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## **Textbook analysis on the representation of Chinese ethnic minorities in a Dutch Mandarin textbook**

Dijkstra, Lars

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# Textbook analysis on the representation of Chinese ethnic minorities in a Dutch Mandarin textbook

Master Thesis

Dr. C.J. Morris

Leiden University

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Lars Dijkstra

s2324245

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**Lars Dijkstra**

**S2324245**

**s2324245@vuw.leidenuniv.nl**

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## Introduction

The teaching of languages is heavily reliant on the use of textbooks that, besides the actual linguistic information, are mediums that people and institutions can use to teach or influence the reader on a set of topics, including history and contemporary culture.<sup>1</sup> In the teaching of foreign languages, also called second language teaching, textbooks are a vital tool for practice and production to novices of the language and have been an important data for researchers for analysis.<sup>2</sup> The most common critiques expressed by scholars on textbooks is the representation of sexual, racial and cultural minorities, which more often than not are portrayed wrongly, oversimplified or even not represented at all.<sup>3</sup> This is also true for the way Chinese ethnic minorities are portrayed compared to the Han-Chinese majority in textbooks aimed at foreign audiences who wish to learn Mandarin. Their knowledge of China and Chinese Culture is often limited which makes them more susceptible to its contents.<sup>4</sup>

China is an ethnically diverse country and there are in total 56 state recognized ethnic groups (minzu 民族) in the People's Republic of China (PRC).<sup>5</sup> The majority are the Han Chinese which account for 91.5 per cent of the total population and the other 55 ethnic minority groups combined make up 8.5 per cent.<sup>6</sup> They are socioeconomically, culturally and ethnically different from the Han majority and because of this, they have drawn a great deal of interest and curiosity from scholars, students, and the general public particularly from the West.<sup>7 8</sup> Through the analyzation of textbooks, scholars try to analyze how these 56 state recognized ethnicities are portrayed in the textbooks used by students within and outside of China. A large corpus of data has been built around the portrayal of the Chinese ethnic minorities starting from Chinese primary and middle school.<sup>9</sup> At the same time with the internalization of mandarin, more and more international students are subject to learning about Chinese culture and history.<sup>10</sup> This has led to a number of scholars taking this new corpus of textbooks as a focus of their research. The completed research done on the latter is

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<sup>1</sup> Sammler, *History of the School Textbook*, (Cultures and Practices of Knowledge in History, 2018), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Sun and Kwon, *Representation of monoculturalism in Chinese and Korean heritage language textbooks for immigrant children*, (Taylor & Francis, 2020), 403.

<sup>3</sup> Mihira e.a., *Gender inequality represented in textbooks*, (Journal of Social Humanities, 2021), 587.

<sup>4</sup> Sammler. *History of the School Textbook*, 5.

<sup>5</sup> Zhao and Postiglione, *Representations of Ethnic Minorities in China's*, (University Media, 2010), 2.

<sup>6</sup> Zhou, *Ethnic Minority Languages in China*, (De Gruyter Mouton, 2020), 6.

<sup>7</sup> Hong en Xianzhong, *Ideologies of monoculturalism in Confucius Institute textbooks*, (Routledge, 2015), 93.

<sup>8</sup> Liu, Colak, and Agirdag, *Celebrating Culture and Neglecting Language*, (Journal of Curriculum Studies, 2022), 687.

<sup>9</sup> Liu, Colak, and Agirdag, *Celebrating Culture and Neglecting Language*, 688.

<sup>10</sup> Hong and Xianzhong, *Ideologies of monoculturalism in Confucius Institute textbooks*, 92.

smaller in size however which means more work is still to be done. Overall this study tries to link itself to the studies done on this topic because of for the Netherlands there is currently no existing studies done on the Chinese textbooks used in the Dutch the primary, secondary or University educational level.

Language textbooks can be found in many forms, contain different types of information but are all susceptible to being used for so-called ideology pushing by any countries associated political elite. Textbooks can thus be wielded by institutions and individuals to propagate a specific narrative or idea within a society.<sup>11</sup> This perspective enables the identification of social and ideological processes that have shaped the creation and interpretation of texts that are conducted through textbook analysis.<sup>12</sup> In the case of the education system of China, which is a top down oriented institution, the knowledge about ethnic minorities for example is selected and constructed to confine them to the prescribed 'diversity in unity' discourse as evidence of ethnic diversity and national unity. Diversity in unity is the idea of China as a unified multi ethnic country where the distinctive features of each ethnic group are still recognized, but are secondary to the identification of the 'Chinese Nation'.<sup>13</sup> Besides this, scholars argue that the cultures and lives of ethnic minorities are represented as distant, exotic, and primitive/traditional whereas the Han are presented as close by, normal, and modern.<sup>14</sup> The ethnic characteristics of the Han are thus by and large normalized in the textbooks due to their dominant status and are represented as if they were not an ethnic group at all.<sup>15</sup> These educational materials not only distorts historical and cultural realities but also perpetuates stereotypes and undermines the understanding necessary for Chinese ethnic minorities

Textbooks aimed at a foreign audience have also received various type of critique.<sup>16</sup> Scholar White who conducted a research on Chinese textbooks for example, also argued that that Chinese as a Second Language (CSL) textbooks provide foreign students with an distorted image of minorities, they are prototypical minorities that sing and dance, and are rural and silent.<sup>17</sup> Another point made by scholars in multiple studies is that textbooks aimed at the not

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<sup>11</sup> Stranger-Johannessen, *Constructing English as a Ugandan language through an English textbook*, (Language, Culture and Curriculum 28, nr. 2, 2014), 131.

<sup>12</sup> Weninger, 'Multimodality in critical language textbook analysis', (Taylor & Francis, 2020)138.

<sup>13</sup> Zhao and Postiglione, *Representations of Ethnic Minorities in China's*, 1-11.

<sup>14</sup> Chu, *The power of knowledge*, (Taylor & Francis, 2015), 483.

<sup>15</sup> Chu, *The power of knowledge*, 479.

<sup>16</sup> White, *Understanding China's Minorities Through Learning Chinese*, (Journal of Multicultural Discourses, 2008), 81.

<sup>17</sup> White, *Understanding China's Minorities Through Learning Chinese*, 91.

Chinese audiences contain representations of ethnic minority culture that for the most part have limited their topics to be related to food, festivals, or the personal sphere thereby lessening the cultural significance and negatively influencing intercultural understanding.<sup>18</sup> Lastly, some minority groups, like the Dai and Tibetans, received more attention than others, such as the Hui or the Zhuang, as their ethnic cultures tend to be perceived as being more interesting for foreign students.<sup>19</sup> If we take these points from previous studies together, some textbooks create a false narrative and reality regarding China. This decreases intercultural understanding argued<sup>20</sup>

The goal of this research is to analyze the previously done textbook analyses both done in the Chinese as well in foreign education and apply that knowledge and test their critiques on the mandarin textbooks used in the second language education in the Netherlands. The following question will be answered: how are the ethnic minorities from China represented in Dutch secondary level mandarin education? Do they provide a balanced representation that is in line with the previously mentioned critiques by scholars on this topic or not? This research tries to link itself onto the debate regarding representation of ethnic minorities and reapply the same research methods. Based on these studies, a critical discourse analysis was conducted.<sup>21</sup> This means that the textual and visual contents of Dutch secondary level textbooks will be analyzed in the same way as multiple key studies on the representation of Chinese ethnic minorities. The exact details and steps of this are dedicated to the methods section of this thesis because of its importance to this study.

The data was provided by 15 teachers of mandarin at Dutch secondary schools and the two leading textbooks that are used by them in their classes. The apparent lack of data on this topic in the present academic field in the Netherlands, the reliance of second language education on textbooks and the problems ethnic minorities of China face with their representation in education are the driving reasons to do this research. The next chapter will review the literature available on ethnicity in China followed by the presentation of ethnicities in textbooks used in China and abroad. Afterwards in Chapter three the research methods most prominent in previous analyses are broken down for the purpose of legitimization the one chosen for this research. The final two chapters will be used to break down the results of

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<sup>18</sup> Liu, Colak, and Agirdag, *Celebrating Culture and Neglecting Language*, 688-706.

<sup>19</sup> Jiaye Wu, *Representing Language, Culture and Citizenship to Minoritised Ethnic Groups: the Teaching of Mandarin Chinese to Mongolian Learners as a Second Language in China Since 1912*, (University of Nottingham 2021), 46.

<sup>20</sup> Liu, Colak, and Agirdag, *Celebrating Culture and Neglecting Language*, 688-706.

<sup>21</sup> Liu, Colak, and Agirdag, *Celebrating Culture and Neglecting Language*, 688-690.

the research and discuss what this means for the Dutch education and offer recommendations for future research.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Ethnicity and Ethnic Relations in China

In China, ethnic distinction has historically not been clear-cut. In fact, many groups of people who were originally not considered Chinese became Chinese by acquainting themselves with the Chinese Confucian, Daoist and agricultural way of life.<sup>22</sup> Others were either conquered by or conquerors of the Chinese Empire. Historically, this has meant that people assimilated and integrated into Chinese culture through a process known as “Sinicization”.<sup>23</sup> China has thus been a country of changing ethnic composition.<sup>24</sup> The study of China’s ethnic groups is a study of the relationship between China’s ethnic minority people and the majority of Han Chinese.<sup>25</sup> More accurately, it is a study of ethnic relationships within the same territory that forms China. I say this because outside of this national territory they are not deemed a minority. “Minority” is therefore a concept which has meaning because of the existence of a majority within a specific territorial borders.<sup>26</sup>

There are a total of 56 ethnic groups in China with the Han as the majority group. The ethnic minority groups live across much of China’s border regions with Yunnan province having the largest number of recognized minorities.<sup>27</sup> In China your ethnicity is printed on your identity card and is depended on the ethnicity of their parents.<sup>28</sup> This ethnic categorization was created by the Ethnic Classification Project which was essentially a project of scholars instructed by the central government to provide information about all the ethnic minorities living in China. Eventually, around 400 groups were identified but because of various reasons, which includes bureaucratic ones, they were compressed in the 56 that we have today. The point of this, is that the idea of these current 56 ethnic are created by the Communist party trying to create political control and establish a modern government.<sup>29 30</sup> They are thus not a natural constructed categorization in which every group is represented.

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<sup>22</sup> Katzenstein, *Sinicization and the Rise of China: Civilizational processes beyond East and West*, (Routledge, 2012), 199.

<sup>23</sup> Katzenstein, *Sinicization and the Rise of China: Civilizational processes beyond East and West*, 176.

<sup>24</sup> Shih, *Negotiating Ethnicity in China: Citizenship as a Response to the State*, (Routledge; 1st edition, 2018) 1.

<sup>25</sup> Shih, *Negotiating Ethnicity in China: Citizenship as a Response to the State*, 4.

<sup>26</sup> Shih, *Negotiating Ethnicity in China: Citizenship as a Response to the State*, 5.

<sup>27</sup> Zang, *Handbook on Ethnic Minorities in China*, (Handbooks of Research on Contemporary China, 2015), 3.

<sup>28</sup> Zang, *Handbook on Ethnic Minorities in China*, 3.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Mullaney, *Coming to terms with the nation: ethnic classification in modern China*, (University of California Press, 2010), 17.

<sup>30</sup> Mullaney, *Coming to terms with the nation: ethnic classification in modern China*, 19.



The ethnic minorities hold a place of importance for scholars in understanding the Han Chinese and also for the Han Chinese themselves in the creation of their identity. First, the ethnic minorities are different from the Han Chinese in many ways. Scholars, especially from the west, have therefore also tried to make sense of the different ethnic minorities in order to better understand the Han Chinese. They do this because they take the ethnic minorities as a comparative point with the Han Chinese. For example, if their gender norms are different or how their allegiance to the country is and if they have the same level of feeling “Chinese”.<sup>31</sup>  
<sup>32</sup> Overall, the studying of ethnic minorities can thus be seen as an important comparative tool for better understanding the Han Chinese. Second, the Han identity is being influenced by the relationships they have with the other ethnic groups.<sup>33</sup> A study by Schein demonstrates that ethnic groups are portrayed as exotic and in need of development and help by the Han Chinese. Gladney argues that the target group of assimilation policy, when adapting, can affect the meaning of Chineseness dialectically and even creatively develop its own identity.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, the relationship Han Chinese have with their ethnically different countrymen reveals to scholars and the Han themselves more about their identity and what it means to be Han Chinese.

This last point of being Chinese is also important because the idea surrounding Chinese identity is a matter which is linked to the political sphere. On the one hand ethnic minorities are applauded and encouraged for being who they are and the practices they have such as their language and ways of life. The central government has noted in the constitution that all ethnic groups should preserve their language and ways of life which is now considered a civil right.  
<sup>35</sup> On other hand there are forms of repression that discourage ethnic languages in top down created curricula which focus solely on the national language Mandarin.<sup>36</sup> The reason given by the central government was that mastering mandarin is necessary for achieving social mobility, integration and political participation.<sup>37</sup> The identity of ethnic minority is thus intertwined with governmental educational policy and nation building efforts surrounding national and ethnic identity. Ethnic groups receive both encouragement as well as discouragement for their culture and identity which makes it more difficult for them to form

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<sup>31</sup> Zang, *Handbook on Ethnic Minorities in China*, 1.

<sup>32</sup> Shih, *Negotiating Ethnicity in China: Citizenship as a Response to the State*, 4.

<sup>33</sup> Latham, *Routledge Handbook of Chinese Culture and Society*, 462.

<sup>34</sup> Gladney, 'The Ethnogenesis of the Uighur', (*Central Asian Survey*, 1990), 1.

<sup>35</sup> Liu, Colak, and Agirdag, *Celebrating Culture and Neglecting Language*, 692.

<sup>36</sup> Liu, Colak, and Agirdag, *Celebrating Culture and Neglecting Language*, 693.

<sup>37</sup> Liu, Colak, and Agirdag, *Celebrating Culture and Neglecting Language*, 693.

their identity.

The primary medium through which people are taught about ethnic groups in China has predominantly been textbooks. Because of this, they are a vital source for understanding how and what is being taught about ethnicity to the next generation of citizens.<sup>38</sup> I say this because textbooks have proven to be vital for shaping citizens their idea of the world, themselves and the nation. Ethnic groups are significantly misrepresented in Chinese textbooks. A study done on primary and secondary level textbooks by Qian Liu in 2022 has revealed that overall, ethnic minorities are portrayed as stereotypical dancing, backwards, thankful for Han aid, welcome guests but above all Chinese. The differences in Han and minorities groups culture is made aware with phrases such as ‘Everyone’s language is different, but the heart is the same you speak yours, I speak mine. However, the general content is national unity and mutual assistance’.<sup>39</sup> This type of paraphrasing indicates that the central government emphasizing the importance of the national identity which matters for all 56 ethnic groups.<sup>40</sup> All in all, information about ethnicity and identity in textbooks are an important analytical tool to understand the construction of the national Chinese identity and the identity of ethnic groups in general.

Historically and contemporary, who is considered to be Chinese and the Chinese identity has been up for debate. Nowadays, the national identity and ethnic identity for that matter is a carefully constructed idea which is promoted and decided by the central government ever since the official recognition of 56 out of around 400 in the last century. This decision is important for the government to establish a social cohesive state in which differences are applauded but unity is prioritized. For ethnic groups this could be confusing in the forming of their identity as they are simultaneously encouraged as well as discouraged for exercising their ethnic culture and languages. The concept of identity is predominantly taught through schoolbooks, which analysis has shown to have unrealistic and patronizing representation of the Han and non-Han relationships. Furthermore, the textbooks construct the identity of ethnic groups to be subordinate to that of Chinese in which they are Chinese first and ethnically different second. The study of textbooks produced in China and abroad are thus an important analytical piece for researchers to examine because its contents can shed light on how ethnic

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<sup>38</sup> Liu, Colak, and Agirdag, *Celebrating Culture and Neglecting Language*, 688.

<sup>39</sup> Liu, Colak, and Agirdag, *Celebrating Culture and Neglecting Language*, 704.

<sup>40</sup> Liu, Colak, and Agirdag, *Celebrating Culture and Neglecting Language*, 706.

minorities and their identities are constructed and represented.

## 2.2 Textbooks as cultural texts

There is a strong focus in the field of textbook analysis on culture and its impact on societies. This focus is explained by scholars Stranger and Johannessen who acknowledge that culture is intricately connected to language and that learning a culture is an integral aspect of language learning.<sup>41</sup> Representations of culture, minorities and even gender teach the users of textbooks and the learners of a language about identity and new worldviews.<sup>42</sup> When we keep the effects of culture in textbooks in mind, scholars therefore utilize criteria that extend beyond the immediate teaching context, for example the new grammars and words of a language but instead focus on the connections to broader social or cultural issues involved in the language and learning process.<sup>43</sup> Evidently, there is a great variance in the published works on researched textbook analysis. There are researchers for instance who wish to analyze textbooks in relation to the facets of cultures that they incorporate, while others shed light on the selective processes in the making of the book.<sup>44</sup> However, one of the most prominent topics of textbook research focuses on the representation of culture and ethnic minorities anywhere in the world. This type of study focuses on the potential scrutinization of ethnic, racial, and national groups in language textbooks. The specifics of these investigations vary depending on the contextual nuances of the languages, nations, and ethnic groups. By and large, textbook analysis on minorities and culture research in textbooks, or language textbooks for that matter, present and acknowledge cultural complications and raise students' intercultural understanding.<sup>45</sup>

Textbooks analysis can serve as a tool for researchers to observe how ethnic minorities are represented in various countries. Through textbook analysis studies, they have consistently observed the exclusion or highly stereotypical representation of racial and linguistic minorities and the absence of representation of ethnic minorities.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, the culture

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<sup>41</sup> Stranger-Johannessen, *Constructing English as a Ugandan language through an English textbook*, 127.

<sup>42</sup> Risager, *Representations of the World in Language Textbooks*, (Languages for Intercultural Communication and Education, 2018) 12

<sup>43</sup> Risager, *Representations of the World in Language Textbooks*, 5.

<sup>44</sup> Luke, *Regrounding Critical Literacy*, (Taylor & Francis, 2018),351.

<sup>45</sup> Chu, *The power of knowledge*, 483.

<sup>46</sup> Ali, *Representation of Muslim characters living in the West in Ontario's language textbooks* ,(Intercultural Education, v24 n5, 2013), 426.

that is represented often takes oversimplified forms or overlooks the differences with the majority culture in the country. For example, representations of ethnic minorities culture have for the most part limited topics related to food, festivals, or personal sphere thereby lessening the cultural significance and negatively influencing intercultural understanding. In other language studies, researchers have found that notable differences between cultural groups speaking the equivalent language are frequently ignored.<sup>47</sup> Besides that, there is a trend to have politically loaded histories and struggles integral to the cultural and linguistic identity of a group lessened in severity.<sup>48</sup> Textbooks thus often face criticism for embracing a limited or simplified approach to the representation of culture, treating it as passive knowledge instead of an ever-changing interaction between different peoples and social groups and the identifications within and between.<sup>49</sup>

The incorrect representation of ethnic minorities contributes to the nation-building efforts and their potential calibration with specific national-political interests.<sup>50</sup> National culture which includes the history in a nationalist form, is a so called hegemonic discourse. This means that it tries to represent all the different social groups as to belonging to one big national idea of a people. This is achieved through the wielded influence of various cultural mechanisms, effectively obscuring cultural divisions and differences that ethnic groups have.<sup>51</sup> As mentioned earlier, the choice of and content within textbooks are used by the political elite for reiterating government-backed political ideologies. These textbooks can thus be wielded by institutions and individuals to propagate a specific narrative or idea within society.<sup>52</sup> Textbooks aimed at immigrants for example frequently portray a narrative about the new country that is often idealized and or success-oriented. It is effective for subconsciously molding new learners into roles of model citizens and workers while simultaneously downplaying recurring challenges and conflicts intrinsic to the immigrant experience as a whole.<sup>53</sup> The content of language textbooks have a real effect on the society in which it is used. Language textbooks are used by the political elite to create a hegemonic national

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<sup>48</sup> Yan and Vickers, *Portraying "minorities" in Chinese history textbooks of the 1990s and 2000s*, (Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 2019), 203.

<sup>49</sup> Weninger, Csilla. *Textbook Analysis*, (The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics Textbook Analysis' 2012), 4.

<sup>50</sup> Stranger-Johannessen, *Constructing English as a Ugandan language through an English textbook*, 130.

<sup>51</sup> Wu, *Representing Language, Culture and Citizenship to Minoritised Ethnic Groups : the Teaching of Mandarin Chinese to Mongolian Learners as a Second Language in China Since 1912*, 30.

<sup>52</sup> Stranger-Johannessen, *Constructing English as a Ugandan language through an English textbook*, 131.

<sup>53</sup> Stranger-Johannessen, *Constructing English as a Ugandan language through an English textbook*.

discourse which all ethnic groups in the country are influenced by. This is not good if these ethnic groups want to be more aware of their cultural differences and ways of life.

Textbook analysis and language textbook analysis are thus an important tool for scholars worldwide in understanding the representations of ethnic, cultural or racial minorities and minorities in general. This is because the portrayal of culture in textbooks influence how readers understand the world around them. Multiple scholars have argued that the representation of ethnic minorities in textbooks are guilty of multiple wrongdoings. First of all, they oversimplify ethnic culture in their books and are focused on limited topics such as food and festivals. Second, important cultural differences between cultural groups speaking the equivalent language more often than not, left out. Third, politically loaded histories and struggles which form part of an ethnic groups identity are left unmentioned or lessened in severity. Finally, as textbooks are good at influencing the users of them about their worldviews. It is a tool by the political elite to mold these users into model citizens by creating national rhetoric within it. Thus, scholars have previously underscored the political nature of language learning through studies that highlight issues that arise when textbooks portray themselves as 'neutral' or clinical representations failing to promote critical dialogue. This together, shows us that the analyzation of textbooks is important and their findings tell us about the world and the realities surrounding ethnic minorities and ethnic relations in countries.

### 2.3 Ethnic minorities in international Chinese textbooks

International students of Chinese or people who learn Chinese as a Second Language (CSL) have a long history in and outside of China. Students have been taking Chinese language courses in China since the 1950s, but with the establishment of the National Office for Teaching Chinese or Hanban Mandarin education, this took even greater forms.<sup>54</sup> The Hanban office is responsible for the establishment of the well-known Confucius Institutes (CI) which, in 2012, was operating in 108 regions around the world and had 1.5 million registered students.<sup>55</sup> The Confucius Institutes had the official objective of promoting Chinese teaching

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<sup>54</sup> White, *Understanding China's Minorities Through Learning Chinese*, 80.

<sup>55</sup> Hong and Xianzhong, *Ideologies of monoculturalism in Confucius Institute textbooks*, 92.

materials while simultaneously shaping foreign students into so-called “friends of China” aiming to ensure they “correctly understand China.”<sup>56</sup> Although they are successful in attracting enough students to enroll in their programs, their activities have also attracted negative attention from scholars, education institutions and politicians in various countries such as the Netherlands.<sup>57</sup>

After the introduction of worldwide establishment of the Confucius Institutes around the world scholars have been analyzing how ethnic representation is upheld in their curricula. Researchers Hong and Xianzhong have performed a textbook analysis based on thirteen books used by Confucius Institutes. Their analysis showed that characters in Confucius Institute textbooks (CIT) have provided some evidence of their international orientation by including characters of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. However, the evidence is not sufficient to conclude that the textbooks reflect ethnic and racial diversity in China as well as in different areas of the world. On the contrary, they found that Han Chinese characters are dominantly represented and valued. The minority group characters, in contrast, are almost absent and invisible as they appeared only in one lesson in one of the books. Western people are much more referenced and represented than other groups, such as Asians. People from Africa are absent from the textbooks. This matters because a hegemonic practice of the representation of the dominant ethnic groups at the cost of marginalizing other ethnic minorities and nationalities does not provide learners information to issues of power, culture and social identity.<sup>58</sup> The critiques expressed by scholars in general is that the Confucius Institutions are guilty of not accurately portraying the rich diversity in cultures and languages present in China, and that the institutions are being explained through only the perspective that is in line with the Chinese government in the debates of delicate subjects such as Taiwan independence and other political subjects.

As mentioned earlier, the Confucius Institutes received critique from various countries actors and scholars. This has led to the closure of many institutions around the world including in the Netherlands. The problem with these institutions was that they became politicized. The teaching of a language was one focus but another focus was shaping the minds of these students. This is in accordance with the Confucius Institutes official objective of promoting Chinese teaching materials while simultaneously shaping foreign students into so-called

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<sup>56</sup> Hong and Xianzhong, *Ideologies of monoculturalism in Confucius Institute textbooks*, 81.

<sup>57</sup> NOS, *Confucius instituut culturele uitwisselingsbrug of China's propagandamissie*, <https://nos.nl/artikel/2369293-confucius-instituut-culturele-uitwisselingsbrug-of-china-s-propagandamissie>

<sup>58</sup> Weninger & Williams, *Cultural representations of minorities in Hungarian textbooks*, (Pedagogy, Culture & Society, 2005), 159.

“friends of China” aiming to ensure they “correctly understand China<sup>59</sup>”. The result is that the Confucius Institute has lost some of its footing in many countries. As the Confucius Institute was one of the main providers of Chinese Second Language materials, these countries then had to rely on other books.

For students using CSL books, the issue is not how these people or groups are portrayed, but rather that they are not portrayed. References to or depictions of minorities are absent in the vast majority of CSL texts. Whites research on hundreds of CSL textbooks concluded that only a handful were found to contain mention of minorities in any capacity. In the 12 of the 13 texts that do include discussion of minorities, only one whole lesson is devoted to the topic of minorities. Three of these texts limit their approach to one specific minority group, while the other ten texts discuss more than one group. Two of the texts do not mention a specific minority group, but rather look at the broad category of minority nationalities (少数民族).<sup>60</sup>

The basis of their argument is that all ethnic, cultural racial and linguistic groups are equal and deserve respect.

Chinese as a second Language has a long international history with students participating in language classes in China and abroad. The most prominent way students learn Chinese from an official institution in many countries is the Confucius Institute. Their materials and ways of conduct has been criticized for being China centered and badly portraying China ethnic diversity. Thus, many countries opted to get rid of the Confucius Institutes, either partly or entirely, while simultaneously using different materials for their students of Chinese. The analyses of textbooks by a variety of scholars have concluded that CSL have failed to address the pleas by scholars to make multiculturalism a cornerstone of education and failed to portray the diversity in the Chinese population and if they do present the different ethnicities, they are portrayed selectively and in a stereotypical way. Regrettably, corresponding studies done on CSL books utilized in the Netherlands are currently missing from the literature. This research can hopefully help develop our understanding of the ways the textbooks used represent ethnic and cultural minorities to students of the Mandarin language.

To conclude, the implications of textbooks extend beyond the immediate teaching context, significantly influencing learners' perceptions of culture, minorities, gender roles, and national

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<sup>59</sup> Hong and Xianzhong, *Ideologies of monoculturalism in Confucius Institute textbooks*, 81.

<sup>60</sup> White, *Understanding China's Minorities Through Learning Chinese*, 84.

identities. Research in this domain reveals imbalances and stereotypes, particularly in gender representation, despite increased awareness among producers regarding the need for progressive treatment. The intertwined issues regarding representation underscore the inherently political nature of language learning, challenging the notion of textbooks as 'neutral' representations devoid of opportunities for critical dialogue. However, a notable gap exists in the literature concerning Mandarin textbooks in the Netherlands, indicating the need for further research. This study hopes to contribute to that gap and analyses if these previously mentioned critiques are actively being addressed in the latest series of textbooks.

## Chapter 3 Methodology

### 3.1 The three methods of analysis

As the previously mentioned chapter focuses on the diversity of language textbook analysis, the various approaches that the researchers take in their research are also diverse. Weninger and Kiss have identified three frameworks that they most commonly use: content analysis, critical discourse analysis, and multimodal analysis. Most textbook analyses view text and meaning as forms of representation. In other words, textbooks are seen as presenting visual and written depictions of various aspects of the physical, social, and mental world. The purpose of these representations is to provide readers with worlds they can imagine, internalize, and perceive as real, as suggested by Krippendorff.<sup>61</sup> Essentially, textbooks can be considered as specific tools that create a representation of reality that readers can engage with and incorporate into their understanding of the world.<sup>62</sup> Content analysis, critical discourse analysis, and multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) offer different but complementary methodologies for analyzing linguistic and visual representations in textbooks and how language and power influence the reader through the use of textbooks. In this methodology sector, these three different methodologies will be analyzed in relation to language and power to justify the use of MDA, which this study follows.

Content analysis is a method developed to examine various forms of human communication

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<sup>61</sup> Krippendorff, Klaus. *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*. (SAGE Publications, 2018), 66.

<sup>62</sup> Krippendorff, *Content Analysis*, 66.



and has found widespread application in the analysis of textbooks. This research technique entails identifying units for analysis from a textual sample, coding these units according to criteria set by the researcher, quantifying the results, and finally concluding interpretations about the significance of the findings.<sup>63</sup> Content analysis has varied based on the topic or focus of textbook research. For instance, when examining the earlier mentioned portrayal of gender roles in the textual and visual content of textbooks. For instances, there were instances in textbooks where there no females or attention was given to gender in general.<sup>64</sup> Critical discourse analysis (CDA) on the other hand has influenced textbook analysis through its theorization of discourse, text, and meaning and its so-called methodological procedures.<sup>65</sup> Thao Le and Quynh Le depict CDA as having the objective of noticing social injustice which could be part of various social practices and taking a stance against social abuse, racism, social prejudice, and discrimination aimed at people with limited power, which in most cases are marginalized people.<sup>66</sup> According to Fairclough, CDA is fundamentally a critical social research aimed at better understanding how societies work and produce both beneficial and detrimental effects.<sup>67</sup> The specific features and the depth of the textual analysis may differ, influenced by factors like for instance the research questions, the research's expertise, and the types of texts examined within the textbooks. Thus, analysts may opt to investigate broader discursive strategies employed by texts to construct and position social groups in relation to others and even focus on the grammatical choices made by authors that might hold on the representation of certain groups.<sup>68</sup>

The origins of multimodal discourse analysis, can be found in critical discourse analysis and visual analysis and works of scholars in these field in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Scholars in the 1980s and 1990s began to argue that besides text and its underlying meanings and symbolism, among other forms, the visual element can be used to signify certain messages and thus communication. This set of tools was argued by the scholars Kress and Leeuwen argued in 1966 and they thus can be seen as the forerunners of MDA.<sup>69</sup> According to Hong & He, it is more common for researchers conducting a multi-modal analysis to integrate a more quantitative content analysis with a qualitative examination of texts and visuals using CDA

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<sup>63</sup> Krippendorff, Klaus. *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, 84.

<sup>64</sup> Risager, *Representations of the World in Language Textbooks*, 9.

<sup>65</sup> Weninger, 'Multimodality in critical language textbook analysis', 5.

<sup>66</sup> Lê, Quynh., and Thao. Le. *Linguistic Diversity and Cultural Identity a Global Perspective*. (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2011), 8.

<sup>67</sup> Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, (Routledge, 2010), 1.

<sup>68</sup> Liu, Yongbing. *The construction of cultural values and beliefs in Chinese language textbooks: A critical discourse analysis*. (*Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 26, 2005), 28.

<sup>69</sup> Weninger, 'Textbook Analysis', 5.

methods.<sup>70</sup> It is in its simplest form a collaborative analysis of the textual and the visual elements such as pictures and drawings. According to Chappelle, researchers should analyze the various semiotic modes used to communicate a message to the readers of a book.. This can in turn enhance our understanding amid a growing interest in multimodal analyses in language textbooks.<sup>71</sup> A relatively limited number of studies have explored the intermodal connections between the textual, visual, and semiotic content of language textbooks.<sup>72</sup> The CDA methodology is struggling with finding theories and frameworks and the complexity of multimodal interpretations. Semiotics deals with signs as it considers that signs mirror society thus they can depict the hidden ideologies if required deeply. It explores how a text is made interactive by its producer and how they have manipulated all of these modes. The multimodal approach is thus broader in scope compared to content analysis and critical discourse analysis as it can identify diverse ways of making meaning through gestures, postures, attitude, position of vectors, expression in an image for chasing the thought purpose.<sup>73</sup>

Kress, the forerunner in multimodal analysis, uses the example of his travels as a participant in the United Kingdom road system.<sup>74</sup> Kress uses the example of the difficulties customers face in reaching a particular parking lot at a supermarket he visited. This example shows how through different ways and mediums a message is conveyed to people. In this case, various road signs both above and beside the road were placed to interact and influence drivers to reach the parking place in both textual and visual ways. Although this largely everyday set of signs, they sparked Kress to think further and explore the workings of the combination of visual and textual communication. The point of this example is that the combination of the visual and textual elements worked together to convey a message better. Besides that, he took something in the real world and changed it into data for analysis which researchers in the MDA field have to do as well.<sup>75</sup> What Kress essentially did with the analyzation of the road signs, is turning a social phenomenon into research data. In conclusion, the recognition of language as a vital but not exclusive mode of communication has led to the emergence of multimodal discourse analysis. This case will be built around the fact that textbooks rarely

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<sup>70</sup> Curdt-Christiansen, Xiao Lan ; Weninger, Csilla, *Language, Ideology and Education: The politics of textbooks in language*, (Routledge, 2015), 122.

<sup>71</sup> Gunther Kress, *Multimodality in Critical Language Textbook Analysis*, (Routledge, 2009), 143.

<sup>72</sup> Hyland, Patridge and Wong, *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Discourse Analysis – (Bloomsbury handbook, 2023)*, 1.

<sup>73</sup> Mushtaq, *Analyzing Visual Images Of English Language Textbook: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis Of Textbooks In Pakistan*, (Jordan Journal of Modern Languages and Literatures, 2021) 152.

<sup>74</sup> Charles Forceville, *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*. (Journal of Pragmatics 2011), 10.

<sup>75</sup> Charles Forceville, *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*, 10.

rely on a single mode of communication and a multimodal analysis is ideal for this research.

<sup>76</sup> Therefore, hereafter MDA will be employed to examine multi-semiotic phenomena. The analyzation of both visual as well as the textual semiotics of textbooks will tell us more about the representation of ethnic minorities in its entirety.<sup>77</sup>

In textbook analysis there are multiple ways a researcher can approach their study but the most common ones are content analysis, critical discourse analysis and multimodal discourse analysis. Content analysis systematically categorizes and quantifies elements within textbooks to interpret their significance, often highlighting the portrayal of social roles such as gender. Critical discourse analysis delves deeper into the societal implications of these portrayals, identifying and challenging instances of social injustice, discrimination, and power imbalances as depicted in the texts. Each has its own focus and gives different results but it is multimodal discourse analysis which focuses on using multiple modes of communication into getting answers that complement each other. This is mainly a composite of textual and visual elements in textbooks. The recognition of language as a vital but not exclusive mode of communication has led to the emergence of MDA. While traditional linguistic research predominantly focused on language, scholars like O'Halloran argued for the inclusion of other meaning-making resources, such as images and architecture. This approach considers multiple modes, including text, color, and images, to analyze how they interact and contribute to semiotic meaning. This approach is also most suitable for this thesis as textbooks can offer variety of content types, stories, describing texts, dialogues, and illustrations. MDA is flexible in tackling this diversity and will reveal any underlying ideologies and differences of the representation of the Chinese ethnic groups.

### 3.2 Data sampling and textbook selection

This research on ethnic minorities in textbooks is aimed at the Netherlands because there is a lack of data on this topic. Due to this lack of previous research, there was no starting point regarding which materials were used by secondary level school teachers. To collect responses and ensure representation across the Netherlands, a website and corresponding email were

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<sup>76</sup> Weninger, 'Textbook Analysis', 5.

<sup>77</sup> Zhang and Cuo, 'A Multimodal Approach to Attitudes towards Tibet in Chinese Language Textbooks', 11.

created to contact as many middle schools in the country offering Mandarin as possible. Participation was facilitated through the creation of a website with the URL is: mandarijnophetvo.nl. The purpose of the website was to generate enthusiasm among teachers by showing dedication to this research and providing explanations on this site. The website was organized into several web pages, each detailing the research goals and contact information. The schools were selected from a national mandarin school network called “*Netwerk Chinees*”. They are a Dutch organization which aims are to improve the internationalization in education. They offer different courses ranging from primary and secondary education to Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs (MBO), higher education and research, and adult education.<sup>78</sup> It is a commercial organization that has published a list of all middle schools in the Netherlands offering Mandarin as a course. Each school on this list was contacted via mail and were asked questions about their curriculum. So given the novelty of the study on secondary education in the Netherlands, a corresponding website and email contact were established to reach out to all middle schools offering Mandarin. The primary objective was to create as large a dataset as possible to ensure comprehensive representation in the research results.

In total, 28 schools were contacted. Out of these, 10 teachers responded to the email, but one school was excluded as they did not offer Mandarin classes. Therefore, 9 out of the original 28 schools, which accounts for 31% of the recipients, participated in this research. There were asked a set of questions such as what kind of textbooks they used in their exam classes and if they spent any other time in their curriculum at the representation of Chinese ethnic minorities. 6 of them told they used *Chinees ‘n Makkie, part 7* in their classes and 2 used *我学中文* (“I study Chinese”) by Jessica Paardekooper. The selection of textbooks sampled for this study would need to take into account issues such as representativeness, accessibility, sample size and the general applicability of the result.<sup>79</sup> What we can derive from their answers is that there is a generally followed curriculum in the Netherlands and that most teachers use the same textbook. This previously referred textbook is called “*Chinees? ‘n Makkie!*”? which can be translated as “Learning Chinese? That’s easy!” or “Chinese? That’s easy to learn!”. This book is currently one of the most commonly used textbooks since the

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<sup>78</sup> Nuffic, *Chinees in het voortgezet onderwijs*, (<https://www.nuffic.nl/onderwerpen/netwerk-chinees/chinees-in-het-voortgezet-onderwijs>),

<sup>79</sup> Gobo, *Sampling, Representativeness and Generalizability*, (Qualitative Research Practice, 2004), 436.

centralization of the curriculum in the Netherlands, meeting this critical criteria. However, Jessica Paardekooper's book was unavailable for consumer purchase and efforts to contact her via Nuffic or her personal information were unsuccessful. This omission of Jessica's book will on the one hand increase the focus of this research on *Chinees 'n Makkie*. On the other hand, it will diminish the overall representativeness of the study's results for the Netherlands. Therefore, this research should be considered a case study, focusing mainly on *Chinees 'n Makkie*. This research hopes to inspire future overarching analyses on the representation of minorities in Dutch-Chinese language textbooks

Part 4 of *Chinees 'n Makkie* is written by Tin Chau Tsui and Sven Bosch in the year 2022. The title of the textbook *Chinees? 'n Makkie!* can be translated as "Learning Chinese? That's easy!" or "Chinese?, that's easy to learn!". Sven Bosch is a sinologist who received his education at the University of Leiden. He is currently affiliated with Avans University of Applied Sciences as a teacher of Chinese, marketing and supply chain management. Dr. Tin Chau Tsui is also a sinologist who has taught in secondary education, higher vocational education and scientific education. He has more than 30 years of experience in mandarin teaching and is writer of the other books in the *Chinees 'n Makkie* series part 1, 2 and 3. Dr. Tsui worked at the Hogeschool Zuyd as one of the main mandarin teachers before retiring. During his employment and after retirement he produced the *Chinees 'n Makkie* textbooks series that were used at Zuyd Hogeschool. Zuyd Hogeschool is an education institution and one of the few in the Netherlands offering high level mandarin education. The selection of the textbooks sampled for this study must consider issues such as representativeness, accessibility, sample size and the general applicability of the result.<sup>80</sup> *Chinees 'n Makkie* is currently one of the most commonly used textbooks since the centralization of the curriculum in the Netherlands, meeting this criteria.

*Chinees 'n Makkie* is organized into eight language themes, each functioning as overarching chapter consisting of three lessons of around 15 pages. The topics covered are related to traveling to China, current events, returning home, and maintaining contact, typical of Mandarin textbooks. Besides language lessons, the book also dedicates a total of eight themes related to what are known as "culture themes". Just like the language, each culture theme consists of three sub-themes related to main topic of the culture theme. For example, the first

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<sup>80</sup> Gobo, *Sampling, Representativeness and Generalizability*, 436.

lesson of culture theme two is “The period of Mao Zedong”. This theme, in turn, consists of three sub-themes, one of them being “The Great Leap Forward”. The total of the culture themes is displayed below:

- 1 “Modern Chinese history till 1949”
- 2 “ The period of Mao Zedong (1949-1976)”
- 3 “The Chinese Communist Party of current China”
- 4 “Special Chinese territories”
- 5 “Classical Chinese Literature
- 6 “Modern Chinese Literature”
- 7 “ Current Chinese Literature”
- 8 “The People's Republic under the Leadership of Xi Jinping”

The culture themes make up 48 out of the 277 pages of the textbook, constituting a relatively large portion of its content. The topics range from Chinese dynastic times till contemporary times while also touching upon things like literature, revolutionary times, wars, democracy, Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Taiwan. This book shows to have a variety of topics that will be analyzed in the next chapter.

In conclusion, employing a comprehensive approach, this study engaged with middle schools through the "*Netwerk Chinees*" organization, aiming to explore common practices and challenges encountered by Mandarin teachers. Based on the responses indicating that 7 out of the 9 teachers used *Chinees 'n Makkie*, it was selected for analysis. This textbook became a focal point for the study due to its representative nature. A preliminary analysis of the textbook revealed a structured organization into eight language themes, accompanied by eight culture themes. These themes delve into various aspects of Chinese history, literature, and contemporary issues, showcasing a comprehensive approach to Mandarin language education. Notably, the emphasis on the Communist Party of China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and Chinese literature highlights the interrelation of language and cultural contexts within. This research sets the stage for a deeper exploration of the implicit representation of ethnic minorities embedded within language education. By analyzing the representation present in this book, this study hopes to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics shaping Mandarin language education in the Netherlands.

### 3.3 The research process

This research on Chinese ethnic representation in *Chinees 'n Makkie* is conducted in two phases, examining both the textual elements and visual elements of the book. The results of the analysis will be discussed in the conclusion and in their own respective chapters: chapter 4 for textual results and chapter 5 for visual results. As mentioned earlier, there are various methods researchers can analyze representation in textbooks. Scholars Hong and Xianzhong focused on a smaller corpus of data in their analysis of Confucius Institute textbooks (CIT), which serves as the basis for this research. They have analyzed the ethnic representation in CIT using both qualitative as well as quantitative methods and presented their findings in several figures which I adapted to fit this textbook and its representation of ethnic minorities. In a textbook analysis from Liu, ethnic representation is measured using a comparison between ethnic minorities groups and Han Chinese.<sup>81</sup> By using a comparative analysis, the differences in representation among these ethnic groups can be made more clear and the methods used in previous studies, such as Liu's, will enhance the reproducibility of future research. This study thus builds upon two previous studies: the first involves the counting and categorization of ethnic groups from Hong and Xianzhong's research, which will be further elaborated on in the next paragraph; the second involves the comparative representation of ethnic minorities from Liu's study, contributing to a reproducible study.<sup>82</sup>

Phase one is based on Hong and Xianzhong's categorization of ethnic groups which was a research on Confucius Institute book aimed at a foreign audience. The textbooks produced for domestic consumption relatively frequently mention ethnic minorities, and the ideas of statehood are more prominent.<sup>83</sup> Books for foreigners rarely show a large investment in representing ethnic minorities and CIT books serve as a prime example of this trend. Similar to Hong and Xianzhong's book, mentions of ethnicity in *Chinees 'n Makkie* are relatively scarce, with only two pages dedicated to this topic. Therefore, using their counting method this research will identify any other ethnic person present in *Chinees 'n Makkie* who are not specifically mentioned in those pages dedicated to ethnic minority. Using the categorization of ethnicities in Figure 1, Hong and Xianzhong counted the number of fictitious characters

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<sup>81</sup> Liu, Colak, and Agirdag, *Celebrating Culture and Neglecting Language*.

<sup>82</sup> Hong and Xianzhong, *Ideologies of monoculturalism in Confucius Institute textbooks*.

<sup>83</sup> Liu, Colak, and Agirdag, *Celebrating Culture and Neglecting Language*, 691.

and categorized them into ethnic groups such as Japanese and Korean. They also did this on non-fictional characters and famous persons that can be seen in Figure 2. The adaptation made for this research was changing present ethnic groups, such as Korean, if they were not present to ones that were present, such as Manchu's. For the textual analysis, one count corresponds to instances where an ethnicity whether Han or not, speaks or is mentioned. For the visual analysis, one count corresponds to instances where a person appears in a picture or drawing. The exact details of distinguishing between ethnicities will be explained later. Overall, this study is based on the research methods demonstrated by Hong and Xianzhong in their analysis of CIT textbooks and the representation of ethnic minorities within them.

**Figure 1.**

*Table 5.2 Fictitious characters: Type and frequency of referencing in CIT*

<i>Types of characters</i>	<i>Characters with Chinese as L1</i>		<i>Characters with Chinese as L2 or FL</i>				<i>Total</i>
	<i>Han ethnic group</i>	<i>Ethnic minorities</i>	<i>Western</i>	<i>Overseas Chinese</i>	<i>Japanese</i>	<i>Korean</i>	
No. of characters	41 (69.5%)	0 (0%)	14 (23.7%)	2 (3.4%)	1 (1.7%)	1 (1.7%)	59 (100%)
Frequency of referencing	779 (48.7%)	0 (0%)	728 (45.5%)	81 (5.1%)	10 (0.9%)	3 (0.3%)	1601 (100%)

**Figure 2.**

*Table 5.3 Non-characters: Type and frequency of referencing in CIT*

<i>Types of characters</i>		<i>Characters with Chinese as L1</i>		<i>Characters with Chinese as L2 or FL</i>			<i>Total</i>
		<i>Han ethnic group</i>	<i>Ethnic minorities</i>	<i>Overseas Chinese</i>	<i>Western people</i>	<i>Other nationalities</i>	
Characters with geographic origin	N.	8	0	2	8	0	18
	Freq.	21	0	17	49	0	87
Characters with ethnic origin	N.	1	9	0	0	0	10
	Freq.	2	29	0	0	0	31
Famous characters	N.	21	0	0	6	0	27
	Freq.	75	0	0	15	0	90
Total	N.	38 (60.3%)	9 (14.3%)	2 (3.2%)	14(22.2%)	0 (0%)	63
	Freq.	98 (47.1%)	29 (13.9%)	17(8.2%)	64(30.8%)	0 (0%)	208

As mentioned in this chapter, phase two is based on a comparative analysis conducted in studies done by for instance Liu, in her analysis of representations of ethnic groups. This



method emphasizes the minority narratives, including texts and visuals, characteristics and traits, intergroup relationships, and the dominant narratives. This framework offers analytical guidelines for exploring the minority and dominant narratives regarding cultures and languages in Chinese textbooks.<sup>84</sup> In addition, the analysis focused on the representation strategies by reflecting on whose perspectives and voices were included and the intentions of such representation. She uses picture of a Chinese family having dinner and compares that with a photo that introduces a Mongolian ethnic group as shown in figure 3. She concludes her analysis by the fact that Mongolian people are often portrayed as hospitable and friendly hosts who welcome their Han countrymen with food, singing, and dancing. This enhances mainstream society's stereotypical view of ethnic minority people, as they are, through these fixed and imposed depictions, reduced to strategically selected aspects of their cultural backgrounds.<sup>85</sup> Phase two analyzes the differences in representation on a critical level based on a variety of factors that extend beyond mere counting of ethnic representations, focusing on the how the textual and visual work together in the creation of a certain narrative of ethnic minorities.

**Figure 3.**



**Figure 3.** Hospitable hosts and Han guests on the grassland.

The nuances of ethnic differences is not always very clear but are an important part of this research. The textbook itself also often did not make a clear visual or textual conformation of

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<sup>84</sup> Liu, Colak, and Agirdag, *Celebrating Culture and Neglecting Language*, 695.

<sup>85</sup> Liu, Colak, and Agirdag, *Celebrating Culture and Neglecting Language*, 699.

the ethnic backgrounds of the described or depicted individuals. Therefore, the decision was made that if the ethnic background of individuals was not clearly indicated through textual or visual cues, they were assumed to be Han Chinese as Han culture and ethnicity dominate in China. Based on the verbal descriptions, such as typical Han Chinese name structures and visual cues like physical appearances including clothing or skin color, individuals were categorized into Han and non-Han ethnic groups. There were instances for example where people were introduced as Uyghur or as a Dutch person making the distinction clear. Also, if someone had a Dutch or ethnic name they were considered accordingly. A final note is the category which is often used namely "Western" because this is not a nationality but a political label, however, for the purpose of this study, it refers to those people of different nationalities from North America, Europe and Australia, as in other studies. The distinction between ethnic groups is challenging but it relies on the previously mentioned cues. If these cues are absent or ethnicity is not clearly indicated, individuals are categorized as Han.

The methods of this research is based on various studies done on textbooks aimed at a foreign audience as well as Chinese. Their methods are divided in a quantitative and qualitative approach which are called phase one and two. Phase one focuses on the categorization of ethnic groups present in the book to analyze the frequency in of ethnicity and what that can tell us about their representation or not. Phase two focuses on how the representations of ethnic groups differ from each other and the greater narrative that the textbooks has on the ethnicities. When presenting the qualitative content analysis results, a well-defined balance between description and interpretation is drawn.<sup>86</sup> Qualitative research is in some cases interpretive in nature and the interpretation represents personal and theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study which will be made clear when presented. The objectives of the study were;(1) to analyze the embedded meanings of text and visual images and how they work together or not (2) to analyze which types common critiques on textbooks are visible in this Mandarin textbook?

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<sup>86</sup> Talebi, Nouri, and Kafeshani, *Identifying the Main Individual Factors Influencing Entrepreneurial Decision Making Biases*, (International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 2014), 5.

## Chapter 4 The findings

### 4.1 Phase one findings

The results of this research is presented in the following manner: first, the textual frequency will be presented followed by the visual. These results will then be discussed and analyzed in comparison with previously studies on ethnic representation. I will examine whether there are similarities with other studies and if this textbook addresses the criticism expressed by scholars regarding ethnic representation in both foreign and Chinese domestic textbooks. The focus of the first part of Chapter 4 lies in the frequency of references and what this says about the representation of Chinese ethnic minorities in the Netherlands. The textual frequency analysis will reveal how often Chinese ethnic minorities are mentioned. Similar, the visual frequency analysis will reveal how often these minorities are portrayed in images and illustrations. By comparing these findings with previous studies, We can determine whether or not the representation of ethnic minorities in Dutch-Chinese language textbooks is comparable with previous studies.

At the end of each lesson, a text is dedicated to Chinese culture, history, and well-known figures. Notably, there are no Africans or non-western people textually represented. The total number of textual references to Han Chinese people was 489 (63.35%) , followed by Western people with 267 (34.59%), ethnic minorities with 11 (1.42%) and ethnic minorities in a historical context with 5 (0.64%). There was no mention of non-Western people. The category of Han Chinese is clear but more information can be given on the ethnic minorities and Western people sections because they contain multiple ethnicities. The ethnic minorities mentioned in the book are 9 references to Uyghurs, one reference to a Manchu and one reference to a person who is half Japanese and half Chinese. The Manchu is the historical figure Emperor Puyi and the person who is half Japanese and half Chinese is a Ming loyalist named Koxinga. The mention of the Uyghurs comes in the form of a culture theme section called “Special Administrative Regions” and the lesson titled “The Uyghur Autonomous region of Xinjiang”. These preliminary results show that, on a textual level, ethnic minorities receive relatively little focus in the book, whereas Han Chinese are the most dominant, followed by people from Western countries. Also, there is only focus on historical figures but not on the ordinary person, Manchu emperor Puyi is not representable for the Manchu population as a whole because of is unique historical position.

The total amount shown was 420 for Han Chinese people, followed by 31 for Western people, 14 for non-Western individuals, 10 of African origin, and 8 references of ethnic minorities, all based on visual references. The category “Non-Western” may require some clarification regarding who falls under this classification. In this context, 11 were from non-European Latin countries, meaning South-Americans and native Americans. There were also a total of 44 Han Chinese famous individuals counted thus forming the largest group among the presented ethnicities. Their relevance to Chinese culture, level of fame, occupation or reasons for being well-known differed greatly. For example, they included administrators like Carrie Lam, artists such as Mo Yan, and historical leaders like Mao Zedong. The number of westerners mentioned is 6 and were of Dutch, American, and English ethnicities, including figures like Mark Rutte and Donald Trump. The results of the visual counting also indicates a noticeable difference in the representation of different ethnic groups.

The frequency findings of this research align with multiple previous studies and their results, which concluded that Chinese ethnic minorities are almost absent in textbooks aimed at a foreign audience. White’s analysis of Chinese second language textbooks revealed that only a handful textbooks mentioned ethnic minorities, with just one entire lesson dedicated to this topic. In *Chinees ‘n Makkie, part 4*, there is also only one lesson or 2 pages dedicated to this topic which focuses on the Uyghurs. Furthermore, this lesson does not incorporate the other 54 ethnic minorities groups and is not a lesson dedicated to ethnicity in China in general. The foundation of arguments by scholars conducting a textbook analysis is that all ethnic, cultural, racial, and linguistical groups deserve equal respect. Confucius Institute books are widely used in Mandarin teaching, yet there are similarities between *Chinees ‘n Makkie* and those. The CI books received widespread condemnation for not accurately portraying the rich cultural diversity present in China something which *Chinees ‘n Makkie, part 4* also does not. Research in the Chinese lower and middle school textbook revealed that there were certain ethnic groups that were represented more than others. These were the Uyghur, Mongolian, Tibetan and Dai. Although the Zhuang and Manchu, despite their large population size, did not receive the same level of emphasis. This is because they are perceived by the dominant group as having ‘exotic’ and distinctive cultural characteristics.<sup>87</sup> In the analysis of *Chinees ‘n Makkie* there is also a focus on the Uyghurs who are part of the “popular” ethnic group.

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<sup>87</sup> Chu, *The power of knowledge*, 477.

These textual results show a lack of sufficient evidence to argue that the textbooks reflect ethnic and racial diversity in China as well as in different areas of the world. On the contrary Han character are dominantly represented and valued. The minority group characters, in contrast, are almost absent and invisible. They appeared only in one lesson of one of the books. This hegemonic practice of the representation of the dominant ethnic groups at the cost of marginalizing other ethnic minorities and nationalities does not provide learners with "empowering, multicultural portrayals of the world that sensitize them to issues of power, culture and social identity".<sup>88</sup> Besides that the fact that Confucius Institute books are no longer used for their wrong representations of the cultural diversity in China it is ironic that a book currently used in some middle schools in the Netherlands can justifiably face the same criticism. Which is, that the Chinese ethnic minorities culture in China are not represented sufficiently and that there is a strong emphasis on displaying the biggest ethnic groups such as the Uyghur leaving out the smaller groups in the content.

## 4.2 Phase two findings

The study on the representation of Chinese ethnic minorities reveals many differences in how Han Chinese and the Chinese ethnic minorities are represented. One example is that Chinese ethnic minorities are more likely to be portrayed as helpful guests, grateful to Han Chinese aid and less modern in terms of living standards. The results of this study are based on the differences between the Ethnic minorities present in the text, which is unfortunately not that many. Another point made by scholars is that the Han Chinese are not considered a ethnic group at all. It is namely solely based on the Uyghur culture lesson that was mentioned in phase one of this research. The picture and textual information used there is compared with the many ways and portrayals of the Han majority group and the examples will be given and written down in this text. The results of the analysis to how *Chinees 'n Makkie part 4* represents Chinese ethnicities is written down below and concluded in the final paragraph

In the textbook, the Han Chinese are portrayed in many pictures and texts. They are by far the largest group presented in and portrayed in different ways and scenarios as can be seen in figure 4 and figure 5 and figure 6. They are shown working, traveling, eating with friends and family and besides this, cultural significant people like political leaders and celebrities are

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<sup>88</sup> Weninger & Williams, *Cultural representations of minorities in Hungarian textbooks*, 199.

shown as well. The textbook just like Chu argument on the analyzation on Chinese elementary textbook. This textbook also represents the Han in a dominant way and as if their culture and ethnicity is normal and not an ethnic group like others.<sup>89</sup> As photos could sometimes tell a story words couldn't, the gap of ethnic representation could have been filled by the visual elements of each cultural theme. There is an interplay between the two modes of communication, however, this interplay does not have a positive effect on the readers' comprehensive understanding of culture and is used as a tool to push an ideology whose foundation lies in the background of the writers and the people had influence on the choice of this book. The lack of cultural information in the visual aspects could have been added in the textual, showcasing explicit information of the Han that shows how they are culturally distinct and the largest ethnic group of the country. Overall, this book does not touch upon the ideas of ethnicity and Han chinese ethnicity in anyway in both the visual and textual elements of this book which furthers the idea of the normality of Han Chinese which scholars like Chu have argued against. The reason for this is that students should be taught a critical understanding of issues such as ethnicity to create mutual understanding and the opportunity to understand China better.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Chu, *The power of knowledge*, 479.

<sup>90</sup> Chu, *The power of knowledge*, 484.



Figure 4.



Figure 5



Figure 6 this shows a shopping street where a lot of people are walking in a well-lit modern street. If we compare this with picture 6 shown of the Uyghur presumably in Xinjiang, there are differences in the level of development. Figure 6 shows modern international shops whereas figure 7 shows a calm street with only several shops. This links into the idea of previous studies that ethnic minorities live in lower levels modernity compared to the Han Chinese.<sup>91</sup> The Han Chinese are portrayed in contemporary, modern societies whereas ethnic groups are seen in a distant geographical place on the borders of China. They are constricted in a way on picture and textual descriptions as living their “traditional” ways of life and more in nature.<sup>9293</sup> Although, this analysis does not detect this level of disparity. Still, the fact remains that there is difference in the of the streets on figure 6 and figure 7 in their level of development. The portrayal of the Uyghur ethnic groups is therefore relative to the Han Chinese represented as more traditional and primitive. There is a shift compared to textbooks used in analyzed Chinese domestic used that were analyzed that showed certain ethnic groups as living in traditional housing seen in figure 3, but nonetheless the difference in the representation is present.

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<sup>91</sup> Yan and Vickers, *Portraying “minorities” in Chinese history textbooks of the 1990s and 2000s*, 483.

<sup>92</sup> Liu, Colak, and Agirdag, *Celebrating Culture and Neglecting Language*, 706.

<sup>93</sup> Chu, *The power of knowledge*, 483.



Figure 6.



Figure 7.



The culture theme where figure 7 originates from is the culture them regarding the Uyghurs This picture shows a of a street with various people walking and or standing. In the back there are Chinese flags displayed on the poles attached to a what appears to be a shop or market building. First the geography of the region is explained followed by the conflict between the Uyghurs and the Chinese government. The action which the writer says students should take is: “Look up what Uyghurs have to learn in the reeducation camps. Prior to 2017, Uyghurs were subjected to frequent violations of their human rights, faced discrimination on the basis of their identity, and were pressured to assimilate and restricted in their ability to practice their religion, but their identity did not face complete eradication. This situation changed over the course of 2017 as the PRC began a systematic and dismantling of Uyghur culture and identity that some even describe as cultural genocide.<sup>94</sup>” By asking students this question the Uyghurs and calling these camps only in terms of reeducations camps is problematic. The critique that scholars is the downlplaying of the difficulties inherent to a specific culture group which in this case is the recent treatment of the Uyghurs by the central government.<sup>95</sup> The reason stems from the fact that there lacks further explanation to what these re-education camps are used for or the mentionoing of international condemnation of them as actually being prisons. This representation of Uyghurs further reiterates the political a one-sided narrative surrounding the treatment and Uyghur-Han relations and furthermore does not address the cultural differences and the dynamics of these differences.<sup>96</sup>

Another example of the wrong representation of the Ughurs or ethnic minorities in general relates to the portrayal of identity. The ideas surrounding of a nation state and its relation to ethnicity was explained in a way that the Chinese Nation and the ethnicities are united in their diversity, meaning the differences between the groups is permitted and encouraged as long as the ethnic identity subordinate to the identity of being Chinese.<sup>97</sup> The Uyghur culture lesson further enhances this idea of the being Chinese because of two reasons. First, figure 7 shows Uyghur men standing in the street while simultaneously the Chinese flags are visible in the background. Although they are in Xinjiang the Chinese flag and the ideas of the Chinese state are thus present. Secondly, the cultural differences between Uyghur and Han Chinese are not explained in the text at all. Any cultural aspect and also language which forms a inherent part

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<sup>94</sup> Sean Roberts, *The War on the Uyghurs*, (Manchester University Press, 2020), 200.

<sup>95</sup> Stranger-Johannessen, *Constructing English as a Ugandan language through an English textbook*.

<sup>96</sup> Stranger-Johannessen, *Constructing English as a Ugandan language through an English textbook*, 131.

<sup>97</sup> Zhao and Postiglione, *Representations of Ethnic Minorities in China's* 1-11.

of someone culture is not explained. The divisions between ethnic groups is important if the users of this book want to understand China culturally.<sup>98</sup> *Chinees 'n Makkie* does not address this and portrays shows a monocultural country which is not good if people want to be more aware of the cultural diversity of China.

In conclusion, the second part of the analysis has shown the differences in representation between Han Chinese and other ethnic groups. It reveals significant biases and disparities in portrayal and identity. The Han Chinese are predominantly shown in diverse ways and their culture is also seen as the norm. Furthermore, the differences in depiction is guilty of portraying the other ethnicity, in this case the Uyghurs, as less modern than the Han Chinese. This finding correlates to other studies on Chinese second learning textbooks. Such representations echo the critiques of scholars who argue that ethnic minorities are often depicted as lagging behind in terms of modernity and development. Uyghurs have recently met more difficulties with the central government and some have been put into re-education camps, which is, according to the international community, for the purpose of suppressing their culture. The textbook *Chinees 'n Makkie* does not adequately handle this subject and downplays the difficulties they face. This results in the failure of giving Chinese second language students using this book accurate information on the realities of Han-Uyghur relationships and the dynamics of ethnicity within China. Finally, the chosen picture of a street in Xinjiang with Chinese flags in the background is a good example regarding the notion of ethnic identity being subordinate to being Chinese. This idea is present in Chinese textbooks and an important idea in the development of the identity of ethnic minorities, who are both encouraged as well as discouraged in being ethnically different from the Han. These distorted representations about the Han and the Uyghurs are not sufficient since there have been conducted many studies about the representation of ethnic minorities to address this issue and it currently teaches students who use this book a limited understanding of China.

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<sup>98</sup> Wu, *Representing Language, Culture and Citizenship to Minoritised Ethnic Groups : the Teaching of Mandarin Chinese to Mongolian Learners as a Second Language in China Since 1912*, 30.

## Conclusion

This research has attempted to analyze and answer the question whether *Chinees 'n Makkie* represents the ethnic minorities of China in a balanced way and addresses scholars' concern. This study reveals that this textbook makes an effort to portray ethnic minorities and educate the second language learners about ethnicity. This is shown in two ways: first, because there is an overrepresentation of Han Chinese compared to ethnic minorities which only appear in 1.5% of the whole book; and second, phase two of this analysis has shown that there is explanation given to the differences of Han and non-Han ethnicities. This study thus indicates that ethnicity is not deemed relevant, amplifying the dominant positionality of the Han Chinese and reflecting the same issues found in studies on Confucius Institute textbooks. Although they are no longer used, the current textbook still underrepresents the cultural diversity present in China.

Phase two of this research has shown various outcomes including the expressions of government ideas on nationhood, namely the notion that the identity of ethnicity is subordinate to the idea of being Chinese. Moreover, the portrayal of ethnic minorities is limited to the most popular groups, namely the Uyghurs. They are presented in a lower level of modernity than that of their Han countrymen. Furthermore, the treatment that Uyghurs face and their conflict with the Chinese government is not adequately addressed. As a result, the hardships experienced by some ethnic groups, in this case, the Uyghurs are therefore downplayed. This representation of Uyghurs reinforces a certain narrative surrounding Uyghur-Han relations and fails to address the cultural differences adequately.<sup>99</sup>

This study has hopefully contributed to the understanding of the representation of Chinese ethnic minorities after the decreasing influence of the Confucius Institute in the Netherlands. It highlights differences in representation between Chinese domestic textbooks and those intended for foreign audiences which should be considered if they want to teach students about cultural realities of China. This study analyzed a book widely used in Dutch middle school education and found that, in its current state, *Chinees 'n Makkie part 4* does not adequately prepare new students for the ideas of ethnicity and the dynamics of ethnicity of China. Since new students are extra susceptible to new information and language teaching is

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<sup>99</sup> Stranger-Johannessen, *Constructing English as a Ugandan language through an English textbook*, 131.

heavily reliant on textbooks, this is a significant issue for educators when choosing their curriculum and for writers when selecting and creating a textbook. This study concluded that there are several problems, such as underrepresentation, oversimplified narratives and a hegemonic portrayal of the idea of being Chinese that needs to be addressed.

This study has shown that a lot of students in the Netherlands are taught a limited view of China's cultural diversity. After the reduction in reliance on Confucius Institute material in the Netherlands it was expected that the replacement material would address the criticism of advocates to get rid of the CI. Instead, the Confucius Institute label has been removed from the books, but the textbook used is still making the same mistakes. New students of Mandarin are not receiving accurate information on the ideas of ethnicity, the creation of ethnic groups in China and the delicate relationship ethnic groups have with each other and with the central government. If the problem of misrepresentation is not addressed, these misconceptions will only become ingrained in our idea about China. Therefore, this is a problem that must be addressed at a local or national level to improve the level of intercultural understanding and the educational quality level of Chinese language teaching in the Netherlands.

Finally, for future studies, I suggest analyzing other Chinese second learning textbooks used in the Netherlands or another European country. The small scope of this research and the omission of the other widely used book for Chinese second language learning in the Netherlands 我学中文 by Jessica Paardekooper limits the representability of the results of this inquiry. Furthermore, the capacity of multimodal analysis extends beyond what this study has covered. Although the use multiple semiotics were tested and analyzed to show different narratives in textual and visual forms, this topic needs to be further investigated in textbooks studies.



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