Enhancing the Intercultural Communication Skills: A Case Study of Chinese Teachers in Lebanon

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Abstract
This study aims to enhance the intercultural communication competence of Chinese language teachers in Lebanon, focusing specifically on the unique challenges and solutions within this context. Employing a qualitative approach, the research gathers data through structured interviews to gain detailed insights into the experiences and strategies employed by these teachers. This method enables a comprehensive exploration of how cultural specificity influences teaching strategies in intercultural environments. Data were collected from a purposively sampled group of six Chinese language teachers in Lebanon, revealing the specific challenges they face and the adjustments they make in multicultural settings. Findings highlight the critical role of culturally adaptive speaking techniques, strategic listening practices, and culturally responsive learning advancements in enhancing intercultural communication. Teachers proficient in applying these strategies not only boost student engagement but also foster an educational environment that values and respects cultural diversity. The study underscores the importance of continuous professional development in culturally responsive teaching methods for educators in multicultural settings. Ultimately, improving the intercultural communication skills of Chinese teachers in Lebanon enhances educational quality and equips students with essential competencies for success in a globalized world.

Keywords: Chinese Teachers in Lebanon, Intercultural Communication, Case Study.

Introduction

Enhancing teachers' intercultural communication skills contributes significantly to fostering an effective learning environment in multicultural classrooms. Proficiency in cross-cultural communication ensures teaching effectiveness and enables educators to interact openly and amiably with diverse student groups. Ngai & Janusch (2015) emphasize that intergroup interaction programs play a crucial role in enhancing teachers' intercultural communication skills by exposing them to real-world cultural exchanges and teaching scenarios. These programs equip teachers with the necessary skills to navigate the complexities of intercultural communication, enabling them to incorporate diverse student perspectives into their teaching approaches. Davis (2015) underscores the importance of digital fluency in enhancing these skills, highlighting his research on how social media platforms such as Twitter and LinkedIn can aid teachers in professional development related to intercultural competencies. Participation in global educational networks allows teachers to join communities, share teaching methodologies, and gain insights into cultural differences and communication styles. These ongoing learning and exploration processes empower teachers to stay abreast of intercultural communication strategies and effectively integrate them into their classrooms.

Banjongjit & Boonmoh (2018) underscore the integral role of interactive simulations in developing teachers' intercultural competencies. These simulations, often integrated into professional development sessions, enable teachers to role-play communicative scenarios typical of diverse educational settings. Through these exercises, educators practice navigating cultural discrepancies and facilitating more productive dialogues. The primary objective of such training is to cultivate teachers' cultural sensitivity, thereby fostering an inclusive learning environment conducive to equitable education for all students. Dimitrov and Haque's (2016) research emphasizes the significance of an interdisciplinary approach in teacher education, enhancing educators' intercultural communication competencies by integrating diverse disciplinary knowledge. By incorporating interdisciplinary resources into their instructional practices, teachers gain a comprehensive understanding that enables them to effectively engage students across cultural boundaries. This approach not only expands teachers' pedagogical strategies but also enhances students' learning experiences by offering a more nuanced perspective on global cultures. Put plainly, the intercultural communication competence of teachers is vital for delivering effective education in today's diverse society. As classrooms increasingly reflect a broader array of cultural backgrounds, a teacher's ability to communicate cross-culturally becomes indispensable.

Problem Statement

Several studies underscore the significance of teachers' intercultural communication skills, highlighting their crucial role in diverse educational environments. For instance, Ting-Toomey & Dorjee (2015) investigate the cultivation of these skills through intergroup interactions, underscoring their pivotal impact on educational outcomes. Despite this body of research, there remains a notable gap concerning the specific enhancement of intercultural communication skills among Chinese teachers in Lebanon. Existing literature often provides a generalized overview without addressing the unique challenges faced by Chinese language educators in the Lebanese context. This study aims to address this gap by exploring methods to enhance the intercultural communication skills of Chinese teachers in Lebanon. By doing so, it seeks to improve teaching strategies and enhance educational performance within this distinct intercultural milieu.

Aims of the Research

This study examined the efficacy of culturally-based educational methods in enhancing the intercultural communication skills of Chinese language teachers in Lebanon. Initially, this research will analyse how language proficiency classes contribute to the improvement of oral skills among Chinese teachers. It is anticipated that these language sessions will equip teachers with linguistic resources to enhance their clarity of communication and expression in intercultural interactions, thereby fostering an inclusive learning environment. Secondly, the research will examine the impact of immersive language experiences on enhancing the listening skills of Chinese educators. By immersing teachers in environments where they must interpret diverse linguistic cues and cultural contexts, the study aims to enhance their capacity to listen attentively and respond effectively to the varied needs of their students—a pivotal aspect of proficient intercultural communication. Furthermore, the research will proceed to assess how language training sessions impact the intercultural learning skills of Chinese teachers. This aspect focuses on teachers' abilities to acquire and implement new cultural knowledge and teaching methodologies while considering the diverse backgrounds of their students. Each of these objectives contributes to the overarching goal of the study: to enhance the intercultural communication competencies of Chinese language teachers in Lebanon.

Literature Review

Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication serves as a cornerstone for facilitating understanding among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. According to Ladegaard & Jenks (2015), cultural norms, beliefs, and values exert indirect influences on how people perceive and communicate with each other. This understanding is particularly crucial in contexts characterized by cultural diversity, such as multinational business environments or intercultural educational settings. For instance, in multinational corporations, managers often undergo specialized intercultural communication training. This training equips them with the skills needed to effectively integrate culturally diverse teams, thereby enhancing collaboration and productivity.

Building on these foundational observations, Zerfass et al. (2020) delineate the practical challenges associated with studying intercultural communication, advocating for a critical approach that integrates theoretical insights with practical applications. This research underscores the intricacies involved in achieving effective cross-cultural communication and emphasizes the importance of fostering ongoing dialogue and education in this domain. For example, educational programs involving exchange students often incorporate intercultural communication training. This approach aims not only to facilitate the smooth integration of these students but also to enrich the overall learning experiences of all participants involved.

Martinez, Kilag, & Macario (2023) highlight the implementation of strategies emphasizing communicative sensitivity, adaptability, and conflict resolution within intercultural environments. These strategies are essential in educational settings where teachers must navigate classrooms comprising diverse cultural compositions. For instance, an elementary school situated in a culturally diverse urban area may institute specific policies and training programs for educators to effectively manage cross-cultural conflicts. This proactive approach contributes to fostering an environment that promotes greater acceptance and inclusivity. These studies collectively underscore that successful intercultural communication involves not merely the exchange of information, but also the cultivation of mutual understanding and respect among individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Chinese Teachers in Lebanon of Intercultural Interactions

The Chinese teachers' engagement with Lebanese culture is intricate and nuanced, necessitating a deep understanding of cultural dynamics and educational methodologies. Zhou & Li (2015) highlight this as a critical determinant of educational quality from the perspective of Chinese educators. This research proposes adapting teaching techniques to align with Lebanese cultural contexts and students' distinct learning styles, which may differ significantly from those in China. Similarly, Du et al. (2020) underscores the importance of this approach, providing an assessment of the effectiveness of active learning training methods tailored for Lebanese teacher trainers of diverse backgrounds. The findings indicate that employing active learning and culturally responsive strategies enhances teachers' proficiency in intercultural management. This not only improves teaching effectiveness but also fosters a more inclusive and conducive classroom environment.

An illustrative instance of successful intercultural interaction can be observed in the adaptation of teaching methods by Chinese educators in Lebanon, where they introduce group discussions and collaborative activities. This adaptation fosters improved cross-cultural communication and mitigates challenges associated with students from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, the implementation of such strategies is poised to enhance the intercultural communication competencies of Chinese teachers, enabling them to effectively navigate the complexities of teaching in a multicultural society such as Lebanon.

Role of Language Proficiency Sessions on the Speaking Skills

Language proficiency sessions represent a focal area of study in linguistic education research, particularly concerning their impact on individuals' speaking skills. A study by Yassi et al. (2023) underscores that focused language proficiency sessions serve as foundational training modules, offering structured opportunities for practice and input within a controlled environment. These sessions are crucial as they contribute significantly to developing confidence and competence in spoken language, essential components of effective communication. Within the realm of language teaching, Derakhshan, Khalili, & Beheshti (2016) advocate for the systematic integration of oral participation in classroom settings to enhance speaking fluency. This approach not only enhances students' linguistic abilities but also facilitates active engagement in communication. Furthermore, during language proficiency sessions, learners often participate in role-playing activities that simulate challenging communication scenarios. Such activities enable learners to reinforce their language skills by applying them in authentic contexts, bridging the gap between theory and practice effectively.

Furthermore, Rao (2019) emphasizes the significance of communicative language teaching practices in fostering the development of students' speaking abilities. These practices typically involve activities centred on communication, interaction, and real-life situations. The assertion that language proficiency sessions are crucial for enhancing learners' communication skills is thus substantiated. Such activities enable students to master language in a more spontaneous and creative manner, thereby enhancing their ability to communicate clearly in diverse interpersonal interactions beyond the classroom. This approach has proven particularly effective in improving communication skills within a supportive learning environment that encourages constructive engagement.

Role of Language Training Sessions on the Learning

Language training sessions play a crucial role in fostering effective language acquisition and comprehension, providing structured opportunities for learners to engage deeply with the target language. According to Cenoz & Gorter (2015), integrating language into education is particularly critical in multilingual contexts, where demographic and educational settings necessitate a multifaceted approach to language teaching and learning. This understanding forms the basis for the effectiveness of language training workshops, designed not only to refine linguistic skills but also to promote broader educational engagement. Conversely, Kissau & King (2015) argue that mentoring significantly impacts the learning process. Peer mentoring allows novice teachers to glean pedagogical strategies and refine their language proficiency under the guidance of experienced educators, thereby enhancing their teaching practices and ultimately improving student learning outcomes. Thus, this perspective underscores the integral role of mentorship within language training programs aimed at enhancing the language learning process.

Furthermore, Nunan (2016) reveals that language proficiency also influences the comprehension of complex subjects such as biology among minority language students. His research demonstrates that higher language fluency correlates directly with improved understanding and retention of challenging academic concepts. This study underscores the importance of language training in fostering educational achievement across various disciplines. Additionally, Spada & Lightbown (2019), in their exploration of language learning and teaching principles, provide a comprehensive analysis of how instructional strategies, particularly those employed in second language training, impact L2 acquisition. Their findings indicate that structured modern language training not only enhances learners' linguistic proficiency but also enhances their cognitive and academic abilities. Collectively, these studies illustrate the multifaceted role of language training sessions in augmenting linguistic and cognitive skills crucial for academic and professional success.

Role of Immersive Language Experiences in Enhancing the Listening skills

Immersive language experiences play a pivotal role in language learning by providing learners with authentic and contextual simulations that replicate real-life interactions. Language immersion environments or simulations fully engage learners by replicating authentic situations involving the target language, thereby facilitating language acquisition through consistent contextual contexts that mirror real communicative exchanges. For example, Lan and Liao's (2018) study demonstrates that immersive 3D environments significantly enhance listening comprehension among Chinese as a Second Language (CSL) students by facilitating interactive interactions akin to real-life scenarios. Similarly, Dhimolea, Kaplan-Rakowski, & Lin (2022) explore the impact of HiVR on language learning, particularly its role in developing individual listening skills through realistic virtual environments conducive to linguistic interactions. The use of such technology enables students to engage in interactive listening activities within contextual virtual settings, thereby providing robust support for language acquisition.

Significantly, Lan & Liao (2018) have demonstrated that the use of 3D immersive environments enhances students' listening comprehension, suggesting these technologies as valuable tools for language learning. Students accustomed to 3D virtual settings exhibited strong performance in listening tasks due to the unpredictable and varied nature of real-life situations. For instance, interactive language labs enable users to engage in dialogues with native speakers within virtual marketplaces, facilitating language practice and cultural immersion. Furthermore, Peixoto et al. (2023) highlight the potential for future research comparing traditional listening techniques with immersive virtual environments across diverse scenarios. Their findings underscore immersive methods as effective learning enhancers that significantly improve listening comprehension and memory retention, offering insights beyond what traditional classrooms typically provide. Additionally, Tai & Chen (2021) explore the impact of Multimedia Virtual Reality (MVR) on listening comprehension in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings. Their research reveals that MVR not only develops listening skills but also enriches the learning experience through multisensory stimuli, including visual and auditory cues that enhance conceptual understanding. These studies collectively emphasize the pivotal role of immersive language learning environments in modern language education, equipping learners with essential practical listening skills for effective communication in a globalized world.

Methodology

The methodology employed in this study is structured to systematically address its objectives, which centre on enhancing the intercultural communication skills of Chinese teachers in Lebanon. This involves an investigation into three main components: immersive language experiences, the effectiveness of language training, and language proficiency sessions.

Research Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach to gain a nuanced understanding of the experiences and attitudes of Chinese language teachers in Lebanon regarding their intercultural communication skills. Qualitative methods are particularly suitable for this study as they allow for an in-depth exploration of the complex processes involved in language acquisition and intercultural communication within educational and cultural contexts.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study primarily involves structured interviews with Chinese teachers teaching the Chinese language in Lebanon. These interviews aim to gather comprehensive insights into the teachers' perceptions of language proficiency classes, their experiences with immersive language exposure, and the impact of intensive language learning on their skills in intercultural settings. The interview questions are open-ended, enabling participants to articulate their views fully. They cover topics such as challenges in intercultural communication, the effectiveness of different learning modules, and self-assessment of personal skills over time.

Research Design

The selection of structured interviews is intended to maintain consistency in the data collection process, facilitating comparisons and contrasts among responses from different participants. This approach enables a focused exploration of specific areas of interest aligned with the study's objectives, thereby ensuring a thorough understanding of the enhancement of intercultural communication skills.

Research Sample

The research employs a purposive sampling technique to select six Chinese language teachers who serve as representatives of their peers in Lebanon. This sampling method is appropriate for qualitative research as it focuses on extracting themes and insights from specific, informed perspectives rather than seeking findings that can be generalized to a broader population. The selected teachers come from diverse platforms with varied experiences and backgrounds, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of intercultural communication challenges and the impact of training within their respective work environments.

Data Analysis

The themes derived from the interviews will undergo thematic analysis, involving the systematic examination of interview transcripts to identify patterns and themes relevant to the study objectives. Thematic analysis is particularly valuable in qualitative research as it facilitates the organization and interpretation of diverse data, revealing both commonalities and distinctions. This approach is instrumental in uncovering complex issues that may not be immediately apparent in the data. By employing thematic analysis, the study aims to manage and analyse the data comprehensively, thereby enhancing the credibility and validity of its findings.

Findings

The identified codes extracted from the interview guides, which will be utilized for analysis, are listed in the Table 1.

Table 1

S. No.	Codes	Description
1	Culturally Adaptive Speaking Techniques	This code emphasizes the adaptation of speaking methods by Chinese teachers to enhance verbal interactions in a culturally diverse classroom.
2	Strategic Listening for Cultural Insight	Highlights the development of listening skills that enable teachers to better understand and integrate the cultural nuances of their Lebanese students.
3	Immersive Listening for Cultural Integration	Chinese teachers in Lebanon utilize immersive listening to tailor their teaching to Lebanese cultural nuances, enhancing intercultural understanding.
4	Culturally Responsive Learning Enhancements	Chinese teachers in Lebanon employ a variety of culturally informed teaching strategies to improve learning and facilitate deeper intercultural understanding in their classrooms.

Theme 1: Culturally Adaptive Speaking Techniques

Culturally adaptive speaking techniques are crucial for Chinese teachers in Lebanon to enhance their intercultural communication skills. This approach involves integrating Lebanese cultural references into Chinese language instruction and adapting speech patterns to align with local communication styles. This teaching method has effectively influenced classroom interactions, making the learning process more engaging and culturally inclusive. Several responses have been collected regarding these specific questions, and the participants' answers are provided below.

Teacher 1: " To enhance my intercultural communication, I use Chinese translations of Lebanese proverbs in my classes. This approach bridges the cultural gap by allowing students to connect to paired phrases in Chinese in order to strengthen their understanding of both cultures and it also enhance my intercultural Communication"

Teacher 2: "I engage in collaborative projects that require students to work in mixed cultural teams, focusing on topics pertinent to both Chinese and Lebanese contexts. This method has significantly improved my own dialogue skills and understanding across cultures, helping me navigate and communicate more effectively in a diverse educational setting."

Teacher 3: "I incorporate cultural simulation activities into my teaching by role-playing both Lebanese and Chinese scenarios. This exercise helps me echo the right responses in the right language context which is important in cross-cultural communications."

Teacher 4: " There is peer teaching approach too that I employ. Here, students present norms of their own culture as well as the culture of the target language. This way students not only respect but also appreciate each other and enhance my ability to understand and appreciate different cultural

perspectives, so my intercultural communication skills become better too."
Teacher 5: "I implement feedback sessions where discussions about intercultural communication barriers and successes take place. Participating in these reflections has sharpened my ability to perceive and address cultural nuances, enhancing my capability to manage diverse classroom dynamics"
Teacher 6: " Through my efforts to design an engaging curriculum such as cultural immersion weekends with some Chinese cultural activities in Lebanon, I have been able to acquire this first-hand experience which has immensely boosted my confidence and competence intercultural communication within and beyond the classroom."

Teacher 1 utilizes Chinese translations of Lebanese proverbs to help students recognize the linguistic elements that connect the two cultures. Conversely, Teacher 4 employs a different strategy by encouraging students to share their cultural values from both their own and the foreign language, promoting mutual learning and respect. While Teacher 1 primarily focuses on linguistic integration to enhance intercultural communication, Teacher 4 emphasizes the importance of student interaction to foster cultural empathy and awareness, both of which are essential for the success of Chinese teachers in Lebanon in bridging cultural gaps.

Theme 2: Strategic Listening for Cultural Insight

Strategic listening for cultural insight is crucial for Chinese teachers in Lebanon to develop a deeper understanding and connection with their Lebanese students. This approach emphasizes teachers' attentive listening to capture and incorporate students' cultural expressions and values into their teaching practices. By doing so, they can tailor their lessons more effectively to meet the cultural and educational requirements of their students. Effective strategic listening has resulted in more culturally responsive teaching methods, facilitating richer and more meaningful educational interactions. Below are the responses gathered from multiple participants regarding these specific questions:

Teacher 1: "In a class discussion in which a Lebanese student was confused because of a cultural reference related to Chinese New Year, I used the specific vocabulary and sentences that I learned in proficiency sessions to explain the matter. This not only brought us closer together but also helped me in the art of expressing subtle as well as complex cultural ideas in a much clearer and respectful manner"
Teacher 2: "In a session focused on greetings I practiced the culturally appropriate tone and formalities for addressing elder Lebanese individuals, which is a key part of their culture. This practice was particularly useful during a parent-teacher meeting improving my communication skills and easing the trust among the community"
Teacher 3: " The discussion on family values led to a cultural misunderstanding and this I adapted my language to include both Chinese and Lebanese families as examples. This deepened my ability to modify language for each context by making the communication more effective across cultures."
Teacher 4: "In the course of an interactive exercise, I came to understand that direct translations carry the risk of incomplete meaning. I used the language skills I had been taught to explain idiomatic expressions with cultural sensitivity. This has contributed to the prevention of misunderstandings and enhancing mutual respect among my students."
Teacher 5: "In the class on traditional Chinese dining etiquette, I noticed some Lebanese students were confused over some of these customs. Through comparison between what is done in the Lebanese dining practices, these matters have become less confusing. This kind of comparison makes the material more accessible and relatable, hence enhancing my capability to conquer the language barrier through effective communication."
Teacher 6: " I discussed the idea of face of saving in Chinese culture, which was at first foreign to my Lebanon students. By triggering the already developed descriptive skills in training sessions, I was able to express the idea in a way that is related to the same social nuances in Lebanese culture. This cleared the obscurity on the other hand a better intercultural dialogue was created which enhanced my communication of complex cultural concepts"

Teacher 1 adeptly employed specific vocabulary to clarify misunderstandings about Chinese New Year, thereby directly enhancing intercultural communication skills through addressing nuanced cultural aspects. In contrast, Teacher 3 adopted an inclusive approach by adjusting language to reflect both Chinese and Lebanese family structures, fostering deeper connections and mutual respect among students. While Teacher 1 concentrated on clarifying specific cultural content related to Chinese customs, Teacher 3 aimed to integrate and harmonize cultural elements from both countries, thereby promoting mutual understanding and respect within a multicultural classroom setting. These approaches underscore different strategies for improving intercultural communication skills among Chinese teachers in Lebanon.

Theme 3: Immersive Listening for Cultural Integration

Immersion in listening is crucial for Chinese teachers in Lebanon to accurately grasp and engage with the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students. This approach underscores how teachers utilize immersive listening not only to hear but to fully comprehend the social, cultural, and linguistic contexts conveyed by their students. Understanding these backgrounds enables teachers to tailor their lessons effectively, fostering

an inclusive and relevant classroom environment. This pedagogical approach has proven instrumental in energizing the classroom, enhancing mutual respect, and establishing meaningful intercultural connections between instructors and learners. Below are the responses gathered from multiple participants regarding these specific questions:

Teacher 1: "Lebanese students attach special importance to family conversations; this understanding helped me incorporate family-related scenarios into their curriculum, improving the effectiveness of my cultural communication and relatedness."

Teacher 2:"An intercultural listening exercise highlighted the cardinality of assertive communication among Lebanese students. This realization then prompted me to initiate more open discussions and debates in class, which have been very important in the development of my skills in group moderation and facilitation that respect diverse viewpoints thereby fostering my intercultural communication abilities."

Teacher 3:" I realized that Lebanese students loved to use stories in their narration, a cultural feature. That prompted me to use storytelling as a strategy when teaching difficult Chinese characters and words, which enhanced my ability to express complicated concepts in ways that are culturally corresponding and easily understandable for the students."

Teacher 4: "When students talked about their prides in Lebanese celebrations, I paralleled this by combing in Chinese festivals into my teaching. Not only that, I contributed to my cultural knowledge and developed my ability to tap into shared cultural pride which helped create an atmosphere of inclusivity and respect"

Teacher 5: " The school run immersive listening session allowed me appreciate how much passionate Lebanese youth are about music and art. As a result, I made use of Chinese music and art in my lessons. This has positively improved my talents in combining linguistic learning with cultural components which have made my lessons more dynamic and integrated"

Teacher 6: "Lebanese students have shown themselves as multilingual and they switch languages constantly which highlighted my observation that teaching Chinese should be put within the broader range of communicative skills training, including practical use of Chinese by multilingual speakers thereby improving my own communication strategies and adaptability."

Teacher 1 emphasizes integrating family-related conversations into lessons, aligning with Lebanese values on family discussions to enhance relatability and engagement. In contrast, Teacher 3 leverages Lebanese affinity for storytelling to teach complex Chinese language characters and sentence structures. While both approaches aim to align teaching methods with cultural values to enhance learning outcomes, Teacher 1 focuses on creating a familiar learning context, whereas Teacher 3 applies culturally grounded teaching methods to complex language concepts. Adopting both strategies proves beneficial in adapting to cultural preferences in intercultural education.

Theme 4: Culturally Responsive Learning Enhancements

Cultural sensitivity in learning resources represents a significant advancement for Chinese teachers in Lebanon, enabling them to adapt their teaching strategies to the multicultural backgrounds of Lebanese students. This theme emphasizes the introduction of pedagogical tools such as cultural discussions, visual aids, storytelling, and active listening that incorporate both Chinese and Lebanese traditions. By integrating these culture-centred strategies, teachers foster active engagement and deeper comprehension among students, creating a learning environment that respects and integrates diverse cultural backgrounds. These teaching methods have proven effective in enhancing intercultural communication competencies, enriching the study process with greater interest and utility. Below are the responses collected from multiple participants regarding these specific questions:

Teacher 1: "Through my training, which emphasized cultural sensitivity, I have integrated discussions that compare and contrast Chinese and Lebanese holidays into my teaching. This approach has significantly enhanced my own understanding of cultural differences and similarities, enriching my ability to communicate these concepts effectively and respectfully."

Teacher 2: "My learning included the use of case studies based on real-life intercultural encounters. I have since applied this by discussing business interactions between Chinese and Lebanese professionals in my classes, which has sharpened my practical application of language in cross-cultural contexts and improved my communicative fluency in diverse settings."

Teacher 3: "We emphasized the use of visual aids that showcase cultural symbols from both Lebanon and China during training. Incorporating these aids into my lessons has been instrumental in helping me bridge cultural gaps visually, enhancing my ability to present and explain these cultural elements clearly and engagingly."

Teacher 4: " A key part of our training was developing active listening skills. I have applied this by showing genuine interest in cultural backgrounds during class interactions, which has greatly improved my ability to understand and communicate effectively across cultural boundaries."

Teacher 5: " Storytelling, a major component of our training, has become a central technique in my

teaching. Sharing stories from my background and encouraging similar exchanges from Lebanese students has improved my storytelling skills and my ability to engage in and facilitate intercultural dialogue."
Teacher 6: "Our training introduced conflict resolution techniques tailored to intercultural contexts. Implementing these techniques in discussions about cultural misunderstandings has enhanced my capability to mediate and resolve conflicts, deepening my understanding of effective communication strategies in diverse environments."

Teacher 1 enhances students' cross-cultural understanding by incorporating reflections that compare Chinese and Lebanese holidays, fostering respect and curiosity among students. In contrast, Teacher 3 employs visual media featuring symbols and ornaments from both cultures to enhance lesson appeal and significance. Teacher 1's approach focuses on initiating discussions about cultural differences and interactions, while Teacher 3 uses visual representations to bridge cultural gaps, effectively improving intercultural communication in teaching Chinese in Lebanon.

Discussion

The aforementioned findings underscore the pivotal role of culturally adaptive speaking techniques in enhancing intercultural communication skills among Chinese teachers in Lebanon. Techniques such as integrating Lebanese proverbs into Chinese lessons, as demonstrated by Teacher 1, and conducting class activities where students share cultural norms, exemplified by Teacher 4, illustrate diverse approaches to fostering linguistic and cultural integration. These findings, highlighted in a study led by Li, Huang, & Kulich (2024), provide compelling evidence that incorporating linguistic adaptation into foreign language teaching significantly enhances intercultural communication effectiveness by bridging language and culture. Moreover, the study affirms that such approaches not only make language learning more engaging and relevant for Lebanese students, but also cultivate an atmosphere of mutual respect and cultural appreciation. Further supporting these findings, significant research by Xu, Peeters, & Gernay (2022) underscores that educational systems incorporating local cultural elements can markedly enhance student engagement and comprehension in multicultural settings. This evidence underscores the critical importance of culturally adaptive teaching methods for Chinese teachers in Lebanon, particularly as they navigate the challenges of teaching in a multicultural environment. Such strategies not only support language acquisition but also foster cross-cultural dialogue and respect, contributing significantly to the broader educational mission.

Furthermore, the findings underscore the crucial role of strategic listening for cultural insight in enhancing the effectiveness of Chinese teachers in Lebanon as they navigate their classrooms' diverse cultural landscapes. Teachers like Teacher 1 and Teacher 3 exemplify the importance of attentive listening to understand and appropriately address culture-specific nuances and family structures. As highlighted by Chen & Lawless (2020), teachers who engage in systematic listening can develop the intercultural competence necessary to align with their students' cultural backgrounds. Moreover, conducting such studies enables educators to develop lessons that are not only linguistically accurate but also culturally sensitive. Teacher 1's approach of clarifying culture through specific vocabulary and Teacher 3's strategy of integrating diverse cultures contribute to a learning environment where students feel recognized. Supporting this perspective, Vass (2017) asserts that learners are more engaged and responsive when teachers effectively communicate and adopt culturally responsive approaches. These studies collectively affirm that strategic listening forms the cornerstone of culturally responsive teaching. Therefore, these varied strategies should be considered essential techniques for Chinese teachers in Lebanon to foster an environment conducive to language learning and meaningful cultural exchange, crucial for developing teachers' soft skills.

Moreover, research findings indicate that culturally adapted curriculum enhancements significantly enhance the effectiveness of Chinese language education in Lebanon. Teachers employ various culturally designed pedagogical approaches, such as discussing cultural events, utilizing visual aids with cultural symbols, and providing opportunities for students to integrate their cultural knowledge and engagement. Supporting this approach, Kieran & Anderson (2019) validate that culturally responsive teaching, particularly through the incorporation of cultural symbols, narratives, and stories, enhances students' academic engagement in language learning contexts. Furthermore, a deeper examination of cultural instruction reveals that Teacher 1 uses cultural content not only as an educational tool but also to inspire students about the histories and traditions of their own and their classmates' countries, fostering an inclusive classroom environment. Similarly, Teacher 3's use of visual aids serves as a non-verbal yet effective method to teach culture, bridging cultural gaps without relying on verbal explanations. These strategies effectively promote the intercultural communication competency of both teachers and students. As highlighted by Palpacuer Lee, Curtis, & Curran (2018), combining visual and verbal exercises in culturally diverse classrooms improves understanding and retention of cultural lessons, enhancing students' familiarity with diverse global practices. This research underscores the imperative of culturally responsive educational reforms, encouraging teachers to view classrooms as interactive, intercultural exchanges that celebrate student diversity. Thus, this study aligns with the goal of developing the intercultural competencies of

Chinese teachers in Lebanon.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study examined the intercultural communication skills of Chinese teachers teaching the Chinese language in Lebanon, emphasizing their adaptability. The research objectives focused on exploring specific communicative and intercultural challenges encountered by educators and developing strategies to enhance cultural communication. The research employed qualitative interviews with Chinese language teachers in Lebanon to gain deeper insights into their experiences, perspectives, and teaching practices. This method was chosen to uncover nuanced details and understand how intercultural dynamics operate in their classrooms. Analysis of the qualitative data involved closely examining transcriptions to identify recurring themes and patterns, ultimately revealing a profound understanding of how Chinese teachers adapt to meet the diverse needs of their multicultural students. The study's findings underscore the importance of employing culturally adapted conversational techniques and demonstrating strategic listening skills among Chinese teachers. Those who effectively utilized these skills noted enhanced classroom engagement and atmosphere. Teachers demonstrated that integrating cultural references into their instruction and attentively listening to students' perspectives and cultural expressions were key to successful teaching outcomes. This approach not only fosters linguistic and cultural integration among students but also cultivates an environment grounded in mutual respect and understanding.

On the contrary, the study revealed that immersive listening and culturally responsive teaching enhancements effectively bridge the cultural gap between teachers and students. By employing strategies such as cultural immersion and designing lessons that are informative, respectful of students' cultural identities, and responsive to their backgrounds, teachers enhance the learning environment. These improvements encourage students to become more active participants and foster deeper connections with the subject matter, thereby enhancing their academic performance. Therefore, it is crucial that educators teaching Chinese Language in Lebanon receive continuous professional development and in-service training that is culturally sensitive. This training should encompass both linguistic and cultural competencies, equipping teachers to navigate intercultural challenges effectively. Such preparation will benefit both teachers, enhancing their skills, and students, enabling them to interact positively in multicultural environments.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the intercultural communication skills of Chinese teachers teaching Chinese in Lebanon. Firstly, it is recommended to implement a comprehensive language and cultural training program tailored specifically for Lebanon. This program should focus on enhancing proficiency in Arabic and French, the predominant languages in Lebanon, and should also address the cultural nuances that influence social interactions and learning environments. The training should be designed to empower teachers to effectively navigate cultural diversity. Secondly, it is recommended to integrate Lebanese cultural components into the Chinese language curriculum. This entails incorporating local cultural contexts and materials into teaching materials, thereby enhancing engagement and communication among Lebanese students. Prioritizing workshops and seminars aimed at promoting intercultural communication is essential. Continuous professional development sessions for Chinese teachers should focus on effective communication strategies, conflict management techniques, culturally appropriate teaching methods, and other relevant skills. Lastly, implementing a peer mentoring program where Chinese teachers are paired with experienced Lebanese educators or teachers with multicultural backgrounds can offer valuable first-hand experiences and serve as a reference point for professional growth. Additionally, introducing a reflective framework for both students and teachers to express their perspectives on teaching approaches will foster a continuous improvement learning environment. These initiatives are crucial for developing effective teaching methodologies that accommodate all students, thereby enhancing the functionality and inclusivity of the educational environment for both teachers and students alike.

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Appendix

Interview Transcript

Question 1. What key speaking strategy did you learn from language proficiency sessions that has been most effective in your intercultural classes?

> *Teacher 1: " To enhance my intercultural communication, I use Chinese translations of Lebanese proverbs in my classes. This approach bridges the cultural gap by allowing students to connect to paired phrases in Chinese in order to strengthen their understanding of both cultures and it also enhance my intercultural Communication"*
> *Teacher 2: "I engage in collaborative projects that require students to work in mixed cultural teams, focusing on topics pertinent to both Chinese and Lebanese contexts. This method has significantly improved my own dialogue skills and understanding across cultures, helping me navigate and communicate more effectively in a diverse educational setting."*
> *Teacher 3: "I incorporate cultural simulation activities into my teaching by role-playing both Lebanese and Chinese scenarios. This exercise helps me echo the right responses in the right language context which is important in cross-cultural communications."*
> *Teacher 4: " There is peer teaching approach too that I employ. Here, students present norms of their own culture as well as the culture of the target language. This way students not only respect but also appreciate each other and enhance my ability to understand and appreciate different cultural perspectives, so my intercultural communication skills become better too."*
> *Teacher 5: "I implement feedback sessions where discussions about intercultural communication barriers and successes take place. Participating in these reflections has sharpened my ability to perceive and address cultural nuances, enhancing my capability to manage diverse classroom dynamics"*
> *Teacher 6: " Through my efforts to design an engaging curriculum such as cultural immersion weekends with some Chinese cultural activities in Lebanon, I have been able to acquire this first-hand experience which has immensely boosted my confidence and competence intercultural communication within and beyond the classroom."*

Question 2: Can you describe a brief instance where improved speaking skills from these sessions helped you overcome a cultural barrier?

> *Teacher 1: "In a class discussion in which a Lebanese student was confused because of a cultural reference related to Chinese New Year, I used the specific vocabulary and sentences that I learned in proficiency sessions to explain the matter. This not only brought us closer together but also helped me in the art of expressing subtle as well as complex cultural ideas in a much clearer and respectful manner"*
> *Teacher 2: "In a session focused on greetings I practiced the culturally appropriate tone and formalities for addressing elder Lebanese individuals, which is a key part of their culture. This practice was particularly useful during a parent-teacher meeting improving my communication skills and easing the trust among the community"*
> *Teacher 3: " The discussion on family values led to a cultural misunderstanding and this I adapted my language to include both Chinese and Lebanese families as examples. This deepened my ability to modify language for each context by making the communication more effective across cultures."*
> *Teacher 4: "In the course of an interactive exercise, I came to understand that direct translations carry the risk of incomplete meaning. I used the language skills I had been taught to explain idiomatic expressions with cultural sensitivity. This has contributed to the prevention of misunderstandings and enhancing mutual respect among my students."*
> *Teacher 5: "In the class on traditional Chinese dining etiquette, I noticed some Lebanese students were confused over some of these customs. Through comparison between what is done in the Lebanese dining practices, these matters have become less confusing. This kind of comparison makes the material more accessible and relatable, hence enhancing my capability to conquer the language barrier through effective communication."*
> *Teacher 6: " I discussed the idea of face of saving in Chinese culture, which was at first foreign to my Lebanon students. By triggering the already developed descriptive skills in training sessions, I was able to express the idea in a way that is related to the same social nuances in Lebanese culture. This cleared the obscurity on the other hand a better intercultural dialogue was created which enhanced my communication of complex cultural concepts"*

Question 3: What is one significant insight you gained about your students' culture through immersive listening experiences?

> *Teacher 1: "Lebanese students attach special importance to family conversations; this understanding helped me incorporate family-related scenarios into their curriculum, improving the effectiveness of my cultural communication and relatedness."*

Teacher 2:"An intercultural listening exercise highlighted the cardinality of assertive communication among Lebanese students. This realization then prompted me to initiate more open discussions and debates in class, which have been very important in the development of my skills in group moderation and facilitation that respect diverse viewpoints thereby fostering my intercultural communication abilities."

Teacher 3:" I realized that Lebanese students loved to use stories in their narration, a cultural feature. That prompted me to use storytelling as a strategy when teaching difficult Chinese characters and words, which enhanced my ability to express complicated concepts in ways that are culturally corresponding and easily understandable for the students."

Teacher 4: "When students talked about their prides in Lebanese celebrations, I paralleled this by combing in Chinese festivals into my teaching. Not only that, I contributed to my cultural knowledge and developed my ability to tap into shared cultural pride which helped create an atmosphere of inclusivity and respect"

Teacher 5: " The school run immersive listening session allowed me appreciate how much passionate Lebanese youth are about music and art. As a result, I made use of Chinese music and art in my lessons. This has positively improved my talents in combining linguistic learning with cultural components which have made my lessons more dynamic and integrated"

Teacher 6: "Lebanese students have shown themselves as multilingual and they switch languages constantly which highlighted my observation that teaching Chinese should be put within the broader range of communicative skills training, including practical use of Chinese by multilingual speakers thereby improving my own communication strategies and adaptability."

Question 4: How has an immersive listening experience directly improved a classroom interaction?

Teacher 1: "An immersive listening session where students shared about Lebanese family gatherings helped me understand the importance of community. I started incorporating group activities that mimic these settings, which has led to more vibrant classroom interactions and helped me navigate cultural nuances more effectively."

Teacher 2: "During a listening exercise, I realized how Lebanese students value assertive communication. I adapted my teaching to encourage open dialogue and debate in Chinese, significantly improving classroom dynamics and fostering a more inclusive learning environment."

Teacher 3: "Immersive listening to students discuss their daily challenges in Lebanon taught me the significance of empathy. I've since focused on being more empathetic in my responses, which has greatly enhanced trust and communication between me and my students."

Teacher 4: "Listening to the cultural pride in students' stories about Lebanese festivals, I incorporated similar pride for Chinese cultural events in my teachings. This mutual cultural appreciation has sparked more engaged and respectful interactions in the classroom."

Teacher 5: "After an immersive listening experience that revealed students' interest in technology, I started using tech-based examples when explaining complex Chinese concepts. This relevance has increased engagement and improved communication, as students feel the lessons are tailored to their interests."

Teacher 6: "By listening to how students communicate informally, I learned to adjust my teaching tone to be less formal, which is more aligned with Lebanese communication styles. This change has made my classroom interactions more natural and effective, enhancing learning outcomes."

Question 5: What is one practical teaching tool from language training sessions that you've successfully implemented and that increased your learning skills?

Teacher 1: "In training, we focused on cultural sensitivity. I've since incorporated discussions that compare and contrast Chinese and Lebanese holidays in my lessons. This has not only increased my understanding but has also fostered respect and curiosity among students about each other's cultures, enhancing communication."

Teacher 2: "We were taught to use the case studies from the real-life intercultural encounters during our sessions. I used this by discussing business interactions between Chinese and Lebanese professionals. It's been proved effective in showing the practical applications of language and increasing the student's ability to navigate cultural nuances."

Teacher 3: " During my training, I learned about the use of visual aids such as cultural symbols from Lebanon and China. This classroom implementation has helped to fill cultural gaps and make lessons more interesting and applicable for my students."

Teacher 4: " "The active listening skills that I learned from the training sessions were the most useful for me. During the class, I tried to show interest in students' cultural background and to ask them insightful questions, which helped me to build mutual understanding and to communicate better"

Teacher 5:" Storytelling was one of the main themes in our language training. I have started sharing stories from my life in China and asking students to share their own from Lebanon. This exchange has made the classroom more suitable for intercultural dialogue."

Teacher 6: " Training sessions were held for us that taught us the techniques of conflict resolution in the context of inter-culturalism. I applied these methods in the classes which were related to cultural misunderstandings, helping students to learn the effective communication strategies that respect different perspectives."