Chapter 9
Integrating ChatGPT Into a Culture–Focused Flipped Curriculum for Chinese as a Foreign Language:
Experiments and Implications

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores ChatGPT's potential for assisting in a culture-focused flipped curriculum to facilitate the development of intercultural communicative competence, a core value of foreign language education in the 21st century. Three experiments assess ChatGPT's performance in generating scenarios and performance scripts for practicing intercultural communication in Chinese-speaking contexts. While ChatGPT demonstrates remarkable linguistic accuracy and comprehension abilities, it struggles to generate scripts that reflect communicative strategies specific to Chinese-speaking contexts, especially when the prompt lacks explicit instructions about Chinese cultural expectations. The limitation can be rooted in ChatGPT's training and the user's ineffective prompting. The findings suggest that ChatGPT is better suited as a reference tool than a primary learning resource in the curriculum. The implications for foreign language education and the integration of AI are also discussed.

A core value of foreign language education in the 21st century is the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages [ACTFL], 2017). Compared with "communicative competence," ICC adds an emphasis on the ability to take up the perspectives of the listener or reader in intercultural communication (Byram, 2020). This emphasis necessitates a more effective integration of language and culture in foreign language instruction. To

meet this challenge, proponents of the Performed Culture Approach (PCA) (Walker, 2010; Wang &Jia, 2023; Yu, 2021) propose a shift to a culture-focused framework characterized by performance-based instruction and assessment. For example, by enacting various scenarios that simulate interactions between individuals of different social hierarchies in Chinese-speaking contexts and receiving feedback from a Chinese perspective, students develop a concrete understanding of how hierarchy plays out in Chinese-speaking contexts while developing proficiency in the language. Such experiential knowledge is more easily registered and more readily accessible than what is gleaned merely from cultural notes. It equips students with the flexibility to effectively navigate similar situations, whether in life or in reading.

In lower-level foreign language courses, the development of ICC can be greatly facilitated by a culture-focused flipped curriculum, which dedicates classroom instruction to enactments of intercultural scenarios. Effective implementation of the curriculum requires students to teach themselves the language before class and demonstrate their knowledge in class to receive feedback. The instructor's preparation for class centers on creating a range of meaningful scenarios that enhance cultural understanding while facilitating language practice. Both the students and the instructor may benefit greatly from the assistance of ChatGPT, a remarkable achievement in the realm of artificial intelligence (AI). Equipped with a transformer architecture and trained on extensive datasets, ChatGPT has demonstrated excellence in swiftly generating realistic texts of various forms and providing detailed responses to factual and conceptual queries (Hong, 2023; Kasneci et al., 2023). This chapter explores ChatGPT's potential for assisting in a culture-focused flipped curriculum.

In the forthcoming sections, I first offer a brief description of the culture-focused flipped curriculum, highlighting how it may incorporate ChatGPT while upholding academic integrity and depth of learning. I then review current discussions among educators about ChatGPT's capabilities and limitations for language education. Furthermore, I report findings from three experiments that I conducted with ChatGPT3.5, assessing its performance in one of the most demanding lesson-planning tasks faced by human instructors implementing the culture-focused flipped curriculum, namely, generating a variety of context-specific performance scripts for practicing intercultural communication. The chapter concludes with implications for language educators aspiring to harness ChatGPT's potential to enhance the effectiveness of language education for cultivating ICC.

THE CULTURE-FOCUSED FLIPPED CURRICULUM

The culture-focused flipped curriculum is an application of the Performed Culture Approach (PCA) (Walker, 2010), specially developed to help learners participate effectively in cultures that are fundamentally different from their own. PCA, informed by sociocultural theories and recent developments in cognitive science, pioneers a culture-focused framework, where the goal of foreign language education is to enable learners to function effectively in the target culture (Wang & Jia, 2023). It emphasizes the learning of behavioral culture in all levels of language classes for long-term benefits. Behavioral culture is the tacit knowledge of effective (re)actions in specific contexts. It is embodied in the dynamic processes that frame the behavior of its members and give them the means to recognize the behaviors of their own and others in specific contexts (Walker, 2021). The emphasis on behavioral culture is achieved by using performance as a unifying framework for language and culture.

Performance, in this context, refers to a situated communicative event specified by five basic elements of human behavior, namely time, place, roles, audience, and script (Noda, 2007; Walker, 2010; Walker

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