing principle

The use of music and in particular song lyrics for this course was an appealing idea for two main reasons. First, music is nearly always a reflection of the culture from which it comes, and Chinese 495 is first and foremost a culture and civilization class. As previously stated, there exists an indelible connection between language and culture; therefore, teaching language via culture—in this case as reflected through music—is natural and sensible. Music provides a window into the culture that it reflects (Elliott, 1995; Kern, 2008). The World-Readiness Standards goal area of Cultures come into play here also as music is definitely a product embodying one or more perspectives of a particular culture (Dema & Moeller,

2012; Eddy, 2007; The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). Music frequently reflects the historical values and contemporary life experiences of a particular people and/or era. As such, it is a strong cultural phenomenon that students can examine to see what is significant in the target language culture (Goering & Wei, 2014; Harbon, 2013; Koo, 2000; Larsen-Freeman & Freeman, 2008). Additionally, music—and a close examination of song lyrics—can help students understand social, political, and cultural events that may elude their understanding (Lau, 2007; Law & Ho, 2006; Law & Ho, 2011; Murray, 2005). Improved intercultural understanding and reduction of cultural biases are worthy goals of language instruction through music (Abril, 2003; Liu, 2013; Rodgers, 2014).

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The second reason is the long-standing suggestion of an association between musical ability and second language acquisition. Researchers have long been interested in whether or not using music in language teaching is effective (Fonseca-Mora & Grant, 2016). Some studies have shown benefits derived from using music in the FL classroom for instruction, including positive influences on memory, attention and effort, lowered affective filter, better linguistic perception, improved test scores, and improved physiological effects (e.g., lowered heart rate, respiratory rate, and blood pressure) (Debreceeny, 2015; Fonseca-Mora, 2000; Fonseca-Mora, Toscano-Fuentes, & Wermke, 2011; Fonseca-Mora & Grant, 2016; Kennedy, 2006; Koo, 2000; Li & Brand, 2009; Salcedo, 2010). There is also some evidence that the effects of CBI and the use of music on the brain do have a positive impact on second language development (Debreceeny, 2015; Kennedy, 2006; Li & Brand, 2009; Marie, Delogu, Lampis, Belardinelli, & Besson, 2011; Murphey, 1990; Salcedo, 2010).

Some researchers note that adults spend up to 50% of their daily time listening, compared to only upwards of 16% of their time reading (Kean, 2013; Murray, 2005). Thus, auditory input is a prime factor in everyday life. When taken in conjunction with the general popularity of music as an auditory input, it is not surprising that songs can be quite influential in terms of making information “stick” in learners’ minds. Murphey (1990, 1992) explains this as the “song-stuck-in-my-head” phenomenon (SSIMHP) and relates it to the din that language learners experience while progressing along their interlanguage continuum. Most likely, everyone has experienced the SSIMHP at one time or another, perhaps to a maddening degree. It seems beneficial, then, to take advantage of this phenomenon to enhance the linguistic and cultural learning of students by using music and song lyrics as vehicles for CBI in Chinese 495.

Methodology

Song Selections

In order to enhance student understanding of Chinese culture, history, politics, and language in various periods of time in Chinese history, it was necessary to ensure

Time and history in lyrics

that each song be representative of its time, and that it provide a clear connection between the lyrics and the history and culture it contained. There are many methods for selecting representative songs, including by genres, styles, or chronological periods of time in Chinese history. In this particular course, songs were first selected based on chronological order by decades from the 1920s-1930s, the 1940s-1950s, the 1960s, the 1970s, and so on, and then by genres and styles. These selected songs were well-known during their time, and often contained noteworthy music or very expressive lyrics that reflected the historical, political, and cultural challenges of the period. Another essential consideration—even requirement—was that the lyrics and stories be meaningful, and that they contain appropriate grammar and vocabulary suited to the students' Chinese language level. The literary nature of the lyrics was also an important element as a representation of the cultural and historical period. Finally, the background of the lyricist or songwriter was also considered; those composers who were most representative of each particular era were chosen.

For this course, several genres of songs were employed. In order to underscore the lengthy history of music-making in China, some eight thousand years or more (Moore, 2009), an initial brief treatment of ancient Chinese music was presented. For example, as a general backdrop to the entire theme of lyrics and music, ancient folk songs were selected and presented from *The Book of Songs: The Ancient Chinese Classic of Poetry* (Allen & Waley, 1996), one of the world's most outstanding collections of poetry and traditional songs remaining from China's Ancient Classical period. The end of the Qing dynasty, circa 1911, (Tian, 2013) signaled the beginning of the Republic of China, with all the concomitant influences pouring in from the western world. These influences naturally had a great impact on the sociocultural landscape, including literature, art, and music production. For example, the music available and popular in Shanghai during the 1920s and 1930s closely resembled the music prevalent in the United States during that same time period.

Military songs were identified that represented the 1940s in China, a period dominated by the war with Japan, and later, the Chinese Civil War. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was represented by patriotic songs popular during the 1960s. Next, the open-door policies and economic reforms of the government of the 1970s and 1980s encouraged the influx of foreign culture and influence into China. Thus, this era was represented by popular songs influenced by the so-called "Decadent Music" from Taiwan. Teresa Deng Lijun, for example, reworked Shanghai tunes from the 1930s that had previously been designated as improper or "yellow" music—a reference to its association with pornography and sexually indecent lyrics (White, 1998). Songs from the 1990s-2000s were characterized by the rise of Chinese Rock and Rap protest music that developed following the Tiananmen Square incident as students and young professionals began demanding more political, economic, and social freedoms. The music of Cui Jian, known as the "godfather of Chinese rock," embodied the unrest of the times with such songs as "Nothing to My Name" and "The Last Gunshot," an anthem to the violence of Tiananmen Square (Tong, 2016). Finally, music from the current decade (2010 to present day) was characterized by popular music originating on television or through the Internet. In contrast to movie music from the United States film industry, which sometimes uses already-existing,

classical, popular, and/or famous songs as background (viz., the soundtracks for such movies as “Goodfellas,” “A Clockwork Orange,” and “The King’s Speech”), in China the music and songs are written specifically for that particular medium, such as movie and television drama. Along with the media venue, these songs are almost instantaneously wildly popular.

Curriculum Design and Course Delivery

The course curriculum was structured to enable students to make the connection between their second language acquisition process and how the language actually relates to social development and change in Chinese history and culture. Throughout the semester, as students were introduced to new songs, they were provided with information on the biographical background of the composers and the lyricists. They were also introduced to various music styles in general and their associated terminologies. A contextual explanation of the cultural and historical events of the times was also provided, to expand the students’ understanding of the period. The instructor also offered additional information through personal stories, news media accounts, articles, or books to further illustrate the political and societal circumstances in which the songs were created. All instruction by the instructor and interactions in the course between and among students and instructor were in the target language: Mandarin Chinese. A typical daily lesson plan indicating activities of a regular class period is found in Appendix A.

The songs selected were studied in chronological order, beginning from the 1920s. This approach not only allowed the students to immerse themselves in the Chinese culture and society of the period, but also allowed them to explore concurrent musical and cultural developments occurring in the United States. Each decade of musical development in China was accompanied by a corresponding examination of the political, social, and musical movements that were occurring at the same time in the United States. For example, during the 1960s, China was experiencing the Cultural Revolution during which most music was relegated to propaganda directed at praising the Great Leader, Chairman Mao, the Communist Party, and the movement. One notable song from the period was “The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is Good” (Bandurski, 2011). During this period, China was experiencing the peak of the cultural and political influence of the Communist party and the government, and individual freedom of expression in music and literature was non-existent. Conversely, in the United States, the students discovered that instead of pro-government platitudes, the society and its music reflected very different attitudes and movements within the country, especially the anti-government and anti-Vietnam War movements, the sexual revolution, and the civil rights movement. A notable song during this period in America was Bob Dylan’s “Blowin’ in the Wind,” (1962), which became a rallying call for anti-war protestors, not just in the United States, but all over the world (Naylor, 2000). As indicated in Appendix A, students made such time period-based cultural comparisons between activities in China and the United States on a regular basis in class.

By the 1980s, however, the political landscape in China had changed with the emergence of Deng Xiaoping, who initiated China’s open-door policy and economic

Time and history in lyrics

reform. These dramatic changes to society were illustrated in film, literature, music, and television. Popular Chinese music shifted away from propaganda promoting the government to lyrics that celebrated love, individual expressions, individual happiness, and societal prosperity. Deng's open-door policy led to the introduction of "Decadent Music" from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the West.

As Chinese society continued its rapid development, bringing with it increased prosperity, especially to the cities, China's music began to reflect contemporary societal concerns. Societal problems surrounding migration of farmers from remote areas of the countryside to the major cities to find work created issues with education, healthcare, and housing. A representative rock and roll song by Wang Feng from the 2000s entitled, "Beijing Beijing," (chinaSMACK, 2013) echoed much of the migrants' frustrations. The expression of their hopes and dissatisfactions while trying to achieve the "Chinese" dream, encompassed by rock and roll style and lyrics, was a phenomenon learned and imported from the West.

The students also encountered an interesting parallel of Chinese musical expression that was very similar to music created in the United States during the 1980s. Known as Charity singles, Chinese music such as "Let the World be Filled with Love," (Ho, 2014) emulates the American classic of the same period called "We are the World" (Sullivan, 2012). In both cases, this music was used to bring attention to African hunger issues, and, most recently, for Haitian earthquake relief efforts. The growth of this type of music in China reflects progress toward a greater connection with the global society and an awareness of global issues such hunger, natural disasters, and world peace.

Student Research and Presentations

To further enhance their language skills, as well as to develop greater cross-cultural awareness, students were assigned projects with the following three components: (1) research Chinese songs within their cultural and historical contexts; (2) compare songs from the same genre or era in both China and the United States; and then (3) present their findings to the group and lead overall discussion based on questions they have generated. All of these presentations were conducted in the target language. For each project, students worked in small groups (2-3 students) and subsequently presented their project to the entire class. These presentations addressed the background of the song, analyzed the lyrics in the context of their cultural and historical period, and identified the political and social undertones of the time. Students explained why they chose the particular songs and also discussed which lyrics were most meaningful to them. Their presentations then generated in-depth discussions about China and its decade-by-decade development, as well as parallels and contrasting ideas concurrent in the United States.

For example, one group of students found a Chinese song entitled "Friends" (Wang, 2015). This song was meaningful to these students because the lyrics suggested the value of having friends to help one through difficult or challenging periods of time. The song resonated with these students because they had collectively conquered a challenging academic and military training experience, and were now about to graduate and be individually assigned to far-flung locations around the

world, far from family and friends. Another example: the song, “Meihua,” (Chang & Holt, 2006) is often used metaphorically to symbolize the beauty, grace, strength, and resilience of women. “Meihua” – the plum blossom, is a cherished national symbol in China, and its beauty, resilience, and ability to endure harsh elements are treasured. This song was meaningful to our female students who have had to overcome the challenges associated with a male-dominated military environment.

Examples of student work

The instructional methodology employed in this course resulted in some very impressive student Chinese language and culture learning. During the course, students were asked to write an essay about their favorite Chinese song, select two songs to perform in front of their classmates, and create the lyrics to their own song, all in the target language. And, as the following examples demonstrate, they were fully engaged in a student-centered learning process.

Composition: For the essay portion, each student was instructed to select a favorite Chinese song, research the lyricist and composer, and then either compare the music to a contemporary western piece, or describe how it was representative of the student’s own experiences. One student selected a piece entitled “Sunshine in the Cracks” [“裂縫中的陽光”]. In his essay, he described it as an inspiring song about a depressed man who shed tears in bed, and mentioned that occasionally, when he (the student) was feeling dispirited, he enjoyed listening to the song. He described a verse in the song that stated “wait until the dark night passes, for the light of a new day,” [“等到黑夜翻面之后, 会是新的白昼”]. He interpreted this to mean that individuals should have hope, for every day is a new experience, and that we should not be too worried about the difficult challenges from yesterday. He also described another line that said “life will not only be about the harvest, but will also inevitably include sorrow” [“人生不会只有收获 总难免有伤口”]. The student felt that the sentiment expressed in the lyrics was very real, “because many times, life is not always happy. Often, we are disappointed and do not want to move forward. But this sentence says we have to keep trying.” He then went on to explain that the lyrics that had the most powerful impact on him were as follows: “Do not be afraid of the imperfect corner of life, because the sun is scattered in every crack” [“不要害怕生命中 不完美的角落, 阳光在每个裂缝中散落”]. He concluded his essay by explaining that “Sunshine in the cracks” was very interesting to him personally because when he was ten years old, he learned to play this song on the piano. He then performed it for the elderly in a nursing home. He felt that the song gave him confidence to share his talents, as well as the personal backstory to his favorite Chinese song.

Song Presentation: Each student was required to learn and sing two Chinese songs. They performed in groups of two or three, to minimize reticence in singing in front of peers. During their presentations to their classmates and instructors, the students were expected to use the target language to explain why they chose each song and describe the period of time in which it was composed, as well as any relevant historical, cultural, or societal stimulus that may have influenced the song writer. In addition, students were asked to research the lyricist and the composer and to explain their background and any personal experiences that may have

Time and history in lyrics

contributed to the music development. Students were then asked to discuss their favorite line in the song and explain why that particular verse resonated with them. Following their presentation, classmates and instructors had the opportunity to ask questions and gain more insight into the music.

After singing, the student who chose to learn the aforementioned traditional Chinese folk song called “Meihua” [“梅花”], explained that her favorite line was “it is not afraid of cold or snow, wind or rain” [“冰雪风雨它都不怕”]. She said that line deeply affected her attitude towards some of the challenges and difficulties she personally had been facing. She also stated that she was determined to acquire those attributes of resilience and strength to meet the challenges of her environment, emulating the Meihua.

Composing Lyrics: Through this process, students not only learned the techniques of writing poetry using Chinese characters, they also became more aware of how powerful personal experiences, coupled with societal and cultural changes, can influence the music that is written. Another student wrote lyrics for a song about unrequited love entitled “I Still Love You” [“还在爱你”]. In this composition, he did not draw upon historical or cultural experiences to compose his lyrics. Instead, he reflected again and again on his personal experience to create the lyrics that ultimately expressed his inner thoughts and deepest feelings. The song’s refrain is hauntingly beautiful and poignant. In it, he laments “I hold you, You push me; I love you, You hurt me; Whatever I can do, I will do, to show that my love for you is real; Though much time has passed, Still I love you” [“我抱你, 你推我; 我爱你, 你伤我; 我什么都可以做就做, 给你看我对你的爱是真正的; 虽然过很多时间, 但我还在爱你”]. He explained to the class that the song-writing process was cathartic, allowing him to express feelings and emotions that had been long suppressed. He indicated that although his feelings towards his former love had not necessarily changed, he no longer felt the deep loneliness that had once consumed him.

Assessments and Evaluations

Different assessment methods/instruments were employed; all required reception and production skills in the target language. These assessments included classroom discussions, essay writing, vocabulary and sentence structure quizzes, comprehensive questionnaires/exams with translations, group presentations, song writing, and even a singing performance. Students were able to utilize critical thinking skills in relation to history, culture, politics, and societal issues through these music lyrics.

Student progress was assessed through group research presentations, individual written essays, and lyric composition. The aforementioned group research projects were focused on the cultural and societal background of the songs, as well as the historical events of the times and their influence on the music. In addition, students were expected to become familiar with the composer and lyricist background and biographies, as well as to identify any other interesting stories and information about how the songs they researched were inspired or created. Students in the group were graded individually based on their presentation in the language, their

content knowledge, and their ability to generate critical thinking among the rest of the students. The individual written essays were analyses of certain songs from a variety of approaches: for example, (1) compare and contrast (usually) a Chinese and an American song, (2) discussion of the literary quality of the songs, (3) a biography of the lyricist, (4) a recompilation of the sociocultural background of the era and its relation to the song.

Individual written essays in the target language focused on the cultural and historical context in which the songs were written and highlighted societal change that may have been influenced by the music. Finally, students had the opportunity to select their favorite music style, genre, and historical era, and then compose their own lyrics appropriate to the times.

The benefits of the development of these skills had repercussions and a reach far beyond Chinese 495. Exploration and subsequent mastery of these skills help shape the way students approach their other course assignments, assess which books they choose to read, how they evaluate the music and lyrics they listen to each day, how they approach research projects, and the way they think, write, and handle a myriad of tasks every day.

Student knowledge and course perspective

At the beginning of the semester, a simple pre-test (see Appendix B, Mini-survey) was administered to students to assess their overall knowledge of 40 topics directly related to the Chinese civilization and culture of the time periods involved in the course. Students were asked merely to self-rate their knowledge of these topics as “very well,” “somewhat,” and “not at all.” At the end of the course, a post-test (identical to the pre-test) was administered to see if any gains in knowledge were made. This rudimentary measurement of student knowledge showed some remarkable results, as illustrated by Appendix C. In the pre-test, over half of the class expressed a complete lack of knowledge about 31 of the 40 topics. These results were surprising as these were upper-level students enrolled in an advanced class in Chinese. A striking example of this lack of cultural and historical knowledge is reflected in 13 of 15 students indicating no knowledge at all about “The Great Leap Forward” (topic #15) and the remaining two students only indicated “somewhat” as their response about this topic. Even more surprising, not one student recognized the topic “The Gang of Four” (topic #21) at the beginning of the course. The post-test happily showed a vast difference and improvement in the self-rated knowledge of the topics listed. For example, the percentage change on topic #21 was 82% and that of topic #15 was 75%. Overall, 29 out of 40 topics showed a delta of 48% or greater, indicating a definite increase in student self-rated knowledge.

In addition, students responded to an end-of-course questionnaire (see Appendix D) about various aspects of the class. The reactions were overwhelmingly positive in terms of the course content and methodology employed to cover same. Students appreciated the variety of projects and corresponding assessments used throughout the course. They particularly mentioned the comprehensive instructor presentations entailing cultural and historical material as very useful aids to comprehension. Not surprisingly, the use of songs and music to transmit

Time and history in lyrics

the historical and cultural content was quite popular and viewed as “very effective” and “engaging,” echoing Murphey (1990, 1992) and the other previous CBI arguments (see above) in favor of this type of vehicle for imparting course materials. Indeed, students cited singing as an excellent way to remember the lyrics, Chinese characters, and grammar they encountered during their research and in the course content.

Conclusion

Using music, specifically song lyrics representative of chronological eras in modern Chinese history, as the basis for a culture and civilization course proved to be a unique and effective method of language instruction at the advanced level. Students were engaged and enthusiastic throughout the course. The course material established and sustained an atmosphere of positive cultural and linguistic learning that was evinced by pre- and post-test results as well as comments on the end-of-course questionnaire. Students were able to study the culture, history, and language of modern China in depth. They were also able to leverage their learning in the creation of their own original songs and the concomitant explanation and presentation of their artistic production. Clearly, there are myriad ways to approach an advanced course on culture and civilization in a FL classroom. The course topic and structure presented above is offered as one effective way teachers can consider in their own curriculum. It is a format easily generalizable across languages and target cultures.

Note

1. Institutional Review Board approval for this research project was obtained (FAC20170043E).

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NECTFL Review 81

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Appendix A

Typical daily lesson outline for Chinese 495: Time and History in Lyrics

The following procedures and activities encompass a typical daily lesson in Chinese 495. Of note is the undercurrent of connections to the United States culture. This reflects a primary belief on the part of the instructor vis-à-vis intercultural competence. That is, in order for students to begin to consider and subsequently understand another culture, they must have a foundation in their own culture and a solid notion of the products, practices, and perspectives underpinning same.

1. The specific time period is determined, e.g., the 1960s
2. Instructor presentation of cultural and historical events of the era, providing the background of society at that particular time; solicitation of student knowledge of events relevant to the time period in both China and the United States; class discussion of same

Time and history in lyrics

3. Continuation of class discussion involving comparison and contrasting of China and the United States with regards to parallel events, themes, incidents, but with an emphasis on China
4. Song presentation by instructor:
 - a. lyrics printed out and distributed to students
 - b. students listen to song
 - c. students analyze lyrics
 - d. discussion about style of writing/lyrics used by composer
 - e. students select and explain favorite “lines” in song
5. Homework assignment: in order to elicit critical thinking, students are asked to contemplate and respond to the following statement: “Clearly, events affect the songs and lyrics. But how might the lyrics contribute to societal events, if at all?”

Appendix B - Mini-Survey Questions

Chinese 495 – Time and History in Lyrics

Please answer the following questions on Chinese culture, history and music: 请回答40个与中国文化，历史和歌曲音乐方面的问题：

Do you know? 你知道吗？

A. very well B. somewhat C. not at all

1. The Falling of the Qing Dynasty清朝灭亡
2. The Rising of the ROC中华明国的兴起
3. Shanghai Concessions上海租界地
4. Chiang Kai Shek蒋介石
5. Mao Zedong 毛泽东
6. The Chinese Communist Party中国共产党
7. The Red Army红军
8. The People’s Liberation Army中国人民解放军
9. “Three Disciplines and Eight Attentions” “三大纪律，八项注意”
10. The Sino-Japanese War抗日战争
11. The Chinese Civil War解放战争
12. The Establishment of the People’s Republic of China中华人民共和国的成立
13. Chinese National Anthem中国国歌
14. The Relationship between Chinese and USSR in the 50s, and songs during that time 50年代中苏关系与歌曲
15. The Great Leap Forward大跃进
16. The Cultural Revolution文化大革命
17. “The East is Red” “东方红”
18. Beijing Opera京剧
19. The Revolutionary Model Plays革命样板戏
20. The Educated Youth, “Go up the Mountains and go down to the Countryside” 知识青年上山下乡

NECTFL Review 81

21. The Gang of Four 四人帮
22. Deng Xiaoping 邓小平
23. The Open-up Policy 改革开放
24. The Economic and Technology Development Zones 经济技术开发区
25. Taiwan Campus Music 台湾校园歌曲
26. Deng Lijun (Teresa Teng) 邓丽君
27. Styles of Music and Songs 歌曲的分类
28. Folk Songs in China: Areas and Styles 中国地方民歌：地区与风格
29. Peng Liyuan 彭丽媛
30. Chinese Rock and Roll 中国摇滚乐
31. “Bei Shang Guang”/the Beijing Migrants 北上广/北漂
32. Internet Music and Songs in China 中国网络歌曲
33. “Rats Love Rice” “老鼠爱大米”
34. Chinese Square Dance 广场舞
35. Chinese Movie and TV Songs 中国影视歌曲
36. Chinese KTV 中国KTV
37. The Voice of China 中国好声音
38. The Influence of American Music on China/ Chinese Favorite American Musicians 美国歌曲对中国的影响/中国人喜欢的美国歌手
39. Rap in China 中国说唱/饶舌音乐
40. I know how to sing two or more Chinese songs. 我会常两首以上中国歌。

Time and history in lyrics

Appendix C – Mini-survey results

Chinese 495 – Time and history in lyrics

Question #	Beginning of semester			Question #	End of semester			Beginning Average	End average	Delta % change in learning
	Number of “C” scores (No knowledge)	Number of “B” scores (Some knowledge)	Number of “A” scores (Strong knowledge)		Number of “C” scores (No knowledge)	Number of “B” scores (Some knowledge)	Number of “A” scores (Strong knowledge)			
1	5	7	2	1	0	10	4	39%	64%	25%
2	9	6	0	2	0	6	8	20%	79%	59%
3	8	7	0	3	4	5	5	23%	54%	30%
4	11	4	0	4	0	7	7	13%	75%	62%
5	1	11	3	5	0	2	12	57%	93%	36%
6	5	8	1	6	0	3	11	36%	89%	54%
7	7	6	2	7	0	5	9	33%	82%	49%
8	7	6	2	8	0	5	9	33%	82%	49%
9	14	1	0	9	0	9	5	3%	68%	65%
10	12	2	1	10	1	10	3	13%	57%	44%
11	10	4	1	11	0	9	5	20%	68%	48%
12	8	7	0	12	0	9	5	23%	68%	45%
13	3	11	1	13	0	8	6	43%	71%	28%
14	10	5	0	14	0	12	2	17%	57%	40%
15	13	2	0	15	0	5	9	7%	82%	75%
16	5	7	3	16	0	3	11	43%	89%	46%
17	11	3	1	17	2	9	3	17%	54%	37%

Appendix C – Mini-survey results (continued)

Question #	Beginning of semester			Question #	End of semester			Beginning Average	End average	Delta
	Number of “C” scores (No knowledge)	Number of “B” scores (Some knowledge)	Number of “A” scores (Strong knowledge)		Number of “C” scores (No knowledge)	Number of “B” scores (Some knowledge)	Number of “A” scores (Strong knowledge)			
18	10	5	0	18	0	9	5	17%	68%	51%
19	10	5	0	19	0	8	6	17%	71%	55%
20	14	1	0	20	1	7	6	3%	68%	65%
21	15	0	0	21	0	5	9	0%	82%	82%
22	9	5	1	22	0	5	9	23%	82%	59%
23	10	2	3	23	0	6	8	27%	79%	52%
24	14	1	0	24	1	8	5	3%	64%	61%
25	6	8	1	25	1	9	4	33%	61%	27%
26	11	3	1	26	0	6	8	17%	79%	62%
27	6	8	1	27	0	4	10	33%	86%	52%
28	12	3	0	28	0	10	4	10%	64%	54%
29	15	0	0	29	1	6	7	0%	71%	71%
30	9	6	0	30	0	4	10	20%	86%	66%
31	11	3	1	31	2	6	6	17%	64%	48%
32	10	5	0	32	0	4	10	17%	86%	69%

Time and history in lyrics

Appendix C – Mini-survey results (continued)

Question #	Beginning of semester			Question #	End of semester			Beginning Average	End average	Delta
	Number of “C” scores (No knowledge)	Number of “B” scores (Some knowledge)	Number of “A” scores (Strong knowledge)		Number of “C” scores (No knowledge)	Number of “B” scores (Some knowledge)	Number of “A” scores (Strong knowledge)			
33	10	3	2	33	0	2	12	23%	93%	70%
34	14	1	0	34	0	11	3	3%	61%	57%
35	7	8	0	35	0	4	10	27%	86%	59%
36	1	9	5	36	0	5	9	63%	82%	19%
37	8	4	3	37	0	2	12	33%	93%	60%
38	4	9	2	38	0	2	12	43%	93%	50%
39	8	6	1	39	0	7	7	27%	75%	48%
40	7	5	3	40	0	1	13	37%	96%	60%

Appendix D: End-of-course questionnaire (with selected responses)

Chinese 495 – Time and History in Lyrics

Please respond to the following end-of-course questions. This will help us improve the course for future offerings. We appreciate your honest responses. No identification will be made of your answers.

1. CHI 495 used a different approach to teach language, culture, and history/civilization. What were the positive aspects of this new approach in your opinion?

- I liked that I got to experience different types of Chinese culture. There was also more free flow of discussion
- Using media is a lot more interesting than reading text
- More engaging, interesting to learn about
- Very interesting course material & usage of videos and verbal prompts were good in increasing engagement
- Learning through a historical examination of culture provides variety to the language learning program not otherwise seen
- I think it was a great spin on typical learning. Using music and lyrics of different time periods allowed for the opportunity to learn about cultural & historical influences of the time
- Created an environment in which I wanted to learn and actively participate

What were the negative aspects of this new approach in your opinion?

- It was difficult to learn 40 new vocabulary per class. And it felt like a lot of the discussion was helped by the teacher instead of the students
- difficult to remember how to sing most of the songs, only remember easy ones
- very specific aspects (?), limited general knowledge, terminology very specific
- some of the music was difficult to get into; But that should be something to expect from the class.

2. What activities helped you most in developing your Mandarin language proficiency?

- speaking and singing helped the most
- Constant speaking in class, especially among tables
- Watching Chinese videos and analyzing Chinese songs
- Reading and interpreting lyrics
- Dr. Hughes unwillingness to speak English & encourage 100% Chinese from us
- presentations; reading articles and discussing
- Discussing cultural issues and listening/discovering songs I enjoy; movies & TV clips

Time and history in lyrics

3. What activities helped you most to increase your cultural and historical knowledge of mainland China?

- Listening and finding deeper meaning to Chinese songs
- Outside research and just being in the class in general. Hearing and speaking has helped me tremendously
- Doing research regarding Chinese era and through presentations.
- With every song we learned, our instructor would provide historical context of the time and the reason the song was written

4. How effective do you think using “song” and “music” is in improving your linguistic, cultural, historical acumen/proficiency in Mandarin?

- Very effective, improved my understanding and linguistic understanding of Chinese immensely.
- Very effective, was able to learn phrases/vocab as well as culture
- It is very effective. Songs teach grammar and expands vocabulary
- It is very effective. Music repeats a culture’s history so through music I also learned a lot about its history
- Linguistic, maybe a little in terms of understanding vocab; cultural/historical, this class was invaluable
- I think using music to learn the language is very beneficial in improving linguistic/cultural& historical proficiency
- Very effective – going over lyrics improved my Chinese most
- VERY! Gained a great insight into relevant cultural practices

5. What suggestions do you have to improve the course for the next offering?

- No improvements to be made. Great class.
- Have a set of vocab for a week or 2 to quiz and study instead of for each class
- Spend more time on modern, so maybe take out a bit of the older history
- I know it takes away from Chinese, but perhaps some English explanations of history
- Definitely more singing!
- Weekly vocab to study/know and vocab quizzes