



## A CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF TRADITIONAL TEXTS IN CHINESE AND TURKISH MOTHER TONGUE TEXTBOOKS: IMPLICATIONS FOR COMPARATIVE EDUCATION

By

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### Abstract

*Mother tongue education plays a vital role in preserving cultural heritage and transmitting values across generations. Textbooks serve as primary vehicles for delivering not only linguistic competencies but also cultural awareness and national identity. This study compares cultural elements and traditional texts in sixth-grade Chinese and Turkish language mother tongue textbooks, exploring how two distinct civilizations transmit cultural values and traditions through educational materials. Comparative textbook analysis offers insights into how different nations balance universal values with the construction of national identity, reveals pedagogical approaches to cultural transmission, and provides valuable data for educational reforms in both countries. Employing qualitative document analysis within a comparative education framework, this study examined official sixth-grade textbooks from China (People's Education Press, two volumes) and Türkiye (Ministry of National Education, two volumes). Traditional texts were identified, categorized, and analysed across three dimensions: traditional characters, concrete traditional elements, and cultural values. Both countries emphasise solidarity, compassion, family values, and social cooperation through traditional texts. However, notable differences emerged: Chinese texts reflect Confucian philosophy, ancestral reverence, and harmony with nature, employing artistic and indirect pedagogical styles. In contrast, Turkish texts adopt direct instructional approaches, incorporating humour and focusing on individualized character development. Chinese texts exhibit a unified artistic language, whereas Turkish texts display variation according to genre. These findings reveal how different educational philosophies shape forms of cultural transmission.*

**Keywords:** China, comparative education, cultural transmission, mother tongue education, textbooks, Türkiye.

### INTRODUCTION

The development of individuals' cognitive abilities, their engagement in social interaction, and their academic advancement are largely contingent upon the proficient and accurate use of their mother tongue. Success achieved in mother tongue instruction positively influences students' academic performance across all subject areas by enhancing their text comprehension capacity, expressive power, and communication competencies throughout their educational process. Textbooks are the most frequently utilized materials in mother tongue instruction and continue to be consulted in terms of their functionality (Ungan & Demir, 2022, p. 543). Mother tongue textbooks provide support through texts and

activities for the development of students' language skills. According to Güneş (2022) "textbooks are widely used educational tools throughout the world. Despite electronic developments, they remain an indispensable guide for students and teachers."

Education stands at the center of social and economic development, independent of geographical and cultural differences. Textbooks prepared with consideration for scientific approaches and cultural elements not only enhance the effectiveness of teaching-learning processes but also shape student achievement and future by developing students' linguistic, cognitive, and social skills (Güneş, 2022, p. 23). The preparation of textbooks with consideration for cultural



elements is closely related to the texts in Turkish language textbooks. Türkben (2019), regarding texts in textbooks, states: "Since textbooks reach every student across the country, these books must be carefully prepared in terms of form, content, and educational values. Texts should be selected in accordance with the principle of child-appropriateness. Through these texts, both the development of language skills and the transmission of values should be targeted." Indeed, when Turkish language textbooks in Türkiye are examined in terms of texts, elements belonging to cultural values can be distinguished.

Regarding texts in textbooks, according to Şen (2008), Turkish language textbooks should employ texts in which Turkish is used correctly, beautifully, and aesthetically, and which possess strong communicative aspects. Through texts conforming to these criteria, both linguistic awareness and sensitivity can be developed, and the acquisition of humanistic, ethical, and cultural values can be targeted. According to Ugan & Demir (2021), the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and habits targeted in Turkish language lessons, as well as acquisitions related to basic language skills, are imparted to students through texts. Based on this information, it can be stated that the contribution of texts to both collective memory and the development of cultural values is transmitted to individuals through textbooks.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Mother Tongue Textbooks

Mother tongue textbooks are not merely technical resources that teach language rules, but rather multidimensional educational tools that enrich students' intellectual world, develop their imagination, and support critical thinking skills (Wang and Zhang, 2025, p. 193). Research on mother tongue textbooks demonstrates that cultural contents in textbooks are closely linked with intercultural awareness and represent the mission of cultural ambassadorship (Li, et al. 2023, p. 1). Comparing textbooks from multiple countries is valuable for textbook research. Comparative education research can help people gain more knowledge about other cultures and societies, identify problems in educational systems, analyze the causes of problems, and find solutions (Li, et al. 2023, p. 2). Based on this information, texts representing traditional and modern values in textbooks help students understand different perspectives and contribute to the internalization of traditional/modern values. Furthermore, mother tongue textbooks are important materials in addressing contemporary issues such as gender roles, ethnic diversity, and social justice. In this context, the content and presentation format of textbooks directly influence the worldview of generations that shape the future of society.

Mother tongue textbooks contain authentic content that reflects each nation's unique cultural, historical, and social characteristics. For instance, China's mother tongue textbooks intensively feature fundamental elements of Chinese culture such as Confucian thought, classical poetry from the Tang and Song dynasties, Chinese calligraphy art, and traditional festivals. In Chinese textbooks, values belonging to Confucian

thought such as "benevolence," "righteousness," and "propriety" are transmitted to students in the context of moral development and social harmony (PEP, 2019). Similarly, mother tongue textbooks in Türkiye contain texts that are cornerstones of Turkish culture, including texts such as the Orkhon Inscriptions, selections from Ottoman period literature, national struggle narratives, and Atatürk's speeches and writings. In Turkish language textbooks, values such as "patriotism," "independence," "diligence," and "solidarity" (MEB, 2024) are attempted to be imparted to students through texts. The cultural elements featured in Turkish language textbooks strengthen students' national identity consciousness while reflecting the historical accumulation, value judgments, and worldview of Turkish society.

Textbooks play a critical role in translating educational policy into classroom practices and transmitting dominant social values, cultural norms, and shared beliefs through selected knowledge and national narratives (Apple & Christian-Smith, 2017, p. 256). In this context, textbooks serve a key function in educating the next generation of model citizens and shaping their perceptions and visions regarding the individual, society, nation, and world. Mother tongue textbooks, in particular, not only constitute one of the most important compulsory courses but also reflect government-supported national values and ideologies (Liu et al. 2022). Apple and Christian-Smith (2017) emphasize that textbooks represent "official knowledge" and that how this knowledge is selected and from whose perspective it is presented constitutes a political process. In this context, the content of textbooks is accepted as "officially approved knowledge".

Liu, Colak, and Agirdag (2022), in their study examining how Chinese textbooks have changed from past to present, revealed that national textbooks consistently represent national values and ideologies, but that this representation has taken different forms in different historical periods. Particularly in the period from the 1970s to the present, the content of textbooks has been directly influenced by the political climate and policy changes (Yan & Vickers, 2019; Xu, 2021).

In the Turkish context, Türkben (2019) demonstrated that Turkish language textbooks have been restructured in direct connection with changes in curricula and reflect updated national educational objectives. Educational reforms and curriculum changes in Türkiye have been fundamental dynamics determining which values will be foregrounded in textbooks, how national and universal values will be balanced, and how national consciousness will be transmitted (Türkben, 2019; Çelikpazu & Aktaş, 2011). In this process, textbooks have assumed a strategic role not only in developing language skills but also in transmitting social values and national identity from generation to generation.

### Comparative Education

Comparative education research endeavors to understand the strengths and weaknesses of different educational systems and to establish a foundation for educational reforms (Akyol & Yeşilbaş Özenc, 2023, p. 5). In this context, the comparison of

mother tongue textbooks provides data for understanding countries' educational philosophies, pedagogical approaches, and cultural priorities. The comparison of mother tongue textbooks from countries located in different geographies, with different historical backgrounds and cultural traditions, such as China and Türkiye, reveals how the balance between globalization and localization is managed, through what strategies national identity construction is realized, and how a balance is established between universal values and national values (Bakioğlu, Karsantik & Kınık, 2019, p. 152). Moreover, such comparative studies allow for the development of recommendations for both countries to improve their own educational systems by analyzing forms of cultural representation in textbooks, text selection criteria, and differences in pedagogical approaches. Therefore, the comparison of Chinese and Turkish mother tongue textbooks in terms of cultural texts represents a research area that can offer original contributions to the comparative education literature.

Comparative education research reveals similarities and differences by examining the educational systems of different countries and regions with their cultural, political, economic, and social dimensions. Through this approach, the origins of educational problems can be identified and solution proposals can be developed (Akyol & Yeşilbaş Özenç, 2023, p. 5).

According to Bereday (1964), the central point that should be focused on in educational research was to develop a proper comparative method that would bring comparative education closer to other disciplines in which political systems can be compared or cross-cultural studies are conducted. As Bereday stated, the primary task of this field was to combine the interests of the humanities and social sciences with the geographical perspective of education. Therefore, comparative education should be addressed not simply as history of education or history of educational thought, but rather as "contemporary history of education"; thus referring to phenomena that occur dynamically while being observed and participated in (Wojniak, 2018).

According to Bereday (1964), there are two types of comparative research. The first involved a descriptive study of a particular region (area studies), a kind of "educational geography" in which specific data and information were collected. The second had an explicitly explanatory dimension and was also referred to as social analysis. The mutual juxtaposition of these data was the starting point for comparisons at the international level. In this research, a descriptive area study was conducted by collecting the data and information of a particular region as specified in Bereday's first stage.

**Comparative Context: China and Türkiye**

This study examines mother tongue textbooks from two major Asian countries with distinct cultural and educational traditions. China, with the world's largest education system serving over 200 million students, maintains a strong emphasis on Confucian values and classical literature in its curriculum (Ministry of Education of China, 2019). The

Chinese language curriculum dedicates approximately 5-6 hours weekly to mother tongue instruction at the Grade 6 level, with nationally standardized textbooks published by People's Education Press (PEP).

These textbooks follow a unified national curriculum framework established by the Ministry of Education, ensuring consistency across all provinces while incorporating regional cultural elements where appropriate. Türkiye's education system serves approximately 18 million students, with a curriculum framework emphasizing republican values, secular education principles, and national identity formation (Ministry of National Education, 2024). Grade 6 Turkish language instruction allocates 5 hours weekly, using nationally approved textbooks that integrate both classical folk literature and contemporary Turkish texts.

The curriculum emphasizes the development of four fundamental language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) alongside cultural awareness and values education. Despite differences in population size and cultural heritage, both countries share similar approaches to mother tongue education: centralized curriculum development, national textbook standardization, and emphasis on cultural value transmission through literary texts. Grade 6 represents a critical stage in both systems, as students transition from basic language skills to more complex literary and cultural understanding. Both education systems use mother tongue textbooks as primary vehicles for not only linguistic development but also for the construction of national identity and the transmission of cultural values across generations.

**Table 1**  
*Comparative overview of educational context*

Indicator	China	Türkiye
<b>Demographics</b>		
Population (2024)	1.4 billion	85 million
School-age population (6-14)	140 million	10.5 million
Life expectancy	78.6 years	78.4 years
Literacy rate	97.2%	96.7%
<b>Education System Structure</b>		
Compulsory education years	9 years	12 years
Primary school (ages)	6-12 years	6-10 years
Middle school (ages)	12-15 years	10-14 years
Grade 6 student age	11-12 years	11-12 years
<b>Mother Tongue</b>		

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**Education**

Curriculum authority	Minister of Education	Ministry of National Education
Textbook approval	Centralized (PEP)	Centralized (MEB)
Grade 6 weekly hours	5-6 hours	5 hours
Main textbook publisher	People's Education Press	Ministry-approved publishers
Curriculum focus	Classical literature	Republican values

**Cultural Emphasis**

Primary cultural values	Confucian philosophy, harmony with nature, ancestor respect	National identity, independence, self-sacrifice
Historical text included	Tang/Song poetry, classical narratives	Republic era, Orkhon Inscriptions.
Traditional festivals in curriculum	Spring Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival	Republic Day, National Sovereignty.

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China (2025), Turkish Statistical Institute (2023), Ministry of Education of China (2019), Ministry of National Education (2024), World Health Organization (2025).

This comparative examination of Grade 6 textbooks from these two countries offers insights into how different educational philosophies approach cultural transmission through mother tongue curriculum, revealing both universal pedagogical principles and culture-specific instructional strategies.

**Research Questions**

The primary objective of this research is to compare the 6th grade middle school mother tongue textbooks of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Türkiye in terms of cultural elements and traditional texts. Within the scope of the research, answers to the following problem questions were sought:

The following problem questions represent the problem statement of this research.

- 1- What are the traditional texts in China's and Türkiye's mother tongue textbooks?
- 2- At what points do the cultural transmission texts between China's mother tongue textbook and Türkiye's mother tongue textbook exhibit similarities and differences?

**MATERIALS AND METHODS****Research Design**

This research employed a qualitative research method. Qualitative research can be defined as "research in which qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interviews, and document analysis are used, and a qualitative process is followed aimed at presenting perceptions and events in a realistic and holistic manner in their natural setting" (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021, p. 37). The research applied a comparative document analysis design. Document analysis encompasses the analysis of written materials containing information about the phenomena and events targeted for investigation.

**Data Sources**

The objects of examination in this research are the People's Republic of China's 6th Grade Chinese Language Textbook and the Republic of Türkiye's 6th Grade Turkish Language Textbook. Both textbooks are official instructional materials used across all regions of their respective countries.

**Data Collection**

In qualitative research, document analysis can be used as a standalone data collection method as well as in conjunction with other data collection methods (Marriam, 2013, p. 28). In this research, data were obtained from official textbooks published by the Ministries of Education of both countries. The textbooks are available in the Ministries' online databases and are open-access materials.

**Data Analysis**

Although the data processing procedure in qualitative research begins inductively, deductive thinking plays an important role as the analysis progresses (Creswell & Creswell, 2021; Merriam, 2013). The analysis followed a systematic four-stage process:

Stage 1 - Initial Reading: Each textbook was read completely to gain holistic understanding of content organization and pedagogical approach.

Stage 2 - Text Identification: Traditional texts were identified based on three criteria: (a) historical origin predating modern era, (b) explicit cultural or moral themes, and (c) use of classical literary forms.

Stage 3 - Thematic Coding: Identified texts were coded across three dimensions - traditional characters, concrete elements, and cultural values - using constant comparative method.

Stage 4 - Comparative Analysis: Coded data from both countries were systematically compared using Bereday's (1964) comparative framework: description, interpretation, juxtaposition, and comparison.

**RESULTS****Chinese Textbook Findings****Poetry texts:**



1. Lodging at Night on the Jiande River
2. Written While Intoxicated at Wanghu Tower on June 27
3. Xijiangyue - Night Walk on Huangsha Road
4. Waves in the Sands
5. Spring in Jiangnan
6. Written on Mr. Huyn's Wall

**Narrative texts:**

1. Boya Playing the Qin
2. Dai Song's Comments on the Ox Painting
3. Young Runtu
4. Beijing's Spring Festival
5. Tibetan Opera

**Turkish Textbook Findings****Poetry texts:**

1. We Are Turkish, We Speak Turkish

**Narrative texts:**

1. My Mother Was Earth, My Father Sky
2. Karagöz
3. Tonyukuk Inscription
4. My Grandfather's Red Harmonica
5. Nasreddin Hoca
6. The Great Offensive
7. The Horse Running to the Front
8. Turkish Sailors – Piri Reis

**Comparative Findings**

Traditional characters serve as cultural ambassadors who embody the values, wisdom, and behavioral norms that each society wishes to transmit to younger generations. Table 2 presents the traditional characters identified in both Chinese and Turkish textbooks, categorized by their cultural significance and pedagogical function.

**Table 2****Traditional characters in Chinese and Turkish textbooks**

Character Type	Chinese Textbooks	Turkish Textbooks
<b>Historical Figures</b>	Boya (ancient musician), Dai Song (Song Dynasty painter)	Tonyukuk (Turkic statesman), Piri Reis (Ottoman admiral)
<b>Literary Characters</b>	Young Runtu (from Lu Xun's story)	Karagöz and Hacivat (shadow theater characters)
<b>Folk Characters</b>	-	Nasreddin Hoca (folk philosopher/teacher)
<b>Poets/Writers</b>	Ancient Chinese poets (Tang/Song dynasties)	Folk poets
<b>Family</b>	Runtu's father, Beijing Spring	Grandgather (Red Harmonica), mother

<b>Members</b>	Festival family members	and father figures
<b>Cultural Educators</b>	Master musicians, classical scholars	Teachers, storytellers, theater performers
<b>Total Traditional Characters</b>	8-19 distinct characters	10-12 distinct characters
<b>Character Presentation Style</b>	Artist, indirect, philosophical	Direct, instructional, often humorous
<b>Primary Character Function</b>	Moral exemplars, wisdom transmission	Behavioral models, national identity formation.

Source: PEP, 2019; MEB, 2025.

Chinese characters emphasize philosophical wisdom and artistic achievement, reflecting Confucian ideals of the scholar-gentleman. Turkish characters demonstrate individual authenticity and employ humor as a pedagogical tool, reflecting the oral tradition and folk pedagogy of Turkish culture.

**Concrete Traditional Elements in Texts**

Beyond characters, textbooks incorporate concrete traditional elements—tangible cultural artifacts, practices, festivals, and art forms—that provide students with direct connections to their cultural heritage. Table 3 identifies and compares these concrete elements across both textbook sets.

**Table 3****Concrete traditional elements in Chinese and Turkish textbooks**

Element Category	Chinese Textbooks	Turkish Textbooks	Similarity/Difference
<b>Art Forms</b>	Chinese calligraphy, traditional painting, classical poetry	Karagöz shadow theater, oral storytelling, folk humor	<b>Different:</b> China emphasizes visual and written arts; Türkiye emphasizes performance and oral arts
<b>Musical Elements</b>	Qin (traditional string instrument)	Red harmonica (folk music instrument)	<b>Similar:</b> Both value musical heritage, different instruments reflect cultural aesthetics

<b>Festivals and Celebrations</b>	Beijing Spring Festival (detailed descriptions of New Year traditions)	Not prominently featured in Grade 6 traditional text	<b>Different:</b> Festivals central to Chinese texts, less emphasized in Turkish Grade 6 textbook.
<b>Traditional Literature Forms</b>	Classical poetry, classical prose, historical narratives	Folk tales, inscriptions (Orkhon), historical narratives, humor stories	<b>Similar:</b> Both use classical forms <b>Different:</b> Poetry vs. prose/humor emphasis
<b>Natural Philosophy</b>	Harmony with nature (mountains, rivers, moon, seasons – deeply integrated)	Nature appreciation (present but not philosophically central)	<b>Different:</b> Confucian nature philosophy in Chinese; pragmatic nature respect in Turkish
<b>Historical Inscriptions</b>	Classical texts from ancient China	Orkhon Inscriptions, Tonyukuk Inscription	<b>Similar:</b> Both preserve ancient written heritage
<b>Cultural Practices</b>	Ancestor reverence, tea culture, agricultural traditions	Maritime/sailor traditions, military campaigns, folk wisdom transmission	<b>Different:</b> Agricultural (China) and military (Türkiye)
<b>Language Arts</b>	Aesthetic language, metaphorical expression, literary parallelism	Direct expression, rhetorical questions, humor and wit	<b>Different:</b> Indirect and artistic (China), direct and conversational (Türkiye)
<b>Geographical Features</b>	Jiande River, Wanghu Tower, Huangsha Road, Jiangnan region	Anatolia, Mediterranean, Ottoman territories	<b>Different:</b> Landscape descriptions central to Chinese poetry

<b>Food Culture</b>	Spring Festival foods, agricultural products	Not prominently featured	<b>Different:</b> Food culture emphasized in Chinese festival texts.
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Source: PEP, 2019; MEB, 2025.

Chinese textbooks incorporate concrete traditional elements with deep philosophical and aesthetic dimensions, particularly in poetry and festival descriptions. Turkish textbooks emphasize practical cultural elements such as theater, humor, and historical military/maritime achievements. Chinese elements often serve contemplative purposes, while Turkish elements frequently serve instructional and identity-formation purposes.

#### Values in Traditional Texts

Values embedded in traditional texts reveal each nation's educational priorities and cultural aspirations. Table 4 presents a comparative analysis of the core values transmitted through traditional texts in both Chinese and Turkish Grade 6 mother tongue textbooks.

**Table 4**  
*Cultural values in Chinese and Turkish traditional texts*

Value Category	Chinese Textbooks	Turkish Textbooks	Similarity/Difference
<b>Family Values</b>	Filial piety, respect for elders, multi-generational harmony, family unity during festivals	Family bonds, respect for grandparents, parent-child affection, family memories	<b>Similar:</b> Both emphasize strong family ties and intergenerational respect
<b>Social Values</b>	Social harmony, cooperation, community celebration, collective identity	National solidarity, social cooperation, community support, patriotism	<b>Similar:</b> Both value social cohesion <b>Different:</b> China emphasizes harmony, Türkiye emphasizes active solidarity
<b>Moral Virtues</b>	Benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, sincerity	Honesty, diligence, wisdom, self-sacrifice, integrity	<b>Similar:</b> Universal moral virtues present in both <b>Different:</b> Confucian framework in

			China; Islamic- Republican framework in Türkiye		, calligraphi c beauty, literary refinement	tradition, folk creativity	performance and oral arts (Türkiye)
<b>Wisdom and Learning</b>	Deep scholarly pursuit, artistic cultivation , philosophi cal understand ing, reverence for classical knowledge	Practical wisdom, folk knowledge, learning from experience, humor as teaching tool	<b>Different:</b> Scholarly and philosophical (China), practical and experiential (Türkiye)	<b>Friendsh ip</b>	Deep friendship ("one who knows the sound") mutual understand ing (Boya and Ziqi)	Camaraderie, companionsh ip, social bonds	<b>Similar:</b> Both value, friendship <b>Different:</b> Spiritual connection emphasis in Chinese texts
<b>Relations hip with Nature</b>	Harmony with nature, agricultura l wisdom, seasonal awareness, nature as spiritual teacher	Nature appreciation, environment al awareness, practical nature interaction	<b>Different:</b> Philosophical connection (China), practical appreciation (Türkiye)	<b>Work Ethic</b>	Diligence, perseveran ce, agricultura l dedication, craftsmans hip	Hard work, diligence, craftsmoman ship, determinatio n	<b>Similar:</b> Both emphasize diligent work
<b>Ancestra l Respect</b>	Deep reverence for ancestors, maintainin g traditions, honoring classical masters	Respect for historical figures, honoring national heroes, preserving heritage	<b>Similar:</b> Both honor past <b>Different:</b> Spiritual ancestor veneration (China), historical hero commemoration (Türkiye)	<b>Humor and Joy</b>	Subtke, artistic, often through poetry	Direct, instructional, folk humor (Nasreddin Hoca, Karagöz)	<b>Different:</b> China uses subtle artistic humor; Türkiye uses direct folk humor as teaching tool
<b>National Identity</b>	Cultural continuity, Chinese civilization pride, Han cultural heritage	Strong national consciousnes s, independenc e spirit, Turkish language pride, republican values	<b>Similar:</b> Both build national identity <b>Different:</b> Civilization continuity (China), nation- state formation (Türkiye)	<b>Language Awarene ss</b>	Implicit (through classical texts and calligraphy )	Explicit (dedicated text: "We Are Turkish, We Speak Turkish)	<b>Different:</b> Türkiye explicitly teaches mother tongue pride
<b>Artistic Values</b>	Aesthetic appreciatio n, poetic expression	Storytelling art, theatrical performance, oral	<b>Different:</b> Written and visual arts (China),	<b>Courage and Heroism</b>	Historical military figures (less prominent in Grade 6)	National struggle heroes, military campaigns ("The Great Offensive"), maritime explorers	<b>Different:</b> Military heroism more prominent in Turkish texts.

Source: PEP, 2019; MEB, 2025.

Both textbook sets transmit universal values (family, honesty, diligence, social cooperation) while emphasizing culture-specific values. Chinese texts reflect Confucian philosophy, emphasizing harmony, philosophical wisdom, and aesthetic refinement through indirect, artistic narratives. Turkish texts emphasize national identity, independence spirit, and practical wisdom through direct, often humorous instructional narratives. The pedagogical approach differs fundamentally: Chinese texts teach through artistic contemplation and indirect

suggestion, while Turkish texts teach through direct instruction and humorous engagement.

## DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to investigate the quality of traditional texts taught to 6th grade level students in courses in the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Türkiye. The texts in both countries' textbooks have been classified and analyzed. The analysis was conducted in three categories: traditional characters in texts, concrete traditional elements, and values. Based on these findings and the categories created, conclusions were drawn about both countries' texts. The conclusion has been presented as similarities and differences between the two countries' texts.

Regarding the People's Republic of China's mother tongue textbook, Liu and colleagues' (2022) research revealed that the increasing emphasis on multiculturalism has led to a decrease in texts and emphases on ethnic multilingualism in textbooks. They emphasized that in the past few has almost completely disappeared. Indeed, in this study as well, there are no texts addressing multiculturalism or ethnic minorities in the traditional texts in the Chinese textbook.

Similarly, Çayır (2015), in his study examining Türkiye's textbooks, demonstrated that although curriculum reform indicated a shift from assimilationism toward multiculturalism, textbooks maintained a tolerance-based inclusionary approach toward ethnic minorities. Therefore, the comparative analysis of traditional texts in China's and Türkiye's 6th grade mother tongue textbooks has provided important insights regarding both countries' national identity construction, transmission of cultural values, and reflection of educational policies in textbooks.

### Interpretation of Findings

The comparative analysis presented in Tables 2-4 reveals systematic differences in how China and Turkey approach cultural transmission through mother tongue textbooks. These differences manifest across three dimensions: character representation, concrete cultural elements, and value systems. Mother tongue courses aim for students to acquire mother tongue awareness and develop fundamental language skills (reading, listening, speaking, and writing). However, each country's approach to this differs. These differences can be concretely observed in textbooks. Some countries' mother tongue textbooks place greater emphasis on texts, some on skills training, and others on social cohesion. Indeed, there are certain distinct differences in China's and Türkiye's mother tongue textbooks. These differences include, primarily, the visuals in the books, text types and activities, as well as text contents and values. The visuals in textbooks reflect both countries' aesthetic and artistic understanding. China's textbook features traditional Chinese miniature art, while Türkiye's presents landscapes offering glimpses from the country. Regarding text types in the textbooks, informative texts predominate in Türkiye's Turkish language textbook, with attention given to current topics (technology and science). In China's Chinese language textbook, literary texts

are given greater prominence. Pre-text and post-text activities in both textbooks are similar in nature.

Structurally, the Turkish language textbook devotes more attention to students' information and digital literacy than China's textbook. However, these inferences are solely based on mother tongue textbook comparison. Topics covered in Turkish language lessons may be taught within a different course in China and may be imparted to students in different contexts. This situation is entirely related to countries' educational systems and course categories. Within the scope of this research, the comparison of traditional texts was targeted.

### Pedagogical Approaches: Direct - Indirect Instruction

Chinese textbooks employ indirect pedagogical strategies rooted in Confucian philosophy, where moral lessons are conveyed through artistic narratives and metaphorical language (Wang & Zhang, 2025). This approach reflects what Confucian pedagogy calls "teaching without words" where students internalize values through contemplation and aesthetic appreciation rather than explicit instruction. In contrast, Turkish textbooks utilize direct instructional approaches, often employing humor and explicit moral teachings through characters like Nasreddin Hoca and Karagöz.

### Cultural Transmission

Based on the texts, commitment to traditional culture, family values, diligence, wisdom, honesty, self-sacrifice, and social solidarity are prominent in both countries. The social solidarity exhibited by the Chinese and Turkish nations, which have deeply rooted histories and have maintained their existence since ancient times, demonstrates a high degree of similarity based on the texts. Moreover, both countries have included texts from world literature (Robinson Crusoe, country introductions) in their textbooks. In the narrative texts of both countries, compassion, self-sacrifice, and affection in human relationships are present.

Among the differences, ancestral culture is foremost. In Chinese texts, Confucian values and respect for ancestors and beliefs are at the highest level. Indeed, the weight of this ancestral culture has also influenced the style and expression of the texts. The language of Chinese narrative texts is more serious; although the language level is appropriate for addressing children (Boya Playing the Qin), it remains distant from establishing a direct connection with children. In Türkiye's texts, there are more texts (Nasreddin Hoca, Tonyukuk) with a style that addresses children as a lesson. Consequently, there is direct instruction in Turkish texts, while in Chinese texts there is artistic and indirect instruction. Natural philosophy has been elaborated with intense description in Chinese poetry. It can be stated that the connection established with nature in Chinese poetry stems from beliefs and values. Moreover, as can be understood from the text "Beijing's Spring Festival" and its demographic structure, it is observed that Chinese society is an agricultural society. Consequently, life intertwined with and in harmony with nature has been reflected in texts and values. Part of



Türkiye is an agricultural society, respects nature, and takes care to preserve natural life. However, there is no religious connection between nature and society. In this situation, although nature descriptions appear occasionally in Turkish texts, they are not as prevalent as in Chinese texts.

In Chinese texts, a common style and language is observed. Even informative and introductory texts (Tibetan Opera) have been elaborated with artistic descriptions. The situation is different in Turkish traditional texts; text language and style also vary according to text type. There are differences between informative texts (Tonyukuk) and artistic texts (My Mother Was Earth, My Father Sky).

One of the direct differences between the texts in the two books concerns mother tongue. In the Turkish language textbook, love and awareness of mother tongue has been directly imparted to students (We Are Turkish, We Speak Turkish). In Chinese texts, there is no traditional text related to mother tongue. Additionally, while festivals and celebrations are addressed in Chinese traditional texts, celebration elements, etc., have not been addressed in Turkish texts. This reveals the attitude of the books regarding the transmission of traditions to students.

## CONCLUSION

Finally, one of the greatest differences between the two countries is the individual authenticity demonstrated by characters in Turkish texts and their use of humor. For example, in the Karagöz text, the characters Karagöz and Hacivat directly reflect their character traits, styles, and sense of humor. Similarly, in the Nasreddin Hoca text, the Nasreddin Hoca character is instructive, a teacher, and an educator. He touches upon important points both in terms of belief and values. However, Nasreddin Hoca delivers his teachings not with a serious style but with a humorous understanding. In Chinese texts, such humorous instruction or characters that teach/provoke thought while amusing have not been encountered.

The identified similarities and differences in the traditional texts of China and Türkiye have been presented. Finally, it must not be forgotten that the fact that not every theme and topic has been addressed in 6th grade textbooks does not indicate that countries do not provide this awareness and education. For instance, the fact that festivals and celebrations have been addressed in Chinese but not in Turkish does not indicate that Türkiye does not celebrate festivals; nor does the fact that mother tongue love and awareness has not been directly addressed in Chinese indicate that China disregards mother tongue awareness. These texts are products of textbooks prepared by blending countries' educational policies, educational curricula, and objectives. In the texts that students in these countries encounter and read, there are elements related to their own cultures. This research has revealed the texts that 6th grade students in China and Türkiye encounter. Most distinctly, it can generally be stated for all texts that while abstract and indirect narration is employed in Chinese, direct narration is more frequently utilized in Turkish. "Even the most superficial comparison opens the

eyes of the student to the truly broadening vistas. This extra dimension to the total thinking processes is the most substantial contribution that comparative studies in general have to offer" (Bereday, 1964).

## Limitations of the Study

This study examined only Grade 6 textbooks (2019 for China, 2025 for Türkiye). Several limitations should be noted:

1. The analysis was limited to traditional texts within textbooks; modern/contemporary texts were not examined.
2. The study focused solely on textbook content without exploring classroom implementation or student reception of these materials.
3. Only one grade level was examined; cultural transmission strategies may differ across elementary and secondary levels.

Future research should include longitudinal analysis across multiple grade levels, classroom observation studies to examine how teachers implement these texts, and student interviews to understand cultural value internalization processes.

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