

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter, presenting the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data gathered, aims to evaluate the efficiency of culture learning on English low achievers' English learning attitude and to investigate the low achievers' preferable cultural learning mode. Three kinds of data were collected: the questionnaire on low achievers' attitudes toward English learning, interval questionnaires on culture learning, and transcription of the interviews. Section 4.1 analyzes the questionnaires of the subjects' learning attitude before and after the treatment of culture learning. Section 4.2 investigates the subjects' reflections toward the culture learning project through the analysis of the qualitative interval questionnaires. Section 4.3 explores the subjects' reactions to culture learning by interviewing them. Analysis of the three types of data is reported below as they apply to the research questions posed in this thesis.

4.1 Analysis of SELAM Questionnaire on English Low Achievers' English Learning Attitude

The items of Students' English Learning Attitude and Motivation Questionnaire (SELAM Questionnaire) were used to elicit the subjects' English learning attitude before and after the treatment. With "group" as the independent variable and "the posttest scores of SELAM Questionnaire" as the dependent variable, the researcher performed the analysis of the t-test to compare the difference of the learning attitudes for the subjects in the experimental group and the control group after the treatment. Table 4.1 presents the mean value, the standard deviation, t value and p value of the pretest scores and the posttest scores of SELAM Questionnaire for the control and experimental groups.

Table 4.1. *T-test of the Pretest and the Post-test Means of SELAM Questionnaire*

	Control Group (N=15)		Experimental Group (N=15)			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	T value	P value
Pretest	89.07	17.73	96.8	17.15	-1.21	0.24
Posttest	94.27	14.90	107.13	18.25	-2.12	0.043*

Note. N=number

$p < 0.05^*$

4.1.1 Results of t-test on English learning attitude

As indicated in Table 4.1, before the treatment the difference in means of the pretest regarding English learning attitude for the students between the experimental and control groups was due to the chance ($T = -1.21, p > 0.05$). However, after the treatment, the results reveal that there was a significant difference on the attitudes toward English learning between the students in the control and experimental groups ($T = -2.12, p < 0.05$). The examination of t-test before and after the treatment further suggests that the change of the English learning attitude for the subjects in the experimental did not happen by chance but due to the insertion of culture learning project.

Since the questionnaire is composed of three sections:(a) questions about general interest in English learning, (b) questions about socio-cultural attitude toward English, and (c) questions about low achievers' desire and attitude toward learning English, the statistics of students' English learning attitude were further analyzed in terms of the three categories.

4.1.2 Results of t-test on general interest in English

Table 4.2 depicts the mean value, the standard deviation, T value and P value of the pretest and posttest scores of the subjects' general interest in English learning.

Table 4.2. *T-test of the Means of "General Interest in English Learning"*

	Control Group (N=15)		Experimental Group (N=15)		T value	P value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Pretest	20.73	4.35	22.20	6.03	-0.76	0.4511
Posttest	22.27	6.25	27.13	6.37	-2.11	0.044*

Note. N=number

$p < 0.05^*$

Table 4.2 indicates that there is no significant difference in the means of the pretest regarding general interest in English between the control and experimental groups ($T = -0.76, p > 0.05$), while the posttest means regarding general interest in English for the two groups differ significantly ($T = -2.11, p < 0.05$). The fact that the posttest mean of the experimental group is higher than that of the control group suggests that general interest in English for the learners in the experimental group was improved after the cultural learning project.

4.1.3 Results of t-test on sociocultural attitudes toward English

Table 4.3 indicates the difference of the sociocultural attitude toward English for the subjects in the two groups through the examination of t-test.

Table 4.3. *T-test of the Means of “Sociocultural Attitude toward English”*

	Control Group (N=15)		Experimental Group (N=15)			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	T value	P value
Pretest	15.13	3.04	16.67	4.73	-1.06	0.3002
Posttest	15.53	3.85	20.4	4.14	-3.33	0.0024**

Note. N=number

$p < 0.01^{**}$

Though there is no significant difference in the means of the pretest for the control and experimental groups' sociocultural attitudes toward English ($T = -1.06$, $p > 0.05$), a significant difference exists in the posttest means for the two groups' sociocultural attitudes toward English ($T = -3.33$, $p < 0.05$). The experimental group's mean (20.4) is higher than that of the control group (15.53). The positive change in the experimental group's sociocultural attitudes toward English was attributed to the cultural learning attitude.

4.1.4 Results of t-test on desire and attitude toward learning English

Table 4.4 shows the t-test result of the pretest and the post-test means of the experimental group's desire and attitude to learn English.

Table 4.4. *T-test of the Means of “Desire and Attitude toward Learning English”*

	Control Group (N=15)		Experimental Group (N=15)			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	T value	P value
Pretest	52.4	12.06	57.93	10.68	-1.33	0.1942
Posttest	56.67	314.33	60.6	9.67	-0.88	0.386

Note. N=number

$p < 0.05^*$

Table 4.4 reveals that the difference between the control and experimental groups' post-test means of attitude and desire to learn English was due to chance ($T = -0.88, p > 0.05$). Though the posttest mean of attitude and desire to learn English for the experimental group was higher than that for the control one, the difference is not evident enough to claim that the difference was due to the result of the culture learning treatment.

4.1.5 Results of paired t-test on the change of English learning attitude before and after the culture learning

A further examination of paired t-test was also conducted to see the difference between the pretest and the posttest scores for the subjects in the experimental group. The difference between the pretest and post-test scores served as a dependent variable. Through the comparison of the experimental group under different conditions (before and after the treatment), the researcher further verified that the change of English learning attitude was affected by the culture learning project.

In Table 4.5, the difference of the experimental group's pretest and posttest means is shown through **paired t-test**.

Table 4.5 Paired T-test for the Change of English Learning Attitude

Analysis Variable: Difference=Posttest - Pretest

	N	Mean	Std Error	T Value	Pr> t
General attitude toward English	15	3.07	1.14	2.70	0.017*
Social cultural Attitude toward English	15	3.57	0.92	3.86	0.0020*
Desire and attitude to learn English	15	3.07	1.68	1.83	0.0889
Learning Attitude toward English	15	10.53	2.92	3.60	0.0029*

 $p < 0.05^*$

Except for the aspect of “Desire and attitude to learn English,” the differences between the pretest and posttest means for the experimental group in the two other aspects of social cultural attitude and general attitude toward English are significant ($p < 0.05$). The result of the final paired t-test of “learning attitude toward English” shows the positive effect of the cultural learning project for the subjects in the experimental group.

To sum up, through the analyses—**t-test** and **paired t-test** of the statistics software SAS, both the vertical and horizontal analyses of the pretest and posttest results on English learning attitude questionnaire show that the subjects’ whole learning attitudes toward English were significantly and positively affected by the cultural learning project especially their general interest and social cultural attitudes despite that the cultural learning project exerted no evident effect on their desire and attitude to learn.

4.2 Analysis of CLF Questionnaires on Each Session of Culture Learning

CLF Questionnaire, designed by the researcher, aimed to examine those learners' responses and comments toward each culture learning session. The questionnaires were implemented after each session of culture learning. All the fifteen learners, represented with letters A to O in this thesis, received the questionnaires after each session except for his or her absence.

The eight questions of the questionnaire (Appendix B), can be categorized into three dimensions: (a) general attitudes toward culture learning sessions, (b) reflections on the culture learning experiences, and (c) suggestions on the content and process of the culture learning sessions. Except for question 1 and 3, other questions are open-ended. Open items in the questionnaires enabled the subjects to express their opinions freely and thus led to more useful and insightful data.

Through analyzing the results of CLF Questionnaire both vertically (based on time) and horizontally (based on subjects), the researcher explored the subjects' attitudes toward the culture learning project, the effects of the culture learning project, and the subjects' feedbacks on the culture learning. The analyses of the results for these interval questionnaires are as follows.

4.2.1 General attitude toward culture learning sessions

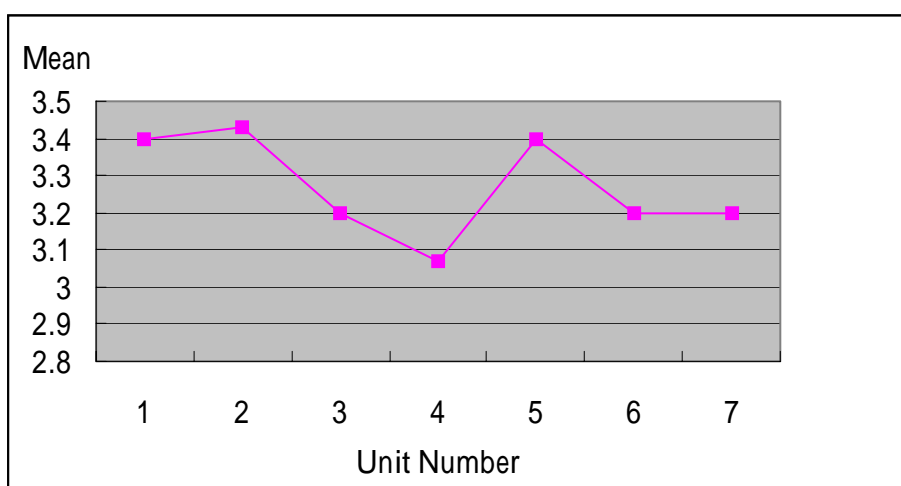
The first part consisted of questions 1 and 2. These two questions were designed to explore the subjects' learning attitude toward culture learning sessions under the treatment—their affective tendency toward culture learning sessions (responding to question 1) and their classroom participation in the culture learning session (responding to question 2).

Question 1: Do you like the culture learning session today?

1) A lot 2) Yes 3) No opinion 4) A little 5) Totally not.

Figures 4.1 and 4.2 present the quantitative results of this questionnaire question, in which Likert's five-point scale was employed. Ratings on five scales were calculated—summed and then averaged to provide an estimate of each subject's perceived attitude toward each culture learning session. A high average score indicates that the students enjoyed the culture learning project a lot.

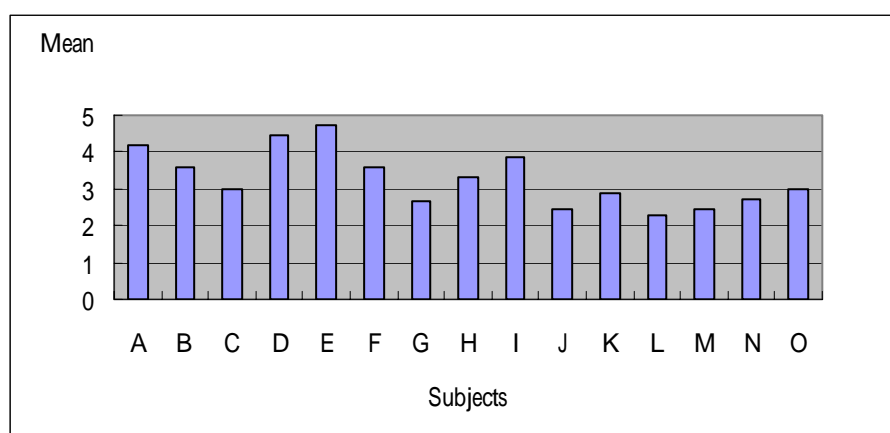
Figure 4.1. Average Scores of Subjects' Attitude toward Each Culture Learning Unit.



Note. The data is displayed with the x-axis representing unit number of the culture learning sessions and the y-axis the average scores of the subjects' attitude toward culture learning units.

Figure 4.1 shows the variance of the subjects' affective tendency toward each culture learning unit. Unit 1 (New York City vs. Taipei City), Unit 2 (Thanksgiving Day vs. Chinese Moon Festival) and Unit 5 (Literature—Harry Potter vs. Journey to the West) received the subjects' more affective preference.

Figure 4.2. Average Scores of Each Subject's Learning Attitude toward the Whole Culture Learning Project.



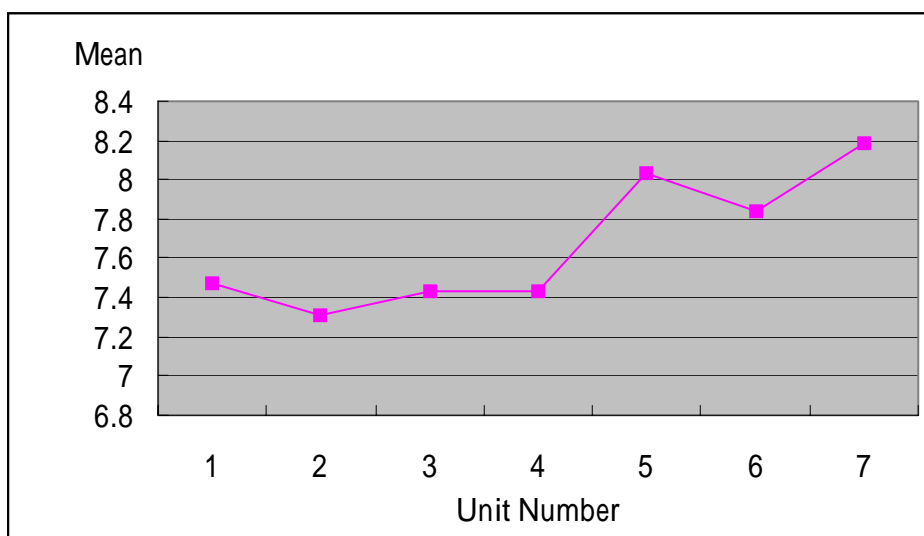
Note. The data is displayed with the x-axis representing each subject and the y-axis the average scores of the subjects' attitude toward the culture learning sessions.

Figure 4.2 indicates the difference of each subject's "affective tendency" toward the culture learning sessions. Nine subjects (60% of the subjects) got the average score above 3 on Likert's 5-point scale, which implied their positive attitude toward the whole culture learning project.

Question 2: Do you concentrate on the session? Choose the point that best reflect your degree of concentration (with a 10-point scale).

Figures 4.3 and 4.4 account for the students' general evaluative reflections on their participation. The adoption of the 10-point scale is in reference to the results of the pilot study; the students expressed that they are familiar with the 10-point scale. The higher the score the higher degree of concentration a student displayed in the culture learning classroom.

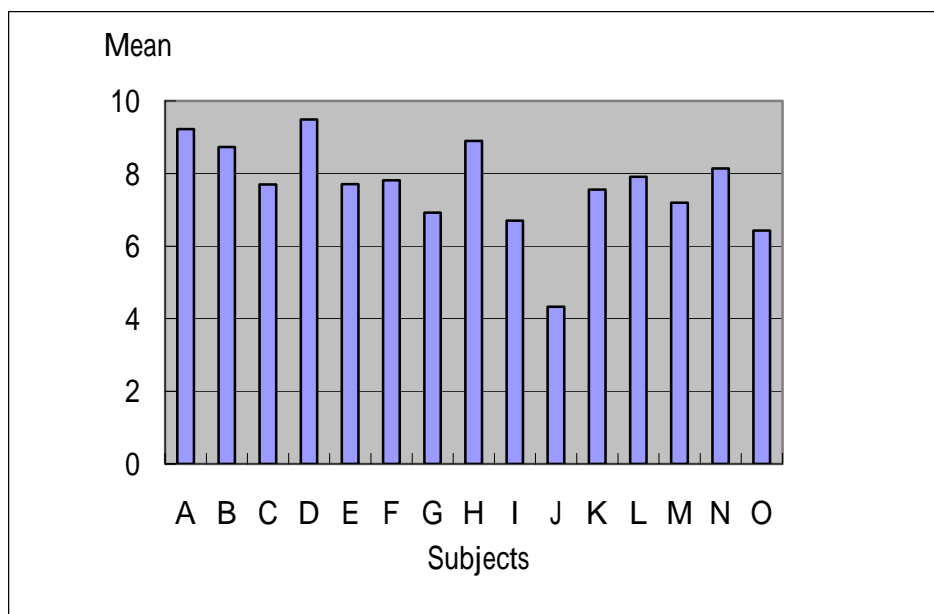
Figure 4.3. Average Scores of Subjects' Concentration on Each Culture Learning Unit.



Note. The x-axis represents the culture unit number of culture learning sessions and the y-axis the average scores of the subjects' concentration on the culture learning sessions given by the subjects.

The data in Figure 4.3 reveal the variance of the subjects' concentration on each culture learning unit. The subjects' concentration on the culture learning sessions seemed to get better with the progression of culture learning—the degree of subjects' concentration on the last three sessions, namely the 5th, 6th and 7th culture units, exceeded that in the first four sessions, the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th culture units, greatly.

Figure 4.4. Average Scores for Each Subject's Concentration in the Culture Learning Sessions.



Note. The x-axis represents the subjects and the y-axis the average scores for the degree of the subjects' concentration in the culture learning sessions given by the subjects.

Figure 4.4 shows the degree of each subject's concentration in the culture learning sessions. Almost all of the subjects (except for Subject J) had the average score above 6 points (out of 10 points), which implied their affirmative evaluation on their own concentration in the culture learning sessions.

4.2.2 Reflections on the culture learning sessions

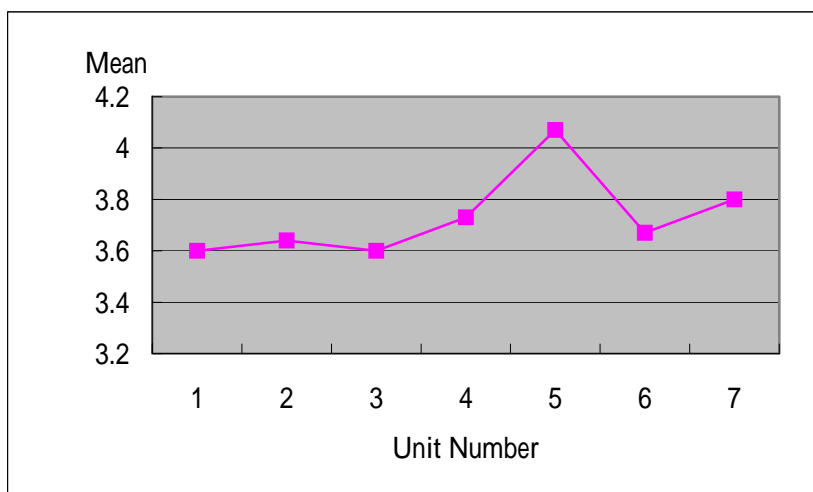
The second part aims to investigate the low achievers' learning conditions and difficulties in the culture learning sessions. It contains 5 questions, including questions 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Question 3: Does the culture learning session hold your attention?

1) Always 2) often 3) sometimes 4) seldom 5) Totally not

In Figures 4.5 and 4.6, Likert's five-point scale was used to show the quantification of the result of the questionnaire question. A high score is associated with a high level of the culture learning attraction for the students.

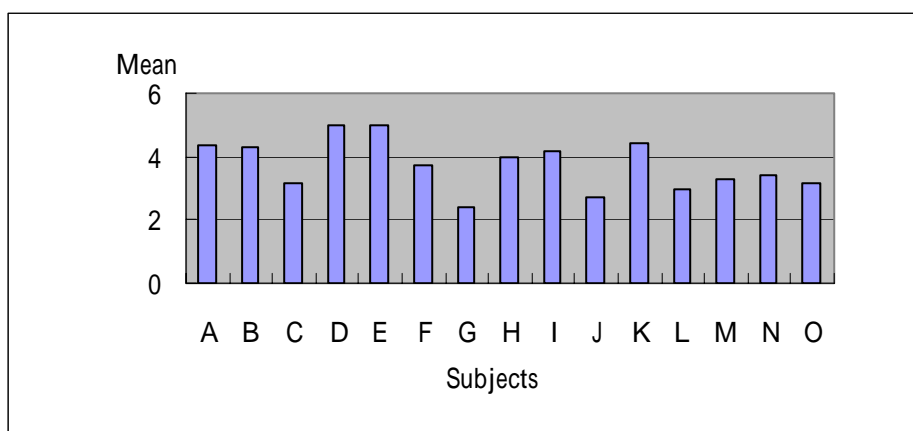
Figure 4.5. Average Scores of Subjects' Evaluation on the Culture Learning Attraction in Each Culture Learning Unit.



Note. The x-axis represents the culture unit number of the culture learning sessions and the y-axis the average scores of the subjects' evaluation on the attraction of the culture learning sessions.

Figure 4.5 displays the extent to which each culture unit held the subjects' attention. It shows the difference of each unit's attraction toward the subjects, from which the researcher can get the idea of the low achievers' preferences for culture learning—the fifth cultural session attracted the subjects most.

Figure 4.6. Average Scores of Each Subject's Evaluation on the Culture Learning Attraction



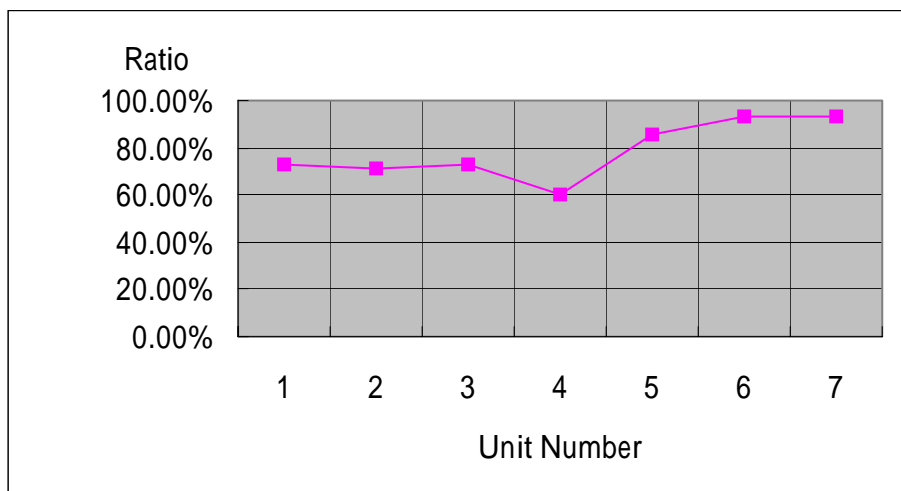
Note. The x-axis represents the subjects and the y-axis the average scores of the subjects' evaluation on the attraction of the culture learning project.

The data in Figure 4.6 indicate each subject's appraisal toward the attraction of the culture learning sessions. 80% of the subjects (except for Subject G and J) had the average score above 3 on Likert's 5-point scale, which implied their positive evaluation on the effects of the culture learning sessions.

Question 4: What's the topic of this culture session?

In Figures 4.7 and 4.8, the data present the ratio that the students were able to perceive the topic of each culture learning unit after culture learning. The higher the ratio is, the better the subjects can get the main idea of the culture learning sessions.

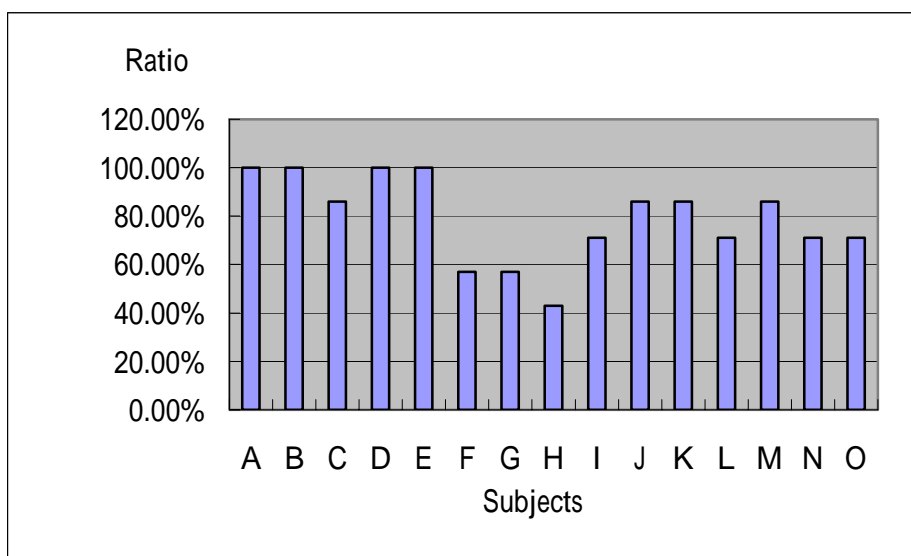
Figure 4.7. Ratio of Subjects' Comprehension of the Cultural Topic in Each Culture Learning Unit



Note. The x-axis represents the culture unit number of the culture learning sessions and the y-axis the ratio of the subjects' clarification of the topic of each culture learning session.

Figure 4.7 expounds the extent to which the subjects' comprehension of the topic in each culture study unit. It shows that each cultural theme (unit) becomes clearer with the progression of the project (except the fourth session). In the last two sessions, almost all the subjects (93%) were able to catch the cultural theme in the cultural learning session.

Figure 4.8. Ratio of Each Subject's Comprehension of the Cultural Topics of the Culture Learning Sessions



Note. The x-axis represents the subjects and the y-axis the averaged ratio of the subjects' awareness of the topic of each culture learning session.

Figure 4.8 indicates that about 80% of the subjects (12 subjects) could correctly figure out more than 60% of the cultural topics after the cultural sessions, which implied that the cultural learning project indeed conveyed clear cultural information to most of the subjects.

Question 5: What impressed you most in this culture learning session?

After retrieving the seven-time reflection questionnaires after the culture learning sessions, the researcher sorted data of students' responses toward the most impressionable part of the sessions into two categories—content and process. Table 4.6 reveals all the subjects' responses collected, summed, and categorized by the researcher.

Table 4.6. *What Impressed the Subjects Most in the Culture Learning Sessions*

Reference to content			Reference to process		
Items	N	Rank	Items	N	Rank
1. Interesting cultural matters	26	1	1. Impressive pictures	33	1
2. Cultural conflicts (unusual or different from their original cultural understanding)	24	2	2. Comparison between one's own culture and other cultures	16	2
3. Real life—people's everyday lives	24	3	3. Computer manifestation (internet surfing or PowerPoint viewing)	12	3
4. What can't be experienced or seen in their lives	19	4	4. Task-based worksheets	5	4
5. Novel cultural matters	12	5	5. Pair discussion or group discussion	5	5
6. Custom and festival	9	6			
7. What can't be learned in the regular English classroom	4	7			
8. Cultural stories	3	8			
Subtotal	118		Subtotal	71	

Note. N=number. The number beside the items indicates the frequency of the answer in all of the questionnaires.

In order to identify the best mode for English low achievers' culture learning

project, the researcher required the subjects to recall their culture learning experience after each culture study unit. The recall of what impressed them most in their culture learning gave the researcher some ideas about the English low achievers' learning preferences for culture learning and also helped her figure out the most appropriate low achievers' culture learning mode.

With the purpose of analyzing the data, the subjects' responses were synthesized and categorized into two types—content and process. The sorting criteria was based on Tsai's (2002) categorization of her data in her study. Tsai (2002) made use of the division of culture learning content and process to interpret her data. The cultural components instructed in the English classroom belonged to the content of culture instruction, while the process of culture instruction referred to the teaching strategies, techniques, the language (the native or the target language) English teachers use in instructing culture, and culture assessment.

The quantification of the responses showed clearly that the English low achievers were impressed with certain cultural content (facts, practices, and perspectives) or culture learning design (methods or techniques). Among what impressed the subjects most in terms of culture learning content, "interesting cultural facts," "everyday life styles," and "cultural conflicts" impressed the low achievers most. As for culture learning process, the low achievers favored "picture displays" and "culture comparison."

Question 6: Comparing with the regular English lessons, what do you think of the culture learning session?

The subjects' comments on each cultural learning session were divided into positive and negative descriptions. Table 4.7 provides the two kinds of comments on cultural learning sessions. The number beside the comment indicates the

frequency of the answer in all of the questionnaires.

Table 4.7. *Subjects' Comments on the Culture Learning Project*

Positive Comments	N	Rank	Negative Comments	N	Rank
1. More relaxed—more interesting and full of fun	32	1	1. Too difficult—English learning	22	1
2. More attractive—more pictures, more information	28	2	2. Irrelevant to the English textbook	5	2
3. Providing more useful information; realistic	26	3	3. Time-consuming	3	3
4. Multifarious and full of variety	12	4			
5. Animated; alive	6	5			
6. More class participation	3	6			
7. More understandable, clearer	2	7			
8. More touching	1	8			
Subtotal	110		Subtotal	30	

Note. N=number. The number beside the items indicates the frequency of the answer in all of the questionnaires.

Generally speaking, the subjects' evaluative responses toward the culture learning project were mainly positive. In terms of the positive comments, some subjects viewed the culture learning experiences more interesting, more attractive, and more useful; they enjoyed themselves in the culture learning sessions. While still some negative comments were expressed in the questionnaire. Among them, the

negative comments on the accompanied difficulties in English learning remained existent.

Question 7: What are the difficulties confronted in this session?

On one hand, this open-ended question served as an evaluative question, which enabled the researcher to know the effects and the problems of each culture learning session; on the other hand, the results of the question provided the researcher with some “progressive” information on how to make the culture learning project more effective. Table 4.8 categorizes the difficulties that the subjects mentioned into two stages—the first three culture study units and the last four culture study units. The division of the two stages is to make a general comparison of the subjects’ difficulties in terms of the beginning four periods (three culture units lasting for four periods) and later six periods (four culture units lasting for six periods) in order to disclose the subjects’ certain switches in the culture learning process.

Table 4.8. *Subjects’ Difficulties in the Culture Learning Sessions*

<i>Unit</i>	<i>Difficulties</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Rank</i>
1 st —3 rd	English learning is still too hard for them.	28	1
(4 Periods)	It is Easy for them to forget what they have learned.	13	2
	They aren’t able to concentrate on the learning all the time.	12	3
	They can’t catch up with the teacher’s teaching pace.	12	4
	Too much cultural information at a time makes them confused.	7	5
Subtotal		72	

(table continues)

Table 4.8. (Continued)

Subjects' Difficulties in the Culture Learning Sessions

<i>Unit</i>	<i>Difficulties</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Rank</i>
4 th —7 th (6 Periods)	It's easy for them to forget what they have learned.	8	1
	The worksheet is sometimes too hard for them to complete.	8	2
	They can't concentrate on the sessions all the time.	6	3
	Certain cultural perspectives are still unclear for them	5	4
	Unknown English words in the reading materials usually "choke" their cultural learning.	5	5
	To express what they think about certain cultural comparison is a little too hard.	4	6
	Certain cultural information is too biased to be accepted even after the culture learning project.	3	7
	Subtotal		39

Note. N means number of the subjects who mentioned this item. There were 111 valid responses collected.

In Table 4.8, the subjects' difficulties confronted in the culture learning project were presented. As Table 4.8 indicates, during the culture learning sessions of the first three cultural units, the difficulties ranking the top three were: (a) "English learning is still too hard for them," (b) "it is easy for them to forget what they have learned," and (c) "they are unable to concentrate on the learning all the time." As for the culture learning in the last four units, the subjects' top three difficulties were separately: (a) "it's easy for them to forget what they have learned," (b) "the worksheet is sometimes too hard for them to complete," and (c) "they can't

concentrate on the sessions all the time.” The researcher found an interesting fact that the subjects’ difficulties changed with the progress of culture learning. In the first three culture learning units, their greatest difficulty fell on English learning accompanying culture learning (39%), while with the researcher’s adjustment toward the content of culture learning, the subjects’ greatest difficulty turned to other issues such as their inability to finish the worksheet in time (21%) and to retain all the cultural information (21%). The possible explanation for such result is that in the researcher’s application of interval questionnaires on culture learning, the researcher effectively dealt with the subjects’ problems through the investigation of the difficulties confronted by the subjects in the progress of culture learning. That is to say, a culture instructor should get a full understanding of learners’ culture learning condition and provide them with in-time help in the process of culture learning.

In addition, through the comparison of the two stages, the researcher also discovered some facts. First, certain difficulties appeared in both stages. English learning embedded in the culture learning “troubled” some participants in both stages. In addition, the participants in both stages mentioned their inability to retain all the cultural information learned in the culture sessions and their inability to concentrate on the culture learning sessions all the time. Second, in the second stage (the 4th-7th cultural units), there were responses expressing the difficulties in learning cultural perspectives which were not found in the first stage. For example, they uttered the responses that “Certain cultural perspectives are still unclear for them,” and “Certain cultural information is too biased to be accepted even after the culture learning project.” A possible explanation for the result is that the subjects in the second stage paid more attention to their culture awareness to other cultures and even their tolerance and acceptance of different cultures with the progress of culture learning. Therefore, they faced various culture issues—not just the learning of cultural facts but

also that of cultural perspectives in the last four cultural sessions.

4.2.3 Suggestions on the content and process of the culture learning sessions

Question 8: What suggestions do you have in terms of the content and process of the culture learning session?

Table 4.9 shows the subject's suggestions on the culture learning sessions. The suggestions were sorted into two types—the suggestions on the culture learning process and those on the culture learning content.

Table 4.9. *Subjects' Suggestions on the Culture Learning Sessions*

<i>Items (Reference to content)</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Rank</i>
To teach something they are more familiar with	12	1
To select topics they are interested like everyday life styles in other cultures	8	2
To introduce some interesting and novel cultural information	4	3
To introduce multicultural cultures—variety	3	4
To teach students how to express their own culture in English	2	5
Subtotal	29	

(table continues)

Table 4.9. (Continued)

Subjects' Suggestions on the Culture Learning Sessions

<i>Item (Reference to process)</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Rank</i>
To make English learning easier	17	1
To slow down the speed of the lecture.	12	2
To allow students to look for some cultural information by themselves	7	3
To permit students more time to review each cultural learning session	7	4
To give students less time pressure in finishing the worksheet	5	5
To make the lecture more detailed	4	6
To select certain reading articles suitable for their English proficiency	3	7
To make the worksheet clearer	2	8
Subtotal	57	

Note. The number beside the suggestions indicates the frequency of their appearance in all of the CLF Questionnaires.

As Table 4.9 indicates, the subjects' suggestions on the culture learning project can be sorted regarding culture learning content and process. The top three suggestions on culture learning process are: (a) to teach something they are more familiar with, (b) to select topics they are interested like everyday life styles in other cultures, and (c) to introduce some interesting and novel cultural information. The suggestions on culture learning process ranking the first three are: (a) to make English learning easier, (b) to slow down the speed of the lecture, and (c) to allow students to look for some cultural information by themselves. Generally speaking, many of the

subjects made a general suggestion on each culture learning session, expressing that culture learning could be easier and more interesting than their regular English learning. Other students gave more specific advice. As to the culture learning process, 30% of the subjects' suggestions focus on the fact that the use of English as the medium of the cultural learning should not be above their English proficiency. They strongly asserted that too much English learning might hinder their "smooth" culture learning. Other opinions like more detailed cultural lecture and slowing down the pace of the lecture were all submitted by them in the after-class culture learning questionnaires.

Another direction to analyze the subjects' culture learning suggestions, as proposed by some students, was by focusing on the culture learning contents. Many subjects thought that a culture learning curriculum should introduce cultural topics which they are more familiar with and interested in. Some cultural topics on the slices of everyday life such as the family life, school life and popular culture should be introduced with more detail. The topics associated them with their existing life experiences can really interest them. Other related suggestions on the cultural content were to introduce multicultural culture learning—not only the cultures in some English-speaking countries but other foreign cultures to help them get more culture understanding and to instruct them to express their own culture in English and so on.

4.3 Analysis of the Follow-up Interview

The Fifteen subjects in the experimental group were interviewed to further verify their English learning attitude after the culture learning project and acquire their final feedbacks toward the whole culture learning project. Two kinds of questions were asked: (a) questions about their attitude toward the efficacy of culture learning on the

regular English learning, and (b) questions about their feedbacks toward their culture learning (as listed in section 3.5.3).

To further explore issues that might not be found in SELAM Questionnaire and CLF Questionnaires, the researcher used letters A to O to represent each student's name, and the transcription of their responses was analyzed in terms of: (a) subjects' English learning attitude after the culture learning project and (b) subjects' culture learning reflections.

4.3.1 Subjects' English learning attitude after the culture learning project

Question 1: What's your English learning attitude now? Is it the same or different after the cultural learning project?

Concerning the interview results on English learning attitude after the culture learning project, nine out of the fifteen interviewees gave positive responses to the question. The nine interviewees all agreed that the culture learning project really brought some positive effects on their English learning. Below are some transcripts of the interview:

- *I get more concentrated on my regular English sessions and more willing to open my mouth to repeat after the teacher. (SIJ¹, Jan 18, 2006)*
- *I am a little more interested in my English learning especially when the teacher mentioned about something related to other cultures in the English class. (SIM, Jan 15, 2006)*
- *I find myself more active in answering the English teacher's questioning in class. (SIO, Jan17, 2006)*

Nevertheless, all of the interviewees' positive feedbacks on English learning

¹ The notation "SIJ" referred to "Subject interview with subject J." For the interviews with subjects A, B, C, and D, the notations were "SIA," "SIB," "SIC," and "SID" respectively.

attitude focused on their in-class participation. When the researcher inquired about their attitude toward their after-class review work, most of them admitted that they still did not exert enough time and energy to do the after-class review work.

- I really want to study English after school, but whenever I started to do my review work, I feel depressed. Because the contents of the textbook really “scares” me. It’s too difficult. (SIB, Jan 15, 2006)

- I really try to do the review work, but as I confront some difficulties, no one at home can teach me. That really discourages me. (SIM, Jan 18, 2006)

As for other responses on English learning attitude from the other six interviewees, they all expressed in unanimity that the culture learning project does teach them something different, interesting and open their world view but still can hardly change their English learning attitude.

- The culture learning sessions really interests me, but the regular English sessions are still too difficult for me. I still can’t pay attention to the English learning in class. (SIJ, Jan 17, 2006)

- In the beginning of the project, I am really more interested in my English learning; however, the complex English learning still precludes me from gaining enough positive feedbacks from it and then finally I give up. (SIE, Jan 16, 2006)

Generally speaking, the culture learning project indeed aroused the subjects’ interest in their English learning and intensified part of their English learning motivation especially their English in-class participation, but their English learning attitude after class did not appear to be improved as effectively.

4.3.2 Subjects' culture learning reflections

In order to have the exploration of the efficiency of the culture learning project, part of the follow-up interview aim to get more details on the subjects' opinions on the culture learning project. The results of this section were subdivided into four sections: (a) subjects' feedbacks on the culture learning project, (b) subjects' favorite topics, (c) subjects' difficulties concerning the culture learning project, and (d) subjects' suggestions on the whole culture learning project.

4.3.2.1 Subjects' feedbacks on the culture learning project

Question 2: What are your feedbacks on the culture learning this semester? Do you like it or not? Why or why not?

The majority of the subjects (thirteen out of fifteen) revealed their positive feedbacks toward the culture learning project. Ten of them deemed the project as impressive, meaningful, interesting, and special. Thirteen of them mentioned that they enjoyed the culture learning sessions more than their regular English learning sessions.

- *I like the project very much because it is interesting, fun and, most important of all, easy to understand. I really concentrate on each session and work hard to finish the worksheet. (SIL, Jan 18, 2006)*
- *I pay more attention to the culture learning sessions than the regular English sessions. The regular English learning is boring and too hard for me. (SID, Jan 15, 2006)*
- *The ten-week culture learning project is too short for us; I hope the project can keep on. Could you introduce some interesting cultural topics I like? (SIO, Jan 18, 2006)*

Though the majority of the subjects expressed their positive attitude toward the

culture learning, only five of them kept high interests through the whole project. As weeks went by, two subjects even got bored with the project despite their passion in the beginning. On the other hand, other subjects displayed either positive or negative feedbacks depending on different culture learning topics.

- To be honest, I do not work hard in each session; it depends on whether the cultural topics can interest me or not. (SIH, Jan 16, 2006)

- I felt quite interested in the project in the beginning, but in about the fourth session, I felt bored. However, the fifth session really interests me. I really enjoy the topic—Harry Potter vs. Journey to the West. (SIL, Jan 17, 2006)

To sum up, the majority of the subjects were in favor of the culture learning project. While as they looked back upon their cultural learning experience, they found that the different cultural topics may interest them to different degrees.

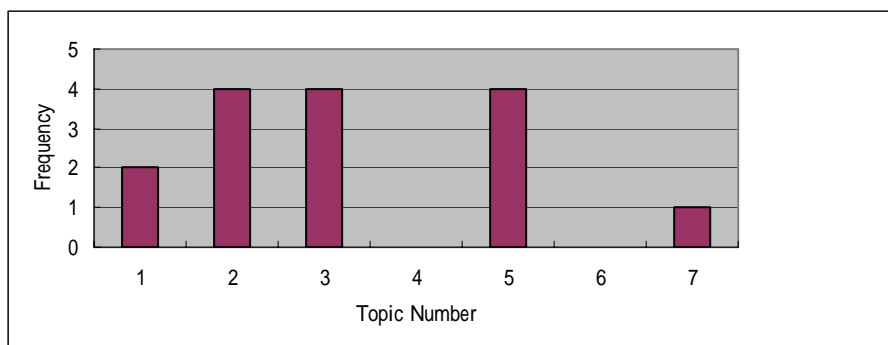
4.3.2.2 Subjects' favorite topics

Question 3: Which topic of culture learning do you like most regarding the ten-week sessions?

Question 4: Are there any other cultural topics that you are highly interested in and eager to learn?

The contents of the cultural learning project were comprised of seven topics, which are “New York City vs. Taipei City,” “Chinese Moon Festival vs. Thanksgiving,” “Food in Germany and in Taiwan,” “Attitudes toward Our Ancestors,” “Harry Potter vs. Journey to the West,” “Chinese Medicine vs. Western Medicine,” and “Gender Bias in English and Chinese” respectively. In the interview, all the 15 subjects picked up their favorite topics among the seven choices. The results were listed in Figure 4.9 to be discussed.

Figure 4.9. Subjects' Favorite Topic in Culture Learning Project



Note. Topic 1: “New York City vs. Taipei City”

Topic 2: “Chinese Moon Festival vs. Thanksgiving”

Topic 3: “Food in Germany and in Taiwan”

Topic 4: “Attitudes toward Our Ancestors”

Topic 5: “Harry Potter vs. Journey to the West”

Topic 6: “Chinese Medicine vs. Western Medicine”

Topic 7: “Gender Bias in English and Chinese”

In Figure 4.9, all the subjects' selections were grouped according to “topic.” The most distinctly favorite topics were “Chinese Moon Festival vs. Thanksgiving Day,” “Food around the World,” and “Harry Potter vs. Journey to the West”. Among the seven topics, “Chinese Medicine vs. Western Medicine” and “Attitudes toward Our Ancestors—Mexicans vs. Chinese ” gathered no resonance in terms of the question. Interestingly, among the five female subjects, four of them favor the topic “ Harry Potter vs. Journey to the West” most. The girls expressed their preference for a deeper and more detailed understanding of literary work like novels, stories, narrations, and dramas. However, as for the eight boys, four favored traditional festivals, and the other four preferred the life styles around the world.

As to what cultural topics they interest or like most, their responses were categorized into: (a) topics on the life experiences in other cultures—such as eating habits, school life, festivals and etc.; (b) topics on novels, music, art, history, people and etc.; and (c) topics they are familiar or they have learned a bit in the textbook.

- *I enjoy cultural topics introducing some novels, tales, movies, stories in our own culture and other cultures. (SIC, Jan 15, 2006)*
- *I hope you can introduce us some cultural topics I have already known a little because I can get a better understanding of the cultural content more easily. (SIH, Jan 16, 2006)*
- *I'd like to know the school life or some popular culture in America, Japan, Canada, and etc..(SIM, Jan 18, 2006)*

4.3.2.3 Subjects' difficulties concerning the culture learning project

Question 5: What difficulties did you confront in your culture learning experience this semester?

When asked what puzzled them most, 14 interviewees out of 15 in the study deemed that they indeed confronted some difficulties. Among the 14 subjects, eleven thought that English learning in the culture learning project still made them confused and discouraged.

- *Though I am interested in the culture learning, "English" in the culture learning project is still an obstacle for me—I am afraid of it no matter how easy it is. (SID, Jan 15, 2006)*
- *English is too hard for me to learn something interesting; I was sometimes blocked up while I was listening to the lecture or reading an article. That really discouraged me. (SIF, Jan 16, 2006)*

Despite the interviewees' criticism on the use of English as part of the medium of culture instruction, most of their viewpoints (thirteen out of fifteen) toward the use of all Chinese to learn culture were negative. They still thought it proper and needed to use English (the target language) to approach culture learning—to learn English more or less in the process of culture learning.

- *Since this is an English class, to use English to learn other cultures is more reasonable. (SIF, Jan 16, 2006)*
- *Though English learning is still not easy for me, the combination of English and culture learning makes English learning more interesting and fun. (SIG, Jan 16, 2006)*

Another difficulty the subjects mentioned was concerned about the process of culture learning. Four subjects complained that the culture learning was too hasty for them to comprehend all the cultural information and to retain it for a long time.

- *The tempo of the culture lessons is sometimes so fast that I can't catch up with it. (SIL, Jan 17, 2006)*
- *I can't understand and remember all of the information because of the time limit (Note: only 45 minutes) and the haste of culture learning. (SIA, Jan 15, 2006)*

4.3.2.4 Subjects' suggestions on the overall culture learning project

Question 6: What improvements are needed in the overall culture learning project in terms of the cultural content and process?

Similar to their opinions given in the interval CLF Questionnaires, the subjects' final suggestions upon the overall project were divided into the following:

Provision of cultural learning topics interested by students. As was revealed in the interval questionnaires, different contents of culture learning affected the subjects' interests in the culture learning. More than half of the subjects (9 subjects) deemed it important that the cultural topics should live up to their expectations and preferences.

- *I enjoy knowing what life is like in other cultures; therefore, I hope you can*

introduce more cultural information about this aspect. (SID, Jan 15, 2006)

- *More cultural topics interested by students should be introduced. Before culture learning, it is better for the teacher to investigate our cultural preferences. (SIO, Jan 18, 2006)*

Appropriate English learning corresponded to the students' English proficiency. As aforementioned, one of the low achievers' crucial difficulties in culture learning was their insufficient English proficiency. Thus, the subjects uttered a strong plea for an integration of comprehensible language input and culture learning.

- *I think the comprehension of cultural information is more important than English learning. I hope the English used and taught in the culture instruction should be easier. (SIN, Jan 18, 2006)*
- *I am afraid of English. Thus, I suggest that the project makes use of easier English to teach me some cultural matters. (SIG, Jan 16, 2006)*

A variety of cultural learning activities. Owing to the time limit and the constrained space, the culture instruction in the project basically adopted the methods of lecturing, discussion, and oral communication. Three subjects thus made the suggestion that there should be more varieties in terms of learning activities. They also stressed that the design of the cultural learning activities should take into consideration the students' English proficiency and learning preference.

- *I hope we can look for the cultural information on the Internet by ourselves. It will be more fun for us. (SIB, Jan 15, 2006)*
- *The teacher could adopt more activities to teach us something about culture. However, don't give too much homework because I am not good at English.*

(SIJ, Jan 17, 2006)

- I like to discuss with my partner and other classmates about some cultural matters. Thus, I think 'group oral presentation' will be a good way to learn culture for us. But I don't mean to do such an activity too often, because it requires us much efforts and time. (SIK, Jan 17, 2006)

A slower pace of culture instruction and more repetition. Four subjects asserted that culture learning should be at a slower tempo and increase more opportunities of review on the cultural content and English learning for students.

- Don't be too fast. A slower pace of a culture session will help me comprehend the cultural information better. (SIF, Jan 16, 2006)

- It's easy to forget what you teach in the culture session; therefore, I deem it needed for the teacher to help us do some review at the end of each session. (SIL, Jan 18, 2006)

In this section, the subjects' suggestions and expectations for better and ideal culture learning were identified. According to the findings, the most appropriate and effective culture instruction for low achievers required the notice of the aspects mentioned above. The culture learning for English low achievers indeed requires the instructor more preparation and patience.

4.3.3 Summary of the follow-up interview

This section summarizes the results of the follow-up interview. First, in the follow-up interview, most of the interviewees considered culture learning improved their English learning attitude but their attitudes toward after-class review work were still negative. This result is accordant with the results in SELAM Questionnaire that the subjects' learning attitudes toward English were significantly affected by the

cultural learning project except their desire and attitude to learn English. Second, the majority of the subjects revealed their positive evaluation on the overall culture learning project, but their interest in the culture project differed depending on the content of the culture study unit. The result is also consistent with that of CLF Questionnaires. Third, the investigation of the interviewees' favorite topics is agreeable to the findings in CLF Questionnaires—the subjects favored cultural topics relevant to their life experiences and what they have learned before. Fourth, the difficulty which troubled the subjects most was English learning embedded in the culture learning owing to their English deficiency. This result was also found in CLF Questionnaire. Finally, the subjects' suggestions on the culture learning project are: (a) provision of cultural learning interested by students, (b) appropriate English learning corresponded to the students' English proficiency, (c) a variety of cultural learning activities tallied with the students' preference and language proficiency and (d) a slower pace of culture instruction and more repetition. These suggestions are similar to the subjects' responses in CLF Questionnaires. The results of the follow-up interview indeed echo the findings revealed in the results of questionnaires and further lead to a deeper and clearer understanding of the subjects' feedbacks on the overall culture learning project.