

# Lesson Design of New Word for Non-Native Learners Using Tool in the Virtual World

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## ABSTRACT

Chinese Fantasy Novel as a genre is known in the magic, mystery and paranormal phenomenon. New words taken from Chinese fantasy novel can be integrated in the lesson design for the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language. This paper discusses the process involved. This paper proposes a lesson design framework for integrating Chinese fantasy novel vocabulary into Chinese as a foreign language instruction through culturally embedded and technology-supported learning activities. The major objective of this paper is to assist in integrating new words in Chinese fantasy novel in the lesson design for the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language. Thus, this will give a hand in ensuring non-native learners might gain positive outcomes in the instruction process.

**Keywords:** Lesson Design, New Word, Chinese Fantasy Novel

## INTRODUCTION

Chinese Fantasy Novel as a genre is known in the magic, mystery and paranormal phenomenon. New words taken from Chinese fantasy novel can be integrated in the curriculum design for the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language. Curriculum design refers to the specific contents of a particular course (Liu, 2014). It is also a very complex process that links various components into the curriculum design (Zhang, 2011). The inclusion of vocabulary of a specific course in the teaching materials for the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language is driven by its curriculum (Xu & Yang, 2012). There are altogether 20 government higher institutions in Malaysia (He, 2014).

Vocabulary knowledge forms the foundation of communicative competence. Without sufficient lexical resources, learners struggle to comprehend texts, express ideas, and participate in meaningful interaction. Traditional vocabulary instruction has typically relied on memorization, teacher explanation, and textbook-based exercises. Although multimedia resources such as videos and slides have been introduced to enhance engagement, these approaches often remain teacher-centred and passive. Learners frequently consume visual materials rather than actively constructing meaning through visualization (Oxford, 2022; Warschauer & Xu, 2021).

The shift toward online and hybrid learning environments following the COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the need for interactive and learner-centred pedagogical strategies. Recent developments in virtual learning environments have enabled language instructors to extend vocabulary instruction beyond traditional classrooms. In this paper, virtual tools refer to web-based learning resources such as learning management systems, online dictionaries, discussion forums, digital storytelling activities, and online quizzes that support vocabulary learning beyond face-to-face classroom instruction. Learning management systems, online discussion platforms, digital storytelling tools, and web-based language activities provide opportunities for learners to encounter and practice vocabulary in meaningful contexts. These virtual tools support learner autonomy, increase exposure to authentic language materials, and facilitate interactive learning experiences that

can complement formal classroom instruction (Li & Hafner, 2022; Lin & Lin, 2023). Virtual learning environments provide flexibility and accessibility, yet they also present challenges related to learner motivation, cognitive engagement, and sustained attention. Consequently, educators are increasingly exploring innovative technologies that can foster active participation and enhance the learning experience (Lin & Lin, 2023).

All of these institutions offer Mandarin as a foreign language courses that put emphasis on the speaking aspect in the curriculum design. For this reason, the inclusion of the vocabulary in the designated curriculum would be more to oral-orientated. Another issue would be on the limited learning contact hours in the curriculum of these courses (Ye, 2012). With this limitation, how to put in new words of Chinese fantasy novel into the curriculum might be niggling. The major objective of this paper is to assist in integrating new words in Chinese fantasy novel in the curriculum design for the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language. Thus, this will give a hand in ensuring non-native learners might gain positive outcomes in the instruction process.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocabulary acquisition has long been recognized as a central component of second language (L2) proficiency (Oxford, 2022). Without adequate lexical knowledge, learners encounter difficulties in reading comprehension, listening comprehension, and oral communication (Warschauer & Xu, 2021). Research consistently demonstrates that vocabulary knowledge strongly predicts overall language achievement and academic success in foreign language contexts (Schmidt & Frota, 2022).

Traditional vocabulary teaching approaches have largely relied on memorization, repetition, and teacher-led explanation (Oxford, 2022). While these methods may support short-term recall, they often fail to promote long-term retention and deep semantic understanding (Kalyuga, 2021). Contemporary language pedagogy increasingly emphasizes learner-centred and meaning-focused instruction, encouraging learners to construct knowledge actively through contextualized practice and multi-modal engagement (Li & Hafner, 2022).

Recent studies highlight that vocabulary learning is most effective when learners engage in meaningful cognitive processing rather than passive memorization (Mayer, 2021). Depth of processing theory suggests that the more actively learners analyse and manipulate new words, the more likely they are to retain them (Paivio, 2021). Consequently, instructional approaches that integrate imagery, storytelling, and contextualization have gained increasing attention (Sun & Zhang, 2024). Technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) has become increasingly prominent in vocabulary instruction. Digital platforms can provide authentic language input, facilitate learner interaction, and encourage independent learning beyond classroom boundaries. Research suggests that virtual learning environments can improve learner engagement and vocabulary retention when instructional activities are carefully designed and aligned with learning objectives (Warschauer & Xu, 2021; Li & Hafner, 2022).

This research has shown that new words in Chinese fantasy novel can be useful to support the expanding of vocabulary among non-native learners of Chinese (Bok & Goh, 2015). This is because the non-native learners who do not have ample of Chinese culture knowledge are keen to gain knowledge pertaining to Chinese culture and Chinese fantasy novel is able to provide the knowledge which students are keen to learn.

Empirical study reported by Bok and Goh (2014a) has revealed that non-native learners of Chinese were positive in accepting new words of Chinese fantasy novel as a source to expand their vocabulary capacity. The challenge is on how to integrate new words of Chinese fantasy novel into the curriculum design?

Non-native learners are agreeable that by learning new words of Chinese fantasy novel, their vocabulary amounts are expanded (Bok & Goh, 2014b). However, in the curriculum design for vocabulary instruction, the selection of vocabulary is basically on vocabularies that are needed for daily communication and appropriate to enhance speaking skill (Goh and Burns, 2012: 180). The choices of vocabulary in the curriculum are also those that are able to express meaning intelligibly (Burns and Richards, 2012). The notion of communicative competence and the development of a communicative syllabus to replace earlier grammar-based syllabus models are to be given

enough of attention (Trim, 2012). Choice of vocabulary for beginning courses for the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language focuses on enhancing speaking skill (Jin, 2015). Hence, necessary steps have to be taken in ensuring that these new words of Chinese fantasy novel can be integrated in the curriculum when at the same time, it does not create cognitive burden in the vocabulary acquisition process but enhance communication purposes.

Moreover, the findings of Bok and Goh (2014c) have shown that students of higher level were having more positive perception in accepting new words of Chinese fantasy novel as a mean to expand their vocabulary. Thus, in the process of integrating of new words in Chinese fantasy novel into curriculum, it is advocated that these new words in Chinese fantasy novel have to be integrated systematically in accordance to the levels of students' Chinese learning.

Study of Bok and Goh (2014d) has also discovered that students are able to understanding cognitively the new words through the learning materials provided. The task in the curriculum design is to provide ample of exercises and activities for enhancement and practices in making sure the active use of the new words acquired.

In sum, some practice suggestions are provided in the next section in proposing how these new words in Chinese fantasy novel can be integrated into curriculum design. It is hoped that these are able to help in making sure that these new words are integrated acceptably into the curriculum.

## METHOD

### Curriculum Design Framework

The proposed lesson design framework consists of four stages: (1) selection of appropriate Chinese fantasy novel vocabulary, (2) contextualization through cultural and literary themes, (3) implementation through virtual learning activities, and (4) reinforcement through communicative practice and reflective learning tasks. The framework aims to ensure that additional vocabulary is introduced systematically and meaningfully while minimizing cognitive overload among non-native learners.

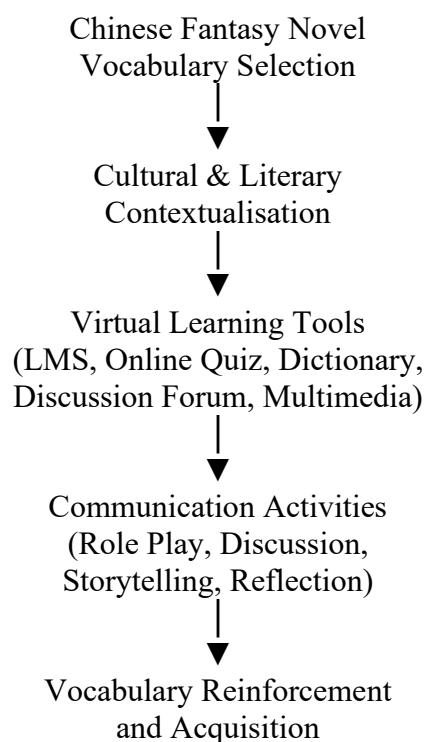


Figure 1. Framework for integrating Chinese fantasy novel vocabulary into virtual learning activities for non-native learners

## Curriculum Design – Integrating New Words of Chinese Fantasy Novel

The curriculum is an “academic plan,” which include the purpose of the curriculum, goals for student learning, content, sequence, and etc. The choice of suitable instructional materials as well as selection of activities for delivering are connected to the attainment of the purpose and objectives of the designed curriculum (Crandall, 2012:150). In integrating new words of Chinese fantasy novel, the thoughts are on how the integrating efforts can be made especially on the aspects of contents and learning activities.

Integrating new words pertaining to Chinese culture in the curriculum design is the method that can be utilized. Language is a component of a culture. In the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language, language and culture are both supplementary (Li & Sun, 2014). Interesting new words of Chinese fantasy novel such as weapons, building, attires, and etc. can be introduced along with culture teaching section of the curriculum. The optimum principle is on the attention-grabbing factor (Zhou, 2014; Fan, 2014).

Integrating new words in Chinese fantasy novel that related to Chinese literature is another approach that can be used in intergrating these new word in curriculum design. Language and literature are inseparable (Li, 2011). Hence, it is practical to introduce new words of Chinese fantasy novel from the aspect of Chinese literature.

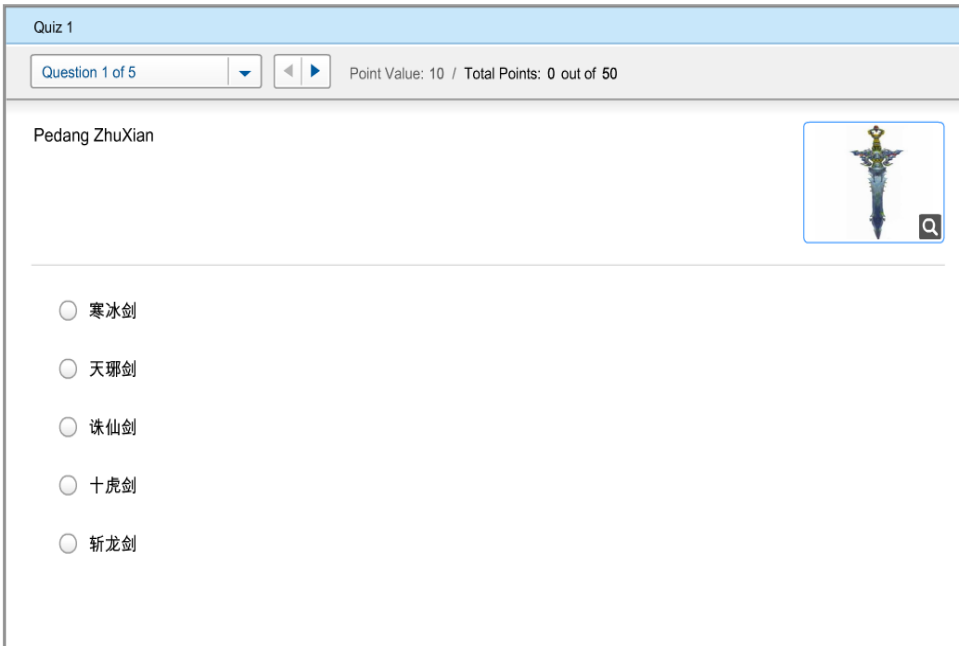
Owing to the fact that teaching Chinese as a foreign language (TCFL) is a discipline that assist non-native learners in mastering Chinese for communication purpose, hence the curriculum of courses related to the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language tend to attain the objectives towards using Chinese language for communication purposes. Foreign language courses generally aim to offer realistic descriptions of discourse derived from empirical investigations of communication and language use in the community or specialist field (Basturkmen, 2010: 36). It is the teacher’s or course designer’s responsibility to work out how the outcomes can be achieved and to develop teaching strategies and materials and content relevant to the context in which they are teaching (Leung, 2012:165). Creating contexts and situation for communication in activating the learning atmosphere for the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language is also very essential (Li, 2014). In this manner, we cannot just simply introduce any vocabulary randomly without referring to the course design. Henceforth, in order to introduce new words of Chinese fantasy novel into the curriculum in a practical since, integrating process is called for. Table below depicts some ideas on how to integrate new words of Chinese fantasy novel into curriculum design.

A more recent focus in syllabus design has been on the authenticity of the input that is provided as a basis for teaching and the role of corpora in determining linguistic input. Corpora provide a ready source of natural, or authentic texts for language learning (Reppen, 2010: 4). A concrete description of the kinds of tasks students will face in the real word is drawn up in the curriculum design. This description, then, serves as the basis for the design and sequencing of tasks in the syllabus (Van den Branden, 2012: 134). Additionally, creative activities and innovative pedagogy should be used and applied in the curriculum design of the courses for the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language as to extend classroom teaching, strengthen learning, as well as to ensure that students are getting update with contemporary Chinese learning (Wang, 2012). For this reason, the instructors may incorporate language activities such as drama (Wang, 2009), television watching (Li, 2013), movie watching (Li, 2011), and etc. that might allow students to use the new words of Chinese fantasy novel that they have learned in authentic environment created in the language activities as well as to carry out communication tasks in the deliberately set language activities.

The integration strategies proposed in Table 1 were developed based on curriculum alignment principles and communicative language teaching approaches. The emphasis is on ensuring that vocabulary learning remains relevant to learners’ communicative needs while simultaneously exposing them to broader cultural and literary dimensions of the Chinese language.

TABLE 1 Ideas on How to Integrate New Words of Chinese Fantasy Novel into Curriculum Design

| Ídea              | Process                                                                           | Example                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cultural aspect   | Integrating new words pertaining to Chinese culture                               | <p>Introducing Chinese traditional weapons</p>                                                                             |
| Literature aspect | Integrating new words in Chinese fantasy novel that related to Chinese literature | <p>Introducing new words that related to Chinese literature, e.g.:<br/>Dou Po Qiongcang</p>  <p>Novel by Tiancantudou</p> |

|                                                      |                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Language online activity after classroom instruction | Intergrating new words of Chinese fantasy novel in organizing online activity     | <p>Online quiz:</p>                                                                                                                |
| Using langugae activity after language class         | Intergrating new words of Chinese fantasy novel in activity after language class. | <p>e.g.drama, television series watching, movie watching, comics and so on.</p> <p>Daomu Biji</p> <p>Novel by Nanpai Sanshu</p>  |



## CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed some ideas in integrating new words of Chinese fantasy novel into curriculum design. Instructors have to use their creativity in the integrating process as to assist students in the learning process. In addition, the ideas in the integrating of new words in Chinese fantasy novel can be utilize as well for supplementary new words such as popular words in the web (Bok, Lee & Goh, 2011; Zhu, 2014; Xing & Jin, 2012), jokes (Zhu, 2012), rhyme (Feng, 2013), and etc. However, in the selection of new words for additional vocabulary instruction, instructors have to ensure that the selected new words do not actually bring confusion to the students. Standard new words have to be considered to avoid misunderstanding among the learners of Chinese as a foreign language.

Furthermore, hidden curriculum refers to the unwritten, unofficial, and often unintended lessons, values, and perspectives that students learn in a course (Mou, 2011). In sum, new words of Chinese fantasy novel can be integrated as hidden curriculum of the courses for the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language. The major thought is to assist students in vocabulary expansion and acquisition within the scope of the curriculum design of the courses for the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language. From a pedagogical perspective, the proposed lesson design demonstrates how culturally rich vocabulary resources can be incorporated into contemporary language learning environments. The framework also highlights the potential role of virtual learning tools in

supporting vocabulary exposure, learner engagement, and self-directed learning beyond formal classroom settings. The suggested ideas are also complementary for after class activity and for self-study in general.

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