A Cultural Dimension as a New Perspective to Teach about the European Union: Taking 'Cultural Studies on European Integration' in China as an Example

WANG Xiaohai

School of English for International Business, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou 510420, P. R. China
Email: wangxhai@gdufs.edu.cn

Abstract: European integration is not only an economic, political and social process, but also a cultural one. From the very beginning of the European integration process up to the 1980s, culture did not come into the sight of those who determined priorities at the European level and it was marginalized by the majority of academic studies about European integration. In recent years, an interest in the cultural dimension of European integration has been developed. Scholars argue that a cultural dimension should be added to political, economic and social European integration. This paper probes into the theoretical basis on which a textbook designed for MA students in China, 'Cultural Studies on European Integration', can be founded and illustrates what possible topics could be included in teaching the course, in the light of the interrelationship between culture and integration.

Introduction

The EU-China relationship has been developing steadily for the past four decades, since formal relations between the European Community (EC) and China were established in 1975. In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the "Belt and Road Initiative", comprising the 'Silk Road Economic Belt' and the '21st Century Maritime Silk Road', which is a comprehensive network of railways, roads, air and sea links, and pipelines connecting China to Europe and the wider world. These developments are expected to push forward intercontinental cooperation between China and Europe in different fields. Thus, there is an increasing need from the Chinese side to understand Europe in general and the European Union affairs in particular. Meanwhile, the EU has also developed a greater interest in an open and prosperous China as EU-China ties are becoming stronger. Therefore, more talents who have a good command of the European culture and EU affairs are urgently needed. In the past decade, dozens of Centers for European Studies have been established in China with support either from the European Commission, or the Chinese government, or both. Thus, teaching and corresponding textbooks about European Integration are in great need in China.

To promote knowledge about European Integration and the EU in China among postgraduate students, and to enhance understanding between EU and China through education materials, teaching about the European Union is the most direct and efficient way. However, textbooks of the sort are rare on the Chinese markets and it usually takes years to introduce foreign textbooks to China. In this case, a possible solution is for teachers themselves to develop textbooks to respond to the respective needs.

What's more, in tandem with the development of European Integration, it appears that a large body of academic works concentrating on the economic and political dimensions of European Integration have been

produced, but fewer from a cultural perspective due to the different meanings attributed to concepts such as 'culture' and 'European Integration'.

This paper is aimed at establishing a theoretical framework for the writing of a textbook and the establishment of an MA course entitled "Cultural Studies on European Integration", by conducting a comprehensive theoretical study on how the European Integration is depicted in academic literature and in textbooks. Based on the research findings, a framework is tentatively developed and the structure of the textbook and the course are designed.

A General Overview of European Union Studies

According to the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of the European Commission, "European Union studies comprise the study of Europe in its entirety with particular emphasis on the European integration process in both its internal and external aspects. The discipline also covers the role of the EU in a globalized world and in promoting an active European citizenship and dialogue between people and cultures." [1]

In 1989, the European Commission launched the Jean Monnet Action to support academic research in European integration. The programme originally addressed academics in the Member States, but came to those in accession countries soon after. Today, it has a global scope. The year 2019 marks the 30th anniversary of the Jean Monnet Activities, named after Jean Monnet (1888 - 1979), one of the founding fathers of the European Union. [2]

In 2014, it was the 25th anniversary of EU's support for the study of European integration around the world through the Jean Monnet Programme and Jean Monnet Actions. "What's next for European Union studies" is the focus of that year's annual Jean Monnet Conference, taking place in Brussels in October. About 350 experts, including Jean Monnet professors, other academics, decision-makers and representatives from international organizations and business, had a hot discussion on the future of EU studies and the core objective of the Jean Monnet Actions: promoting excellence in teaching and research in European Union studies worldwide, as well as new ways of delivering teaching in the area.

Until 2019, Jean Monnet activities had helped to fund 5000 projects so far, more than 300,000 students are taught various courses concerning the EU and European Integration per year, 9000 university teachers are involved per year, and 1000 universities have been supported so far. [3]

Though it has already stopped functioning, the EU-China European Studies Centres Programme (ESCP) laid a solid foundation for the development and flourishing of European Studies in China. It increased the academic presence of Europe in China dramatically.

The European Studies Programme is a joint EU-China response to this need and a commitment of the EU to support China's endeavours in further improving its higher education. The programme strengthens the role of European Studies in Chinese higher education by providing information on European economy, policy, culture and history through exchanges and cooperation between European and Chinese academic communities. In practical terms, the project provides support to selected partner universities in China on human resources development, curriculum development and institutional aspects. It supports the European Studies Centres libraries, funds roundtable seminars and conferences, finances alumni activities and supports the Chinese Association of European Studies. The programme encompasses a broad spectrum of themes, from specific subjects like European law and EU regulations to subjects of general interest like European art and culture. The ESCP helps bridge gaps and brings people together so that they can learn from each other.

The duration of the ESCP was from 2004 to 2008, during which EC made a contribution of €10 million to the program and the Library support was €500,000. Beneficiaries of the program are Chinese universities and research institutes, existing and new European study centres.

The objectives of ESCP are to further develop the European Studies Centres in China, establish new Centres for European Studies in China, support   libraries, information and information dissemination, and maintain lasting partnerships with European universities and research institutions as well as between teachers, researchers and students. ESCP exerted successfully in China and achieved its expected results. It can be argued that during and even after the lifetime of the ESCP it has had an impact on the following:

   - 4 teaching programmes in European Studies established in Chinese universities;

   - 122 European scholars delivered courses or speeches at Chinese universities;

   - 50 Chinese researchers from beneficiary institutions completed their research tasks in Europe;

   - 17 monographs and 60 articles published in printed and electronic journals written by scholars involved in the programme;

   - 2 European studies related book collections established, electronic journal available to outside readers;

   - 10 international conferences and 17 workshops involving more than 700 participants held by ESCP grantees. [4]

The ESCP develops links and exchanges between European and Chinese institutions of higher education and research. It consolidates the awareness, knowledge and understanding of the European Union and European issues in China. The cooperation enriched EU and China's mutual knowledge of each other's work, and also prompted EU and China academics to think about each other's research in a comparative way, which in the end will contribute to a better understanding of the EU on the Chinese part and of China on the European part. Programs like the ESCP should be re-launched for the strengthening of European Studies in China and establishment of new centers, as more and more Chinese want to learn about the European Union and European Integration. After the successful implementation of ESCP over a dozen research centers have been set up.

Depiction of the EU in a Global Academic Perspective and in Textbooks

At the request of the Commission of the European Communities, the Centre d'Etudes Européennes of the Université Catholique de Louvain carried out a series of surveys entitled 'University research on European integration' in 1980s, and published their reports in 1985, 1987 and 1992 respectively. In 1994, edited by G. Ciavarini Azzi, another report "Survey of current political science research on European Integration worldwide: 1991-1994" was presented for the Research Committee on European Unification of the International Political Science Association at the XVIth IPSA World Congress, Berlin. All the reports mentioned above show a clear picture of what was being studied in the field of European integration in the 1980s and the 1990s worldwide. [5]

According to the '1985 Report' (p. XIII) by the Université Catholique de Louvain, amongst over four thousand professors interested in European integration, *foreign relations* stands out as the favorite topic for research (11.75%). Following it are:

- *competition* (8.75%);
- *monetary and financial issues* (6.50%);
- *the common agricultural policy* (6.25%);
- *the history of the beginnings of the European construction* (6%). [6]

The '1987 Report' is based on 3000 research works which are either doctoral theses, or post-doctoral research, or articles published in a scientific publication, or symposia proceedings. These research works have been undertaken in more than 300 universities situated in some forty countries. They treat subjects of great diversity, some of which remain preponderant over the years as evident in the figures below:

- *foreign relations of European Communities* 13%;
- *common agricultural policy and agricultural questions* 8%;

- *competition* 7.5%;
- *institutions* 5.25%;
- *social concerns* 5%;
- *financial systems and industrial affairs* 4.5%;
- *regional affairs* 4.25 %; and
- *questions of security and defence* 4%. [7]

Five years later, the '1992 Report' was published. The 3879 studies included in the report are either Doctoral theses, Individual or Collective Post-Doctoral research studies, article(s) published in a scientific journals, or symposia proceedings. Most of the research topics included in the report essentially involve issues pertaining to law, economics, political science, and history. They cover the multiple facets of European integration and have been divided in the following way:

- *External relations of the Communities* 12.5%;
- *The achievement of the Internal Market and the four Community freedoms* 8.5%;
- *Community history* 6.5%;
- *Social Issues* 5.5%;
- *Finance, Currency, Economic and Monetary Union* 5%;
- *Taxation and industrial issues* 5%;
- *Environment and Consumer protection* 5%;
- *The nature and application of Community law* 4.5%;
- *Competition* 4.5%;
- *Regional issues* 4%;
- *The Common Agricultural policy and agricultural issues* 4%;
- *Issues related to education and culture* 4%;
- *Studies on attitudes towards the Community* 4%;
- *Issues related to Companies and Corporations* 3%;
- *Institutions* 3%;
- *Energy, scientific research and technology* 3%;
- *Transport and Maritime issues* 2.5%;
- *Political cooperation and Union* 2.2%;
- *Security and defence issues* 2%;
- *Human rights* 1.5%. [8]

In comparison with the previous reports, it is interesting to note that the number of studies devoted to the Community's external relations remains remarkably stable, as do the number of studies on social issues, regional issues, and taxation and industrial issues. It is also interesting to note that 'Issues related to education and culture' began to emerge in the '1992 Report', though the percentage is as low as 4%. However, it is significant to the cultural study perspective on European integration.

After having an overview of the study on European integration in the academic literature, let's turn our eyes to textbooks. We performed retrieval from the GEI's 'Online Catalogues', setting the search condition to its maximum [9], with the key words 'European integration' and 'European Union' in different sub-categories. The result obtained is as follows:

Sub-categories	Key words		Total
	'European Union'	'European Integration'	
'School textbooks'	53	7	60
'School textbook research/school textbook analysis'	27	25	52
'Academic literature'	406	263	669
Total	486	295	781

In the sub-category of 'School textbooks', the number of textbooks containing the key word 'European Union' is 53, and the number of textbooks containing the key word 'European Integration' is 7.

Among the fifty three school textbooks, the most recent book published is in 2013 while the 'earliest' one was in 1982; there're only 6 textbooks in English, then all the others are in other European languages.

Among the seven school textbooks, there are three books in English, while the other four are in other European languages; the 'earliest' textbook was published in 1988, and the most recent one was in 2010.

In the sub-category of 'School textbook research/school textbook analysis', the number of books containing the key word 'European Union' is 27, and the number of books containing the key word 'European Integration' is 25.

Comparatively speaking, the number of academic books containing the key words 'European Union' and 'European integration' is much larger in the sub-category of 'Academic literature' than that in the other sub-categories as mentioned above, making the total number to 669, almost ten times as large as that in the sub-category of 'School textbooks'.

Here, we might say that there are more academic works than textbooks on European integration and European Union. Recorded in the GEI database, the date of the 'earliest' textbook publication was in 1980s, which coincides with the second stage of the European integration development. [10]

'Integration' is a rather complex term; this is even more the case of culture. It has been suggested that culture "is probably the broadest concept of all those used in the historical social sciences. It embraces a very large range of connotations, and thereby it is the cause perhaps of the most difficulty". [11] The concept of culture itself has made its way into EU documents since the 1980s as an important dimension to the process of European integration: "The cultural dimension is becoming an increasingly crucial means of giving effect to policies seeking to fasten a Union of the European peoples founded on the consciousness of sharing a common heritage of ideas and values". [12] Culture as contained in the notion of 'cultural integration' differs from cultural policy regulation. We may break down the meanings of culture into four dimensions:

    1) culture as a form of high culture and intellectual artefact;
    2) culture as a normative model;
    3) culture as medium of communication;
    4) culture as social construction. [13]

Based on the findings of our preliminary study, we might come to the following tentative conclusions:

    1) Cultural factors have been neglected or marginalized in academic research and teaching on European Integration;

    2) Culture really matters in the process of European Integration and plays a very important role in areas such as religion, language and so on;

    3) European Integration started from the economic field, gradually it overflowed into the political field,

then affected the social and cultural fields. In tandem with the development of European Integration, a cultural theory can be established in addition to economic and political theories.

The Roles of Culture Played in the Process of European Integration

"International organizations based on states with cultural commonality, such as the European Union, are far more successful than those that attempt to transcend cultures." [14] What is revealed from Huntington's quotation is that culture really matters to the success of European Union and European integration. So what is culture? This is over a century-old question, which has been explored by different scholars from quite a few different disciplines, and from different perspectives. 'Culture' is one of the most difficult words to be defined in any language.

In 1871, in his classic book *Primitive Culture*, British anthropologist Edward Tylor first gave the definition of culture which is widely quoted: "Culture… is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, custom and any other capacities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". [15] Since then, various definitions on culture have been given by scholars from different points of view. Some treated culture superficially as a set of specific artifacts, man-made environments, patterns of social organization and overt forms of behavior. Others treated culture in a more abstract way as the shared knowledge of members of social communities like world views, value orientations, norms, manners, customs, preferred styles of thinking and arguing, etc.

From the standpoint of contemporary cultural anthropologists, culture is characterized by the following four basic features:

(1) Culture is a kind of social inheritance instead of biological heritage;

(2) Culture is shared by the whole community, not belonging to any particular individual;

(3) Culture is a symbolic meaning system in which language is one of the most important ones;

(4) Culture is a unified system, the integral parts of which are closely related to one another. [16]

Over the past sixty years the project of European unification has developed from a 'European Coal and Steel Community' to a Common Market, from a Common Market to the 'European Economic Community' (EEC), from the European Economic Community to the 'European Communities' (EC), and from the European Communities to the 'European Union' (EU) – defined in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty as 'a new stage in the process of creating an ever-closer union among the peoples of Europe'. This evolution has been accompanied by a shift in emphasis from integration, perceived as a rational by-product of economic prosperity and legal harmonization, to more recent concerns with integration as a cultural process, and 'culture' as a political instrument for furthering that construction process. [17]

"If I had the opportunity of starting again the integration process from scratch, perhaps it would be more efficient if it was started by cultural integration. The unification of Europe and the integration of culture together." [18] Quotes like this are often used to ornament texts about European integration, but the fact is that, from the very beginning, culture as a field has been marginalized in a great number of studies about European integration as well as in the eyes of those determining priorities at the European level. In most current debates about European integration, culture remains an abstract term, often used to illustrate how European Integration brings more than economic benefits. It is commonplace to read or hear statements declaring that an economically, monetarily and politically integrated European space will confirm a centuries-old European identity, respect for common values and common European cultural heritage, which have all been foundations for the development of modern European states.

In recent years, a greater interest in the cultural dimension of European integration has been developed in terms of the sociology of culture and cultural politics. Delanty [19] and Eder [20] have argued that now we start adding a cultural dimension to political, economic and social European integration. Delanty refers to the

"culturally deficit project of integration", as culture is usually not associated with integration.

Castells [21] and Delanty [22] distinguish three main historical phases in the European integration process, namely the 1950s, the 1980s and the 1990s.

In 1950s, the European integration process was launched; its original aim was to bring European states together with a view to prevent war and conflicts. So the first phase was also a peacekeeping and an economic phase where nation-states were mainly concerned with pragmatic cooperation.

The second phase started in the 1980s. This is also an integration phase where EU documents identify culture and identity as key dimensions of European integration. [23] Questions of culture such as shared history, common language, and religion came to the fore.

The early 1990s brought a new stage of European integration. The process expanded from the spheres of economics and politics into social integration.

"Cultural Studies on European Integration": A Case Study of Textbook Designing and Course Developing in China

"Cultural Studies on European Integration", the title of the course and the title of the textbook as well, deals with various aspects of European integration seen as a cultural process. Among the issues to be discussed particular attention is given to the following: the history of European civilization, the borders of Europe, the historical development of the "Idea of Europe", the European nation-states and nationalism from the political culture perspective, plurality of European identities, diversity of religious beliefs in Europe and its impact on European Integration, the problem of Turkey's accession to the EU, education policies of the EU, multilingualism and language policies of the EU, and cultural soft power of the EU, the image of EU on the world stage. The main theme of the course is the construction of European Identity. In the analysis of these problems such factors as mythologised history, religion, language, and culturally constructed space are discussed.

The course book we are proposing is of the following structure. First, there is an 'Introduction', covering the issues of what the course is about, the basic requirement of the course, recommended readings. The whole course and the entire textbook is divided into three modules: The core module, also called the backbone of the course, is 'European Identity', while the opposite force is 'Euroscepticism', around which the structure of the course and the textbook is designed. 'Module 1' covers the basics of the course, such as a brief introduction to Europe, its history and ancient civilization, the cultural diversity of Europe, the concept of integration, the concept of culture and the role of culture in the process of European integration. In 'Module 2', the ways and policies adopted by the European Union to construct the European Identity are introduced, such as Religion and European Integration, language policies of the EU, Cultural Policies of the EU, Cultural Heritage and European Identity, Education and Training Policies, the Open Method of Coordination and so on. The structure of the course and textbook of 'Cultural Studies on European Integration' is shown in Table 1:

	Introduction	
Module 1: Basic Concepts	**Core Module: Backbone**	**Module 2: Ways and Policies to construct European Identity**
● Introduction to Europe ● Culture and European Integration ● Cultural diversity of Europe	European Identity vs. Euroscepticism	● Religion and European Integration ● Multilingualism ● Cultural Policies of the EU ● Cultural Heritage and European Identity ● Education and Training Policies

Table 1 Structure of the Course and Textbook of 'Cultural Studies on European Integration'

We believe that from the three 'modules' designed, students will have a clearer understanding of the cultural aspects of European Integration, with European Identity as the main target and the different tools to construct it.

Conclusion

A predictable result brought about by the textbook and the course is that they will enhance the teaching and research of the EU affairs from a cultural perspective. It is at least complementary to the teaching and study on European Integration from the economic, political and social dimensions. Compared with economic and political integration of European nation-states, culture is more like the 'glue' that holds the member states together and the 'brain' which guides the direction of European Integration in future. The hard core of the integration would be the European Identity, which has a closer relationship with culture. So, it is necessary to study European Integration from a cultural angle and promote the teaching and learning as such in Chinese universities. The topics included either in teaching the course or in the textbook are various, ranging from the history of Europe, the story of 'Europa', the historical development of the "Idea of Europe", the religious diversity in Europe, European Identity *vs.* Euroscepticism, the tools to construct the European identity such as education policies, multilingualism and language policies, to the soft power of the EU and its image on the world stage and so on. "Cultural studies on European Integration" is interdisciplinary in nature. The relevant disciplines, such as linguistics, sociolinguistics, education, and politics, are all utilized to analyze the phenomenon of integration in Europe, so that a comprehensive conclusion to European Integration can be reached.

Consequently, different teaching and learning methods can be adopted, such as lectures, seminars, discussions and even co-teaching with scholars from the European countries. They will greatly inspire the interest of the postgraduate students' learning and teachers to study further on the relevant topics.

References and Notes:

[1] Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. Available at: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/actions/jean-monnet_en

[2] Jean Monnet Activities turn 30! Available at: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/news/jean-monnet-activities-30_en

[3] Jean Monnet Activities: 30 Years of Excellence in EU Studies. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus2/files/jeanmonnet-factsheet-2019-06-final.pdf

[4]   Higher   education: EU-China   European   Studies   Centres   Programme.   Available   at: https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/documents/case-studies/china_higher-education_en.pdf

[5] Thanks to Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, who supported me for a one-month's research at GEI in 2014.

[6] Centre d'Etudes Européennes of the Université Catholique de Louvain, "University research on European integration" 1985 Report, p. XIII.

[7] Centre d'Etudes Européennes of the Université Catholique de Louvain, "University research on European integration" 1987 Report.

[8] Centre d'Etudes Européennes of the Université Catholique de Louvain, "University research on European integration" 1992 Report.

[9] '[ALL] AlleWorterohneVolltext'

[10] Samson, R. (2006). *The Cultural Integration Model and European Transformation: The Case of Romania*, PhD thesis.

[11] Samson, R. (2006). *The Cultural Integration Model and European Transformation: The Case of Romania*, PhD thesis.

[12] Samson, R. (2006). *The Cultural Integration Model and European Transformation: The Case of Romania*, PhD thesis.

[13] Samson, R. (2006). *The Cultural Integration Model and European Transformation: The Case of Romania*, PhD thesis.

[14] Huntington, S. P. (2003). *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order.* New York: Simon &Schuster Paperbacks.

[15] Li Yuxiang. (2005). Culture and Language. *US-China Foreign Language, Vol. 3.*

[16] Li Yuxiang. (2005). Culture and Language. *US-China Foreign Language, Vol. 3.*

[17] Shore, C. (2000). *Building Europe --- The Cultural Politics of European Integration.* London: Routledge.

[18] Sassatelli, M. (2009). *Becoming Europeans: Cultural Identity and Cultural Policies*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

[19] Delanty, G. (1998). Social Theory and European Transformation: Is there a European Society?, *Sociological Research Online,* 3 (1).

[20] Eder, K. (2001). Integration through Culture? The Paradox of the Search for a European Identity. In Klaus Eder & Bernhard Giesen (eds.), *European Citizenship: National Legacies and Transnational Projects.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[21] Castells, M. (1998). *End of Millennium, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, Volume 3*. Oxford: Blackwell.

[22] Delanty, G. (2000). *Citizenship in a Global Age: Society, Culture, Politics*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

[23] Shore, C. (2000). *Building Europe --- The Cultural Politics of European Integration*. London: Routledge.

Bibliography:

Castells, M. (1998). *End of Millennium, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, Volume 3*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Delanty, G. (1998). Social Theory and European Transformation: Is there a European Society?, *Sociological Research Online,* 3 (1).

Delanty, G. (2000). *Citizenship in a Global Age: Society, Culture, Politics*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Eder, K. (2001). Integration through Culture? The Paradox of the Search for a European Identity. In Klaus Eder & Bernhard Giesen (eds.), *European Citizenship: National Legacies and Transnational Projects.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Huntington, S. P. (2003). *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order.* New York: Simon &Schuster Paperbacks.

Li Yuxiang. (2005). Culture and Language.*US-China Foreign Language, Volume 3*.

Samson, R. (2006). *The Cultural Integration Model and European Transformation: The Case of Romania*, PhD thesis.

Sassatelli, M. (2009). *Becoming Europeans: Cultural Identity and Cultural Policies*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Shore, C. (2000). *Building Europe --- The Cultural Politics of European Integration.* London: Routledge.