Moving Forward with L3: Challenge and Opportunity

'Exploring Culture Through an L3'

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Context for my research

- Confucius Institute for Scotland's Schools established at the University of Strathclyde in 2012

- There are 43 Confucius Classrooms in 21 out of 32 local authorities

- Hanban teachers come from partnership universities in Tianjin for 1-2 years to support teaching of CLC in primary and secondary schools

- Jointly funded by Scottish Government and the Hanban organisation (now its successor 'Centre for Language Education and Cooperation'

Secondary Confucius Classroom Hubs

Primary Confucius Classroom Hubs
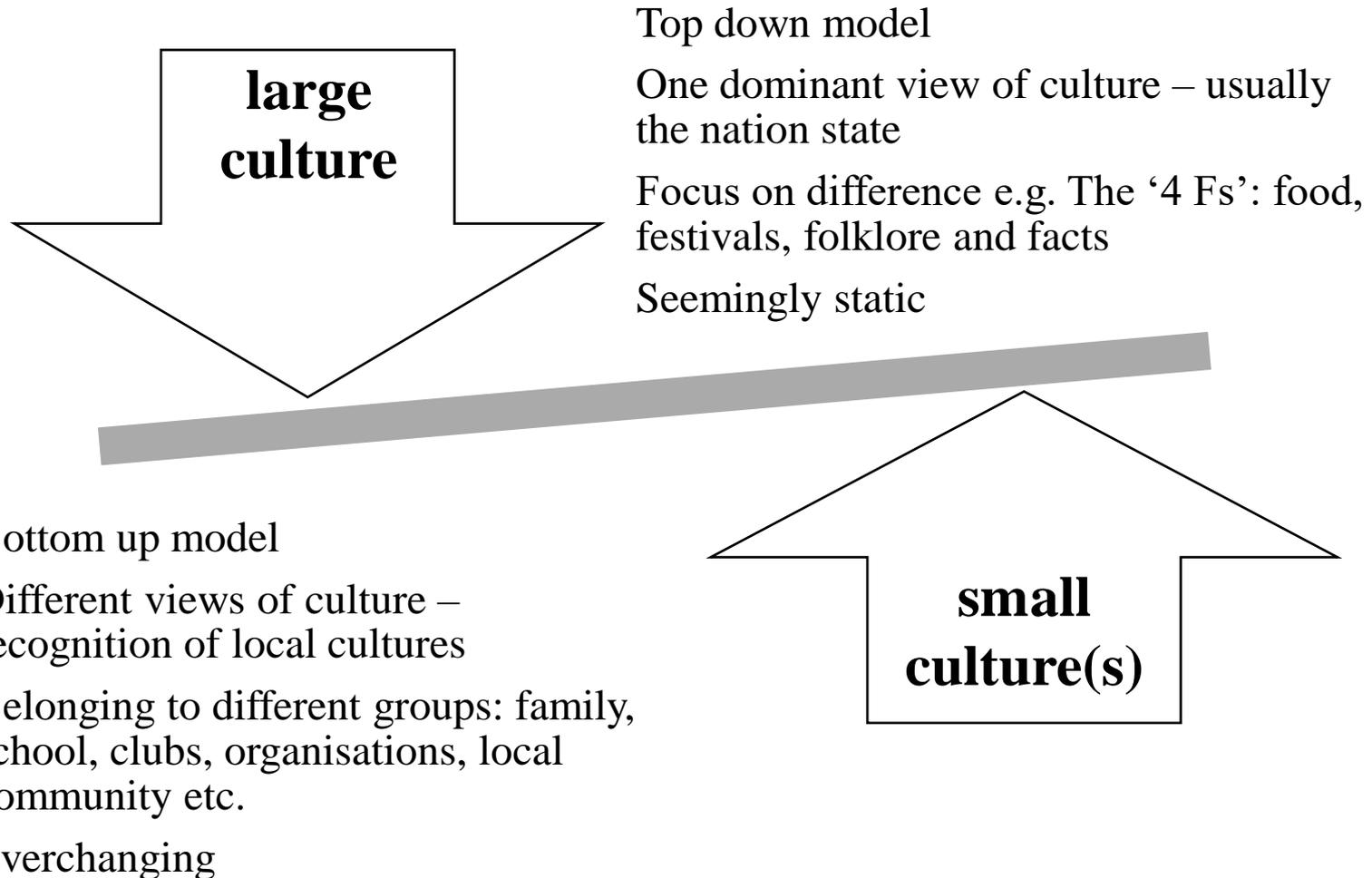
Specialist Confucius Classroom Hubs
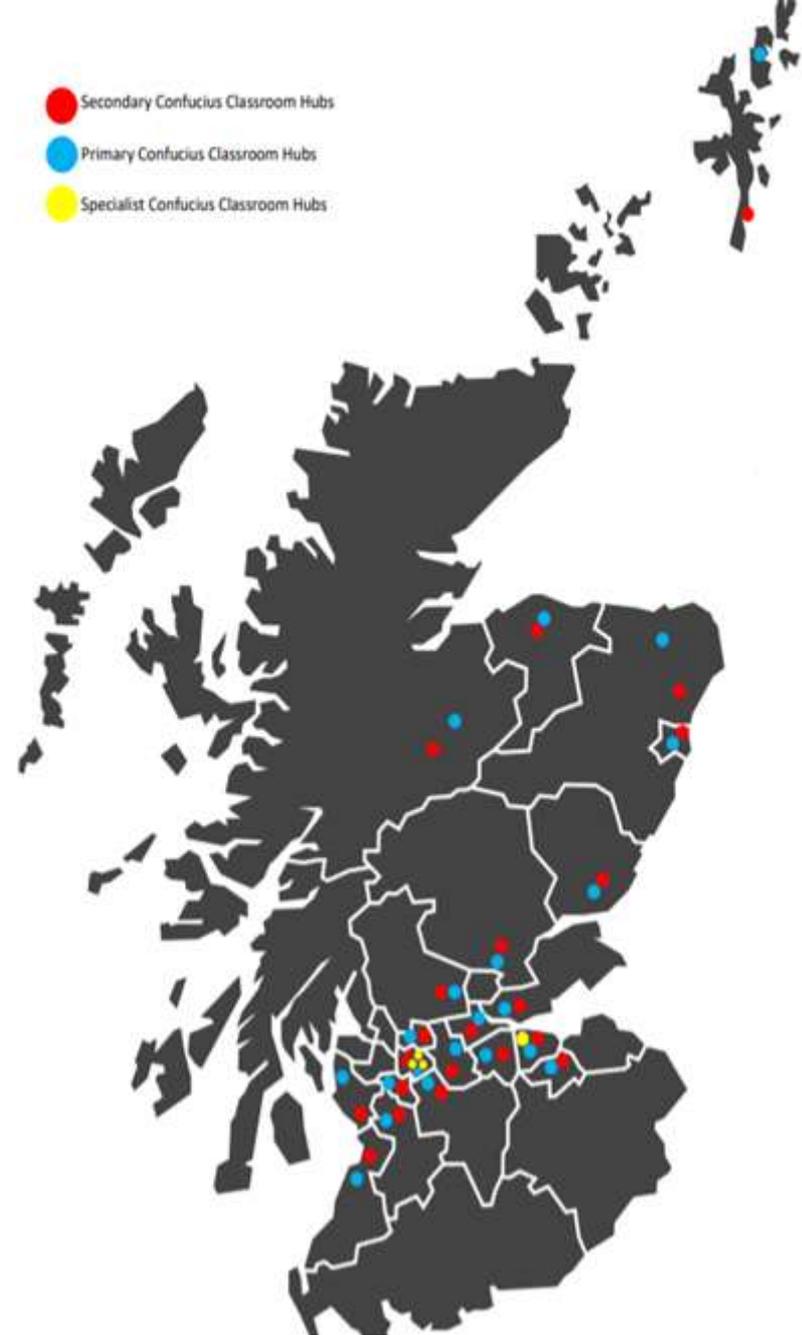
Policy Context: 1+2 languages programme

*Learning about the culture of a country frequently arouses enthusiasm for learning the language. This has been evident in the recent rise in the teaching of Chinese language and culture in Scotland. Young people who learn about the culture of China become interested in learning the language. While traditional language teaching often begins with the language and builds in study of the culture of the foreign country, this **inverse methodology** does appear to be motivating pupils initially to learn more.*

(Scottish Government, 2012, p. 16)

Large and small cultures (Adrian Holliday, Claire Kramsch)

large culture

Top down model

One dominant view of culture – usually the nation state

Focus on difference e.g. The '4 Fs': food, festivals, folklore and facts

Seemingly static

Bottom up model

Different views of culture – recognition of local cultures

Belonging to different groups: family, school, clubs, organisations, local community etc.

Everchanging

small culture(s)

Focus groups: P5-7 pupils' perceptions of China

1. What comes to mind when you think of the country China?

2. How might a Scottish person describe a typical Chinese person?

3. Why might you want to live in China?

4. Why might you not want to live in China?

5. Why might a Chinese person want to live in Scotland/ UK?

6. Why might a Chinese person not want to live in Scotland/ UK?

7. In what ways might you want to be more like a Chinese person?

8. In what ways might you want to be less like a Chinese person?

9. How might a Chinese person describe a typical Scottish person?

10. What comes to mind when you think of your country Scotland?

What comes to mind when you think of the country China? (228 responses)
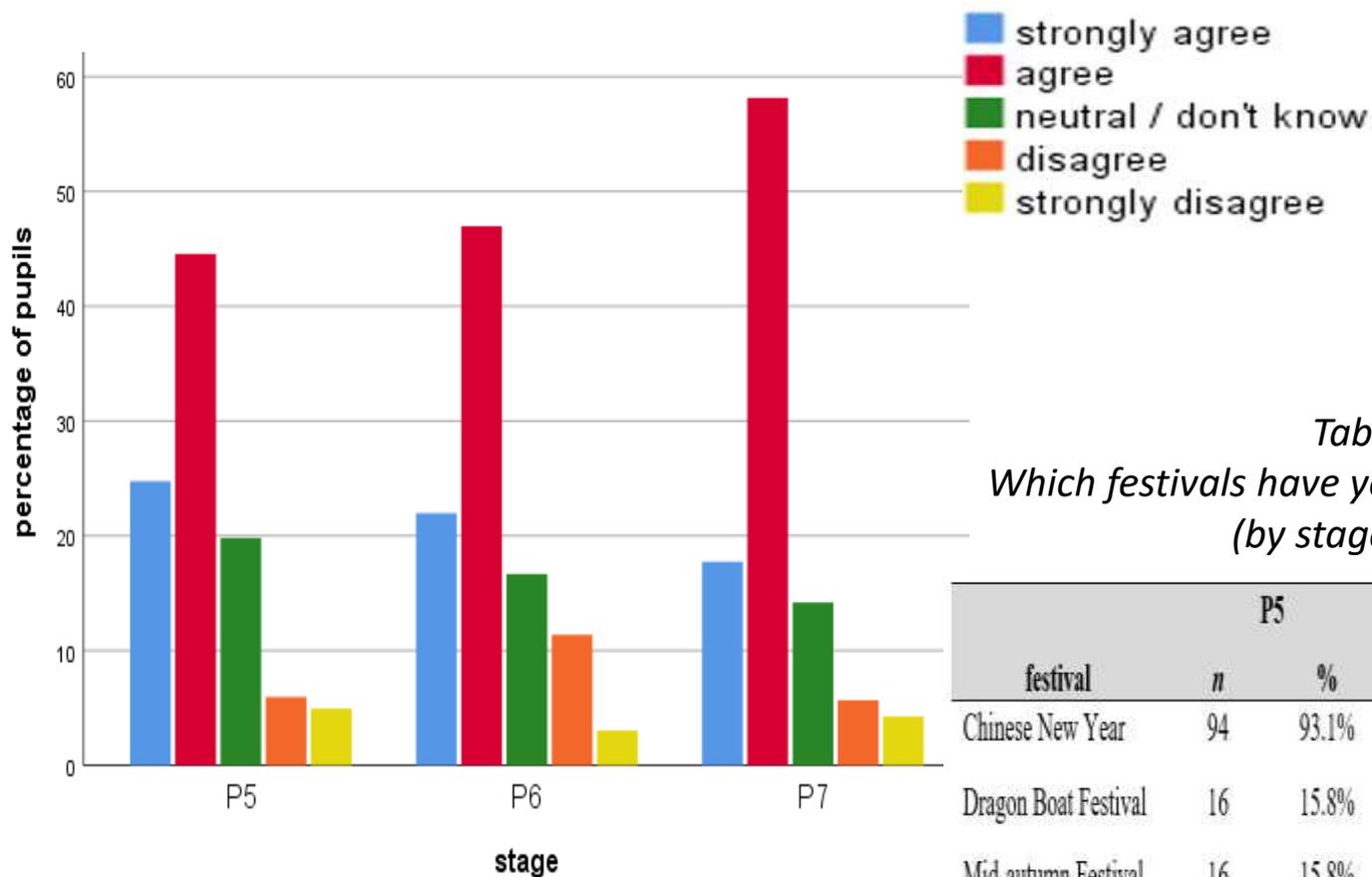
Large culture: festivals

strongly agree
agree
neutral / don't know
disagree
strongly disagree

Figure 29.
In my lessons, I have learned about
different *Chinese festivals*
(by stage, N = 374)

Table 23.
Which festivals have you been learning about?
(by stage, N= 374)

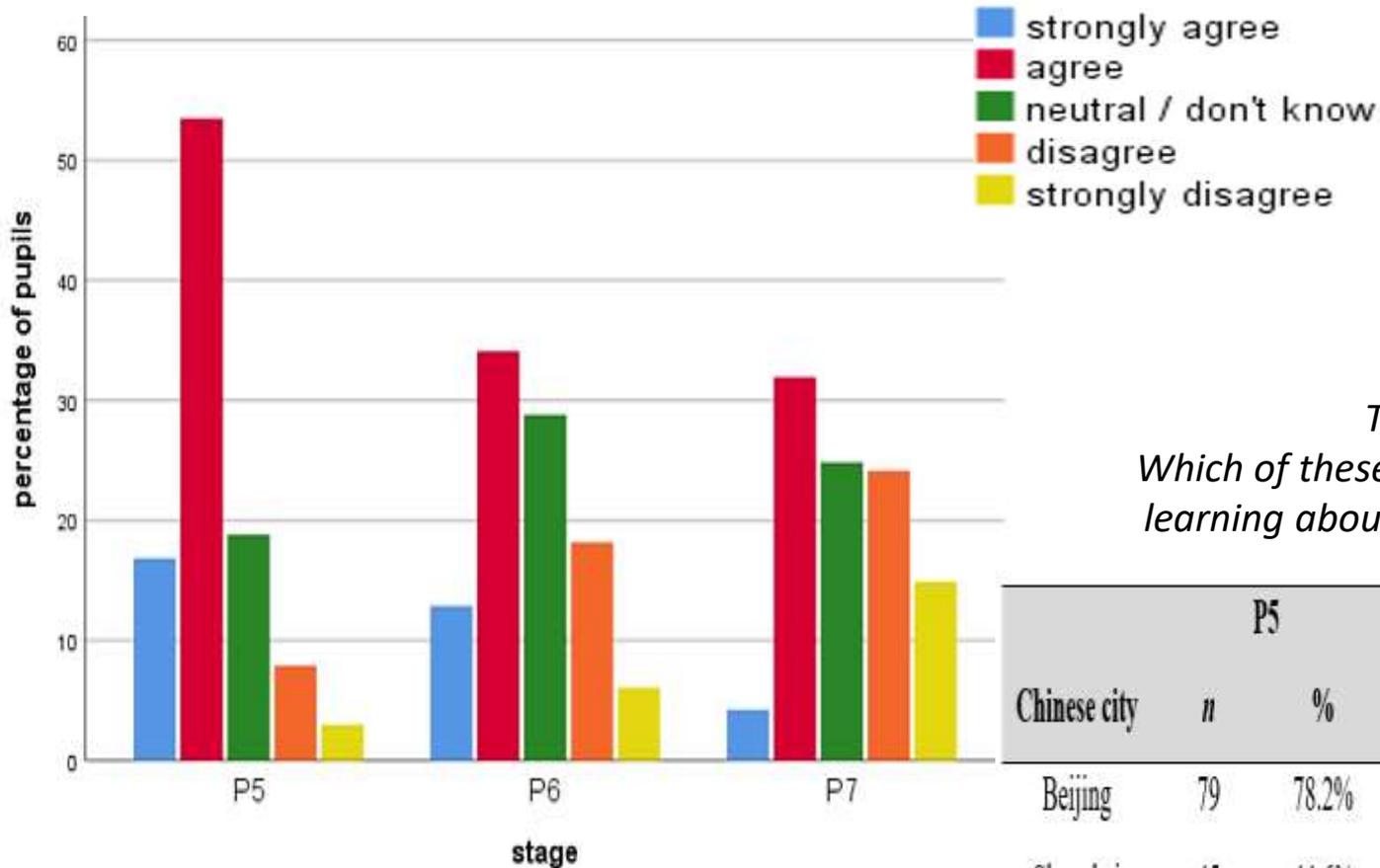| festival	P5		P6		P7	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Chinese New Year	94	93.1%	120	90.9%	133	94.3%
Dragon Boat Festival	16	15.8%	24	18.2%	41	29.1%
Mid-autumn Festival	16	15.8%	12	9.1%	10	7.1%
Harbin Ice Festival	0	0.0%	3	2.3%	0	0.0%
cannot remember	2	2.0%	3	2.3%	5	3.5%
none	0	0.0%	2	1.5%	2	1.4%
other	1	1.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.7%

Large culture: the geography of China

Figure 27.
*In my lessons, I have learned about
the map of China
(by stage, N = 374)*

Table 21.
*Which of these cities have you been
learning about? (by stage, N= 374)*

Chinese city	P5		P6		P7	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Beijing	79	78.2%	71	53.8%	72	51.1%
Shanghai	45	44.6%	28	21.2%	37	26.2%
Hong Kong	30	29.7%	32	24.2%	37	26.2%
no cities	16	15.8%	47	35.6%	53	37.6%
other	0	0.0%	12	9.1%	7	5.0%

Large culture: learning facts about China

- Chinese dragons are a symbol of China, especially at New Year. (P5 npe)

- We learned some facts about the Great Wall of China. It is the longest structure ever built by humans. (P5)

- The Chinese flag is red and yellow with 4 stars, but I don't know why the stars are important. (P6)

- We all went to Edinburgh Zoo to see the pandas. I think they are called Sunshine and Sweetie. (P7)

Balancing big culture vs. small cultures

Table 25. Ranking of features of Chinese life covered during lessons (by stage, N= 373)

aspect of life	ranking	P5		P6		P7	
		n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Chinese traditions	1 = most often	48	47.5%	73	55.3%	83	59.3%
	2 = 2nd choice	35	34.7%	32	24.2%	35	25.0%
Chinese history	1 =	34	33.7%	24	18.2%	34	24.3%
	2 =	35	34.7%	58	43.9%	70	50.0%
Children's hobbies/ pastimes	1 =	2	2.0%	13	9.8%	5	3.6%
	2 =	18	17.8%	21	15.9%	17	12.1%
Life at school	1 =	10	9.9%	13	9.8%	7	5.0%
	2 =	9	8.9%	10	7.6%	11	7.9%
Life at home	1 =	8	7.9%	6	4.5%	12	8.6%
	2 =	4	4.0%	10	7.6%	6	4.3%

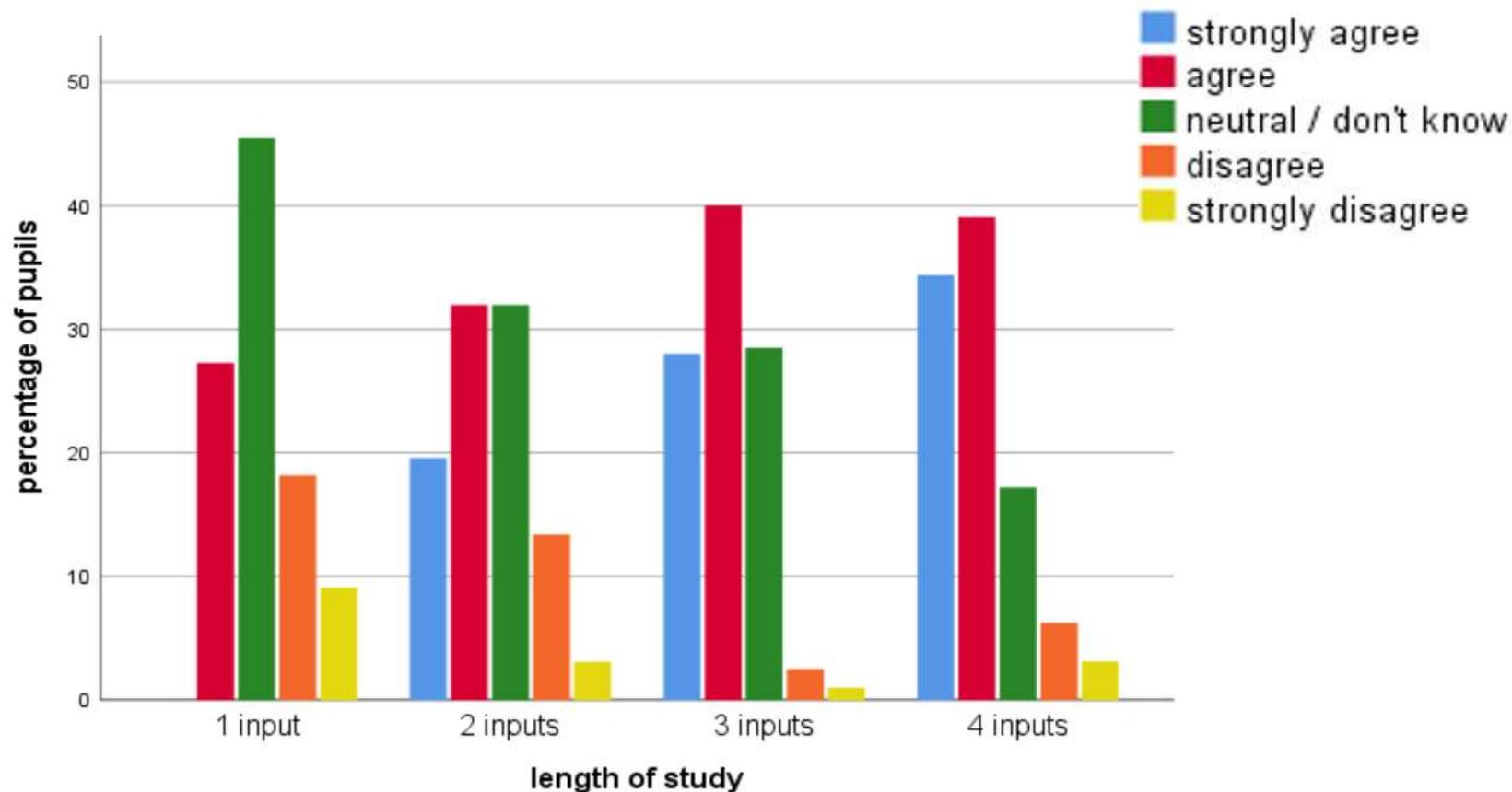# Impact on pupils' thinking about cultural difference

Figure 45. I think people in China are very different to people
in Scotland (by length of study, N = 374)

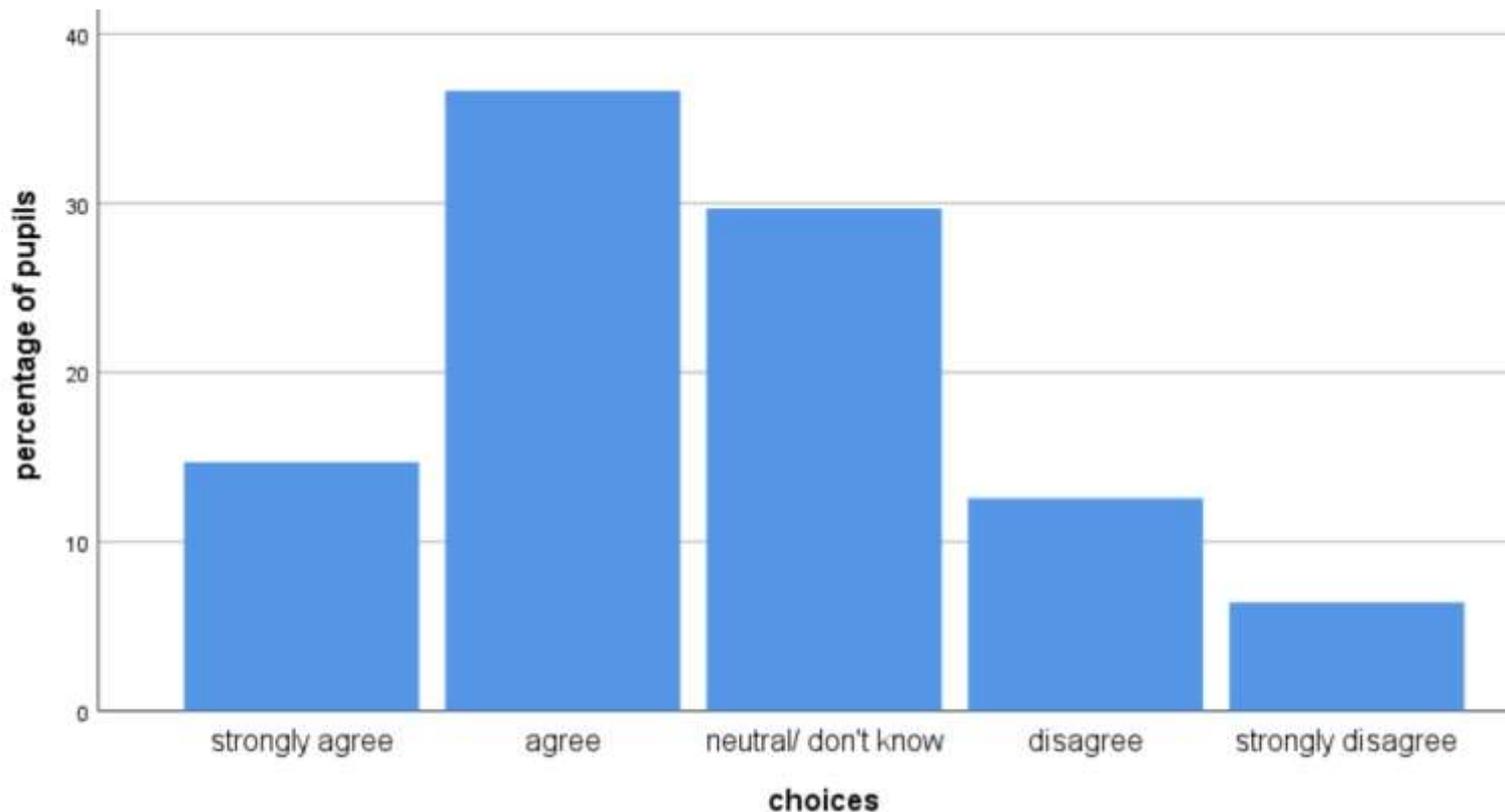# Impact on pupils' thinking about cultural difference

Figure 46. Learning CLC has made me interested
in people from other parts of the world
(by total, N = 374)

Selected study findings

- Very clear association in pupils' minds between culture, traditions and the past.

- Teaching models heavily emphasised 'large culture' narratives.

- Clear variation in pupils' understanding of why they were learning about other cultures with a sizeable number expressing a 'don't know' response.

- Pupils tended to connect culture to touristic uses, despite the likelihood of never visiting countries such as China.

- There was often little connection in their minds to the current and future use of their learning here in Scotland.

Signs of good practice in promoting CLC in Scottish schools

We worked with Historic Environment Scotland (HES) at Stirling Castle. This project saw P5 pupils collaborating in groups on a number of different tasks. The end result was a virtual tour of Stirling Castle in Chinese, signage in Chinese, simple language training for castle tour guides and maps of the castle in Chinese. Pupils' literacy skills benefited from the project and their understanding about the purpose of CLC was enhanced.
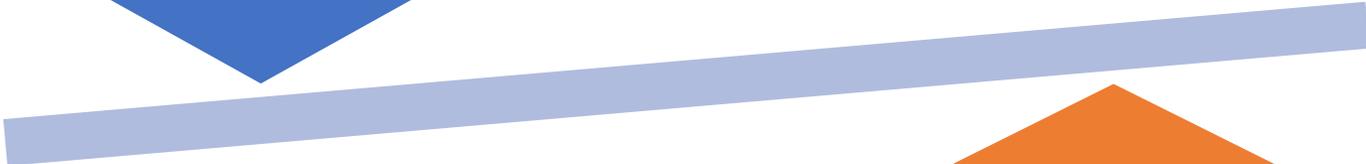

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The need for a more balanced approach

large culture

"Views from pupils can be quite stereotypical: Chinese people are all good cooks, not very friendly, over-disciplined and that seems a general view in some places. It can annoy me at times."

(Hanban teacher)

small culture(s)

"In reality the children are very similar to them – they go to schools, go to clubs, play on the Internet and like social media. In schools, we tend to focus more on the differences, perhaps unhelpfully."

(Scottish teacher)

Some questions for reflection

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of promoting 'big culture' to pupils in schools?

2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of promoting 'small culture(s)' to pupils in schools?

3. What are the challenges for teachers in getting the balance right when introducing other cultures in the classroom?

4. What support have you found/ might find helpful in this respect?