



Investigation on the Usage and Compilation of Local Chinese Textbooks in Bangladesh

Yuanyuan Chen¹, Chunhong Qi^{2*}

¹ School of International Chinese Language Education, Yunnan University, Kunming 650000, Yunnan, China

² College of Chinese Language and Culture, Yunnan Normal University, Kunming 650000, Yunnan, China

*Corresponding Author: email: 810982089@qq.com.

Abstract. With the increasing popularity of Chinese language learning in Bangladesh, the demand for local textbooks tailored to the local teaching environment has also been growing. This necessitates the creation of Chinese textbooks suitable for locals, taking into account the diverse needs of the overseas market. However, the current local textbooks in Bangladesh still face several issues, including limited quantity, lack of variety, excessive vocabulary beyond the syllabus, low recurrence rate of new words, excessive grammar items beyond the syllabus, low degree of localization, insufficient exercises, and monotonous exercise forms. Therefore, this paper mainly investigates the usage and compilation of four beginner Chinese textbooks used by private Chinese training institutions in Bangladesh, with the aim of providing references and suggestions for the compilation of local Chinese textbooks in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Bangladesh, Local Textbooks, Private Chinese Training Institutions, Usage and Compilation.

1 Introduction

With the signing of “the Belt and Road” Initiative Memorandum of Understanding between China and Bangladesh, Chinese enterprises have participated in the construction of 27 power and energy projects in Bangladesh, built 12 roads, 21 bridges, and 7 railways, creating approximately 550,000 jobs in Bangladesh and bringing in billions of dollars in investment.¹ Bangladesh's international Chinese education has also ushered in new development opportunities. Since 2006, Yunnan University established the first Confucius Institute in South Asia, the Confucius Institute at North South University in Bangladesh (currently with 2 teaching sites). In 2015, Yunnan University established the second Confucius Institute in Bangladesh, the Confucius Institute at the University of Dhaka (currently with 5 teaching sites). In 2023, Honghe University and Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology jointly established the Shanto-Mariam-

¹ China Belt and Road Network <https://www.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/p/01U71KVC.html>

Honghe Confucius Classroom. With the rapid growth of Chinese learners in Bangladesh, Chinese teaching resources have become increasingly insufficient. Currently, the three Confucius Institutes (Classrooms) in Bangladesh have 23 Chinese teachers, serving about 1,500 students. The shortage of teachers is severe. This situation has provided opportunities for the development of private Chinese training institutions. Through field visits and online communications, we found that five private training institutions in Bangladesh offer Chinese courses: Belt and Road Chinese Center, China-Bangladesh Chinese Academy, HSK-Solution, Utthula Chinese Academy, and Great Wall Language Center. In 2023, BRAC University also began offering Chinese courses. Currently, private institutions in Bangladesh have 21 Chinese teachers, serving about 600 students. Textbooks, as materials used by teachers and students for teaching activities, are essential. Liu Hanyin and Li Xiaolu (2024) pointed out that the construction of local Chinese teaching resources in Bangladesh's paper textbooks faces several issues, including limited development achievements, low participation of Chinese personnel and institutions, and the need to improve the development capabilities of some authors.^[1] Most institutions in Bangladesh primarily use textbooks written by Chinese experts, but a few institutions are actively exploring the development of local textbooks. For example, *My First Chinese Book*, *Basic Chinese*, *My Chinese Book*, *Chinese Course [Beginner]*. The textbooks compiled by these four institutions are all beginner-level comprehensive textbooks. There are about five types of comprehensive textbooks, six types of spoken Chinese textbooks, three types of vocabulary textbooks, and one type of grammar textbook in Bangladesh. The quantity and variety of local textbooks in Bangladesh are limited. As an important part of international Chinese education, the local textbooks developed by private Chinese training institutions have significant reference value. Therefore, this paper takes the local textbooks developed by four Chinese institutions as the research objects, aiming to provide references and suggestions for the compilation of local Chinese textbooks in Bangladesh.

2 Basic Information of Private Chinese Training Institutions in Bangladesh

The Belt and Road Chinese Center offers courses such as HSK Levels 1-5, Business Chinese, Tourism Chinese, and Basic Chinese. Since its establishment, it has graduated 1,500 students. Currently, it has five teachers, with approximately 100 students. The Great Wall Language Center mainly offering HSK Levels 1-3 courses and basic Chinese courses, with two teachers and about 100 students. The China-Bangladesh Chinese Academy offers basic Chinese courses, with about 70 students, and has graduated 3,500 students since its establishment. BRAC University offers Chinese courses in collaboration with the embassy. There are about 80 students. Table 1 shows the basic information of the four private Chinese training institutions' self-compiled textbook.

Table 1. Basic Information About Four Local Textbooks

Private Chinese Training Institutions	Courses	Textbook/Author	The number of students
Belt and Road Chinese Center (2016)	Basic Chinese	<i>My First Chinese Book (2016)</i> Dr. Md. Sady (Ph.D. in Southwest University)	50
Great Wall Language Center (2015)	Basic Chinese	<i>My Chinese Book (2015)</i> MD. Zikrul Alam Mandol (Ph.D. candidate at Shanghai University of Finance and Economics)	30
China-Bangladesh Chinese Academy (2008)	Basic Chinese	<i>Basic Chinese(2014)</i> Md. Shahadat Hossain (MBA in University of Dhaka ;master's degree in Chinese Beijing Language and Culture University)	50
BRAC University (2001)	Chinese Course	Chinese Course (Beginner) Mohammad Rafiqul Islam(Bangladshi) (Ph.D. in Engineering in Japan) Huang Qingshan(Chinese) (master's degree in International education of Chinese Language)	80

Four textbooks for students mostly at zero proficiency or HSK Level 1. Through an investigation on Daraz, the largest e-commerce platform in South Asia, we found that none of the four textbooks are sold publicly, nor have they been published by any related publishers. This indicates that the sales scope and target users of these textbooks are limited.

3 Research Design

3.1 Research Questions

First, what is the overall satisfaction level of learners with the local textbooks?

Second, what is the satisfaction level of learners with specific items in the local textbooks?

Third, what is the satisfaction level of learners with the localization content in the local textbooks?

3.2 Questionnaire Design

The design of this questionnaire mainly draws on Liang Yu's (2023) *Dynamic Evaluation Model of International Chinese Textbooks* [2] and *Evaluation Standards for International Chinese Textbooks*. This differs from Liang Yu's (2023) evaluation form, as it does not include the evaluation of Chinese characters and texts. The closed-ended questions in the questionnaire are rated by the subjects using a Likert five-point scale, and an open-ended question is included: "What other aspects of the textbook do you think need improvement?" In addition, we conducted interviews with six teachers from four Chinese language institutions. The main question was, "What do you think are the deficiencies of the textbook in the teaching process?"

3.3 Subjects and Their Basic Information

A total of 160 student questionnaires were distributed, with 142 valid responses collected. The majority of learners at the four institutions are aged between 20 and 29 years old and have been studying Chinese for less than a year. Most students have zero knowledge of Chinese, with only a few having reached HSK1 level. In the interviews, all six participants were full-time teachers who had used all four textbooks for teaching Chinese.

3.4 Student Satisfaction Survey

The Cronbach's alpha for the student satisfaction questionnaire in this study is 0.801, indicating high reliability and suggesting that the questionnaire is quite reliable. The KMO value is 0.627, which is greater than 0.6, indicating that the data is suitable for factor analysis. The significance level is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, indicating significance. With the number of factors fixed at three, the cumulative contribution rate is 71.165%, which is greater than 60%, indicating that these three common factors can explain 71.165% of the variance. The factors are sorted in descending order based on factor loadings, with a selection criterion of above 0.40. Detailed information can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of Rotated Items in the Overall Questionnaire Evaluation

	Item	Mean Value
1	1. I am satisfied with the textbooks provided by the institution.	3.64
	2. I believe the Chinese textbooks I use match my level.	3.40
2	3. I think the content in the textbooks meets my needs.	3.35
	4. I am satisfied with the grammar items provided in the textbooks.	3.37
	5. I am satisfied with the vocabulary provided in the textbooks.	3.39
	6. I am satisfied with the exercises provided in the textbooks.	3.38
3	7. I think the knowledge in the textbooks is relevant to or closely matches my daily life in Bangladesh.	3.02

We can divide the three factors into three parts, and the first part is "Overall Evaluation of Textbook", the second part is "Content Evaluation of Textbook" and the third part is "Localization Evaluation of Textbook". The mean satisfaction values for the two items in the overall textbook evaluation dimension are relatively low. Similarly, the mean satisfaction values for the four items in the content evaluation dimension are not high. In the localization evaluation dimension, the mean satisfaction value is very low. Due to differences between the four textbooks and the students' levels, we conducted variance tests on the seven items. The data indicate that the normality tests for all seven items have significance levels less than 0.05, suggesting that the four groups of the seven items follow a non-normal distribution. We then performed non-parametric tests, which showed that the asymptotic significance levels for all seven items were greater than 0.05, indicating no significant differences in student satisfaction across the four textbooks. Therefore, this study directly uses the mean values of the seven items for analysis.

For the open-ended question, "What other aspects of the textbooks do you think need improvement?" 62 students participated in the responses. The main issues mentioned include too many words to memorize (8 mentions), inability to form sentences with Chinese vocabulary (9 mentions), lack of Bangla annotations (13 mentions), textbooks being too difficult (15 mentions), and poor printing quality (17 mentions). Teacher interviews highlighted the lack of corresponding exercises, insufficient digital resources, excessive difficulty of the textbooks, lack of Bangla annotations, and low student interest.

4 Examination of Specific Items in the Four Textbooks

4.1 Vocabulary Examination

The average score for the item "I am satisfied with the vocabulary provided in the textbooks" is 3.39, indicating that students are not very satisfied with the vocabulary. Several reasons account for this dissatisfaction. Firstly, there are too many new words. Zhou Xiaobing and Zhang Peng (2018) proposed that in Chinese as a second language textbooks, the number of new words per lesson should not exceed 10 in the beginner stage, 30 in the elementary stage, around 40-55 in the intermediate stage, and about 50-70 in the advanced stage.^[3] *My First Chinese Book* averages 59.4 new words per lesson, reaching the advanced stage quantity. This is also why students mentioned "too many words" and "cannot remember the words" in the open-ended questions. Secondly, there are too many out-of-syllabus words. Yu Jie (2023) suggested that the number of out-of-syllabus words should be controlled at around 30-35%^[4], if the number of out-of-syllabus words exceeds 35%, students will have difficulty understanding the text. For example, *My First Chinese Book* is designed for learners aiming to obtain a particular job, thus including a certain number of specialized terms. Using the Chinese Thesaurus Service System² developed by the Institute of Scientific and Technical Information of China, we analyzed the book and found 82 specialized terms related to architecture,

² Chinese Theme Word List Service System <https://ct.istic.ac.cn/site/organize/welcome>

shoe manufacturing, and transportation engineering. The *Chinese Proficiency Standards for Professional Purposes* defines the elementary level as "effectively using Chinese to complete simple work tasks in familiar professional scenarios with the help of various means". However, "My First Chinese Book" focuses solely on vocabulary supplementation, lacking real communication scenarios and related language skill training. The book covers multiple work fields, causing a burden for students who only want to pursue a specific profession, hence the feedback from students and teachers about the "high difficulty of the textbooks." Additionally, the recurrence rate of new words is low. Generally, a lower new word density indicates better recurrence in the textbooks, making it easier for learners to master the new words. Shi Qingyan, Zhou Yanyan (2023) pointed out that a new word density of 4-5 is ideal.^[5] Using the "Chinese Research Assistant" software developed by Professor Liu Hua from Jinan University, we conducted statistical analysis of the new word density in the four textbooks³. We found that the new word density in all four textbooks is greater than 5, particularly reaching 9.93 in *My First Chinese Book*. The low recurrence rate of new words makes it difficult for students to master them, explaining why students mentioned "cannot form sentences with Chinese vocabulary" in the open-ended questions. Vocabulary Examination.

4.2 Examination of Grammar Items

The average score for the statement "I am satisfied with the grammar items provided by the textbook" is 3.37, indicating a low level of satisfaction among students. Upon investigation, the primary reasons include the following: Firstly, the quantity of grammar items is inappropriate. However, in the four textbooks analyzed, *My Chinese Book* averages only 0.68 grammar points per lesson, while *Chinese Course (Elementary)* averages 3.92 grammar points per lesson. Therefore, having too few or too many grammar items can affect student satisfaction. Secondly, the distribution of grammar items is uneven. For instance, *Basic Chinese* includes only one grammar item in the first ten lessons, followed by ten grammar items in lesson twelve. Additionally, the presentation of grammar items does not follow the principle of progressing from easy to difficult. For example, in *My First Chinese Book*, the presentation of comparative sentences is disorganized. Finally, there are too many grammar points beyond the syllabus. Out-of-syllabus grammar points should not exceed 10% of the total grammar items. However, in *My First Chinese Book*, out-of-syllabus grammar points account for 32.3%, making learning difficult for students. This is also one of the major reasons mentioned by both teachers and students in the open-ended questions regarding the difficulty of the textbook.

³ Density of new words = total word count/total word type.

4.3 Examination of Post-Lesson Exercises

The average score for the statement "I am satisfied with the post-lesson exercises provided by the textbook" is 3.38, indicating low satisfaction among students. Upon investigation, the primary reasons include the following: Firstly, the number of post-lesson exercises is insufficient. Yang Defeng and Zhang Ying (2018) suggested that the pages dedicated to exercises should account for at least 50% of the total pages of the corresponding chapter^[6]. However, the number of post-lesson exercises in the four textbooks is evidently inadequate. For instance, *My Chinese Book* has an average of 3.6 exercises per lesson, the highest among the four textbooks. This book contains 20 lessons with a total of 82 pages. If there were only two questions per page, there should be 39 pages of exercises, accounting for 47.5% of the total pages. This shortage of exercises is a reason why teachers mentioned a "lack of supplementary exercises." Secondly, the four textbooks exhibit a lack of variety in exercise types and forms. For instance, *My First Chinese Book* only contains communicative and meaningful exercises, with no mechanical exercises. Lastly, the quantity of each type of exercise is imbalanced. Upon classifying the exercises in the four textbooks, it was found that the quantities are unbalanced. For example, *My Chinese Book* contains 50 mechanical exercises and 28 meaningful exercises but no communicative exercises, with a heavy focus on mechanical and meaningful exercises and a lack of communicative ones.

4.4 Examination of Localization Content

The average score for the statement "I think the knowledge in the textbook closely aligns with my daily life in Bangladesh" is 3.02, which is the lowest compared to grammar items, vocabulary, and exercises. Wu Yinghui (2013) stated that localized textbooks should include four elements: localized content, native language annotations for new words, comparative explanations of difficult points, and topics relevant to the local context.^[7] However, among the four textbooks, only *My First Chinese Book* includes Bangla annotations and topics related to Bangladesh. The other three textbooks use English annotations and lack topics related to Bangladesh. This was also mentioned by students in the open-ended survey, where they noted the "lack of Bangla annotations". Without native language annotations, students find it more difficult to understand specific items. If the textbook content does not relate to familiar objects or phenomena in the students' surroundings, they quickly lose motivation to learn. This is a primary reason teachers mentioned "low student interest in learning."

4.5 Summary

Firstly, from a vocabulary perspective, the low satisfaction is due to the excessive number of new words, too many out-of-syllabus words, and a low recurrence rate of new words. Secondly, from a grammar perspective, the low satisfaction stems from an inappropriate number of grammar items, uneven distribution of grammar items, presentation of grammar items that do not follow the principle of progressing from easy to difficult, and an excessive number of out-of-syllabus grammar items. Thirdly, from the

perspective of post-lesson exercises, the low satisfaction is due to an insufficient number of exercises, a lack of variety in exercise types and forms, and an imbalance in the quantity of different types of exercises. Finally, the low level of localization in the four Chinese textbooks is another significant reason for the low satisfaction.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Enhance Top-Level Design of Textbook Compilation

Relevant Chinese government departments should focus on top-level design in textbook compilation, strengthen policy guidance, and promote the establishment of localized textbook writing teams. There should be an emphasis on deepening research on localized textbooks and formulating plans for their compilation. Departments such as the Chinese-Foreign Language Exchange and Cooperation Center should actively launch projects like the "Special Research on Localized Textbooks" to provide funding support for research in this area.

5.2 Implement Teacher Training Programs and Offer Courses on Interpreting Normative Documents

Regular Chinese language teacher training should be organized. In these training sessions, besides inviting outstanding scholars from professional fields to provide expert insights on teaching design and curriculum setup, courses should also be offered to interpret key normative documents. These documents include the *Chinese Proficiency Level Standards for International Chinese Language Education*, *Teaching Reference Framework for Chinese Culture and National Conditions for International Chinese Education* and so on. These normative documents, compiled by experts in the field of international Chinese education, provide guidance on various aspects of international Chinese education. The analysis of the four Chinese textbooks revealed many issues in vocabulary, grammar items, exercises, and localized content, primarily due to a lack of guidance from Chinese experts. Using these documents as frameworks during textbook compilation can help avoid such issues, making the textbooks more scientific and professional. Consequently, teachers will also find their teaching designs better aligned with educational requirements.

5.3 Multi-Edition Use to Increase the Quantity and Variety of Localized Textbooks

The number of localized textbooks in Bangladesh is limited and lacks variety. To quickly address this issue, consideration can be given to the secondary development of established Chinese textbooks from China, adapting them to suit the needs of students in Bangladesh. During this secondary development, content can be added or removed based on local student needs. Additionally, efforts should be made to strengthen the

comparison of languages and cultures, rearrange grammar items and vocabulary according to the differences between Bangla and Chinese, and consider localized issues such as Bangladesh's natural environment, social and cultural environment, and ethnic characteristics. This approach aims to compile Chinese textbooks that are both targeted and applicable.

5.4 Develop Specialized Chinese Textbooks

Based on student learning needs, specialized Chinese textbooks should be compiled. These textbooks should not only reflect the characteristics of the Chinese language but also those of specific professional fields. Therefore, in compiling specialized Chinese textbooks, collaboration with domestic vocational colleges, technical universities, and enterprises should be sought to select content from their professional perspectives. Additionally, practical bases of vocational colleges or relevant enterprises can be utilized to shoot related operational videos to assist Chinese language teaching, helping students grasp specific operational methods during the learning process.

5.5 Promote Digital Literacy for Teachers and Advance the Development of Chinese Digital Platforms

One of the main reasons for the lack of digital Chinese resources in Bangladesh is the low level of digital literacy among teachers. Currently, digital teaching is mostly limited to using slides or software like Ding Talk and Zoom for live teaching. Therefore, there should be a focus on improving teachers' digital literacy, enabling them to master various digital teaching technologies and providing a solid foundation for the establishment of digital platforms. Additionally, strengthening cooperation with the Chinese Language Alliance and the Online Confucius Institute can help introduce high-quality digital resources, thereby meeting the immediate and quality needs of local learners in a short period.

6 Conclusion

Textbook research serves as a crucial method for improving the quality of educational materials. However, the current local textbooks in Bangladesh still face several issues, including limited quantity, lack of variety, excessive vocabulary beyond the syllabus, low recurrence rate of new words, excessive grammar items beyond the syllabus, low degree of localization etc. We propose to pay attention to enhance top-level design of textbook compilation, offer courses on interpreting normative documents, multi-edition use to increase the quantity and variety of localized textbooks, develop specialized Chinese textbooks, and promote digital literacy for teachers and advance the development of Chinese digital platforms. Achieving excellence in local textbooks is a long and arduous journey. It is hoped that this paper can provide reference for relevant research and joint contribute to promote the development of international Chinese education.

Authors

Authors: Yuanyuan Chen, Male, from Chongqing, Master of Arts (MA) in Chinese International Education at Yunnan University.

Corresponding Author: Chunhong Qi, Female, from Xinyang, Henan, Professor at Yunnan Normal University, Ph.D., and doctoral supervisor. Her research focuses on Second Language Acquisition of Chinese and Teaching Chinese as a Second Language. Contact email: 810982089@qq.com.

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