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Article

A Corpus-Based Discourse Analysis of Liberal Studies Textbooks in Hong Kong: Legitimatizing Populism

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Abstract
Researchers have discussed Hong Kong's localist identities, nativist sentiments, and populism, but have not widely examined the extent to which populism could be perceived in education in Hong Kong. As the chief participants of the Occupying Central and the radical Anti-Extradition Bill movements in Hong Kong were students, this suggests the need to explore the relationship between populism and education, particularly the then-controversial liberal studies textbooks. According to contemporary news reports, liberal studies textbooks contained much content stigmatising the Chinese mainland. Previous studies of liberal studies textbooks applied qualitative discourse analysis methods. In this study, mixed-method analysis was applied to a specialised corpus comprising seven commercial liberal studies textbooks containing 248,339 Chinese characters in total to explore the extent to which liberal studies textbooks contain information concerning the key features of populism—the heightened division between the inner and outer groups. A division was found between positive images of Hong Kong and negative images of China in the narratives of commercial liberal studies textbooks. Accordingly, the textbooks can be understood to contain populism. The present study advocates that relevant educational watchdogs in Hong Kong provide more guidance on the writing and publishing of liberal studies textbooks in the future, keeping the enquiry-based spirit of the liberal studies course fulfilled, and urges stakeholders of Hong Kong education to consider teaching peace education and developing a more inclusive environment.

1. Introduction

Since 2014, when the Occupying Central movement broke out in Hong Kong, researchers have discussed Hong Kong localist identities and activities, nativist sentiments, and populism. Synonyms for these phrases increased until the radical Anti-Extradition Bill movement in 2019 (e.g., Chow et al., 2020; Chun, 2020; Li & Xiao, 2020; Lowe & Tsang, 2017; Ma, 2018; Ng & Kennedy, 2019; Sautman & Yan, 2015; Veg, 2017; Vukovich, 2020;

Zamecki, 2018). However, scholars have not widely examined the extent to which the influence of populism could be perceived in education in Hong Kong. It is noteworthy that the chief participants in the Occupying Central and the radical Anti-Extradition Bill movements were university and pre-tertiary school students (see Li & Wu, 2022) and student unions. For example, the student union at the University of Hong Kong was among the radical populist groups (Ng & Kennedy, 2019), indicating the need to explore the possible seepage of populist culture in

some educational fields of Hong Kong. The present study adopts a critical perspective on education, employing Bourdieu's (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000) theory of education as a field of cultural arbitrariness, with textbooks perceived as a medium of cultural arbitrariness, rather than couriers of objective truth.

Accordingly, the present study examines textbooks for the mandatory liberal studies (LS) course in Hong Kong secondary schools for students wishing to enter university. Launched in 2009 by the Education Bureau (EDB), the LS course was a symbol of Hong Kong's educational system reform, transitioning from the British mode of 3–2–2–3 (three-year junior secondary school, two-year senior secondary school, two-year pre-university, and three-year university study) to the Chinese mode of 3–3–4 (three-year junior secondary school, three-year senior secondary school, and four-year university study; Li et al., in press). The LS course had six themes: "personal development and interpersonal relationships, Hong Kong today, modern China, globalization, public health, and energy technology and the environment" (Li & Wu, 2022, p. 130). The original purpose of the LS course was to nurture lifelong learners with critical thinking abilities and inclusive spirit by having students apply enquiry-based learning to social topics (Chiu et al., 2018). Since 2012, the LS course has been suspected of politicising students who participate in radical protests, despite the fact that Chiu et al. (2018) surveyed 2,896 students from 25 secondary schools in Hong Kong found that most students did not develop radical thinking and seldom participated in political activities.

However, the LS course became the focus of significant controversy in 2019. According to contemporary news reports ("Xiuli fengbo yizhounian," 2020), the textbooks contained much content stigmatising the Chinese mainland, potentially misleading students; some critics like Tu (2020) also reported that LS teachers in St Stephen's College had students comment in an exam on the advantages of participating in radical protests rather than evaluating the protesters' behaviour holistically. Noting that the LS course, designed to nurture students' critical thinking, in fact inculcated biases, Wu (2021) suggested that the EDB had delegated LS textbook composition to several commercial publishers and maintained no censorship over the textbooks before 2019. Li and Wu (2022) added that the EDB did not specify official LS textbooks (LST), allowing teachers to choose any textbook from commercial publishers. Such measures and attitudes of the EDB thus allowed bias to enter (Li & Wu, 2022). Although the EDB requested that commercial publishers voluntarily submit their LST for review, only eight publishers submitted their LST to the EDB in 2020 (Li & Wu, 2022).

To pinpoint possible biases in commercial LST, Li et al. (in press), Li and Wu (2022), and Wu and Li (2022) analysed several LST, identifying contrasts between "politically correct" Hong Kongers and "morally stained" Chinese mainlanders, the "developed and Westernised" Hong Kong and the "chaotic and back-watered" Chinese mainland, and "commendable" radical protests and "ineffective" peaceful demonstrations. These authors found that the textbooks highlighted the dangers of Hong Kong's assimilation to the Chinese mainland, inculcating in readers a rejection of almost everything about China. These findings echo those of Silberberg and Agbaria (2021) regarding the heightened division between the insider group (Hong Kongers) and the outsider group (those of the Chinese mainland) from a populist viewpoint, as well as Moffit and Tormey's (2014) descriptors of the key elements of populist style: the notion of crisis (depicting China's assimilation of Hong Kong in the LST) and disseminating "bad manners" in political discourse (commending radical protests in the LST). These LST may thus be suspected of contributing to populist views.

However, earlier research on LST (e.g., Li et al., in press; Li & Wu, 2022; Wu, 2021; Wu & Li, 2022), although informative, applied qualitative discourse analysis, unavoidably "cherry-picking" texts that conveyed particular meanings (Mautner, 2007), rather than providing a verbatim overview of the texts. In this study, mixed-method analysis was applied to a specialised corpus, comprising seven commercial LST containing 248,339 Chinese characters to explore:

RQ1: How were the semantic preferences and prosody of China and its synonyms manifested in the LST corpus?

RQ2: How were the semantic preference and prosody of Hong Kong manifested in the LST corpus?

The answers to these research questions should facilitate a more detailed comparison of the depictions of the inner and outer groups.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Populism and Education

"Populism" derives from the Latin *populus*, "the people," although today populism is often referred to as a political doctrine (Heywood, 2013) centred around tensions between groups claiming to represent the will of the "pure people" against the "corrupt elite" or the regime (Laclau, 2005; Mudde, 2004). Bergmann (2020, p. 36) stated that populism appeals to people across social strata to move against the dominant elite, who are "siding with international actors against the nation and the people." However, Mudde (2004) highlighted the "thin-centred ideology" of populism, contending that populism parasitises other host ideologies, e.g., nationalism, socialism, liberalism, religion, racism, and even neoliberalism. Therefore, populism today is not only about the masses resisting the elite, but also describes the building of boundaries in the name of the masses to exclude the people (i.e., majority-insiders) from the

threatening others (i.e., minority-outsiders). Relevant examples include Israel, where religious populism led the majority insider-Jewish citizens to exclude Arab citizens (Silberberg & Agbaria, 2021); Zimbabwe, where neoliberal populism excluded anyone, including Zimbabwe nationals, with Western backgrounds in favour of insider-majority Black Africans with no Western education (Hwami, 2013); and the US, where Trump-led racist populism excluded Asian international students and immigrants from membership with insider-white majority US citizens (Kirby, 2021).

The relationship between populism and education is somewhat debated. Norris and Inglehart (2019) and Spruyt (2014) opined that people with higher education are less likely to hold populist opinions, and Saurette and Gunster's (2011, p. 199) explanation of the source of academic knowledge may indicate why highly educated people are unlikely to be populists, as academics belong to the elite. However, recent studies, including those by Hwami (2013) and Silberberg and Agbaria (2021), have demonstrated that populism has infiltrated higher and pre-tertiary education systems. Meanwhile, Hong Kong university students' participation in radical populist groups (Ng & Kennedy, 2019) and the divisive contrasts between Hong Kongers and Chinese mainlanders in LST (Li & Wu, 2022; Wu & Li, 2022) suggest that populism might have infiltrated some aspects of Hong Kong's educational system.

2.2. A Critical Perspective on Education: System and Textbook

Employing a critical perspective, Bourdieu and Passeron (2000) demonstrated how education, or what they termed "pedagogic action," could be understood as a system of symbols imposed by the dominant class or through cultural arbitrariness, whereby the culture of the dominant class not only becomes the legitimate form of knowledge accepted in society but devalues and marginalises the symbols and culture of the lower classes (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000). Therefore, students whose family backgrounds and cultural symbols are closer to those of the dominant class experience smoother schooling than their peers from a lower social class (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000). It is easier for students from higher than from lower social classes to achieve higher education; those from lower social classes must either abandon their innate cultural symbols for academic achievement or are eliminated from school through academic failure that locates them in their home culture (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000). In this way, education systems participate in maintaining or reproducing existing social and power structures:

> [Pedagogic actions] tend to reproduce the system of cultural arbitrariness characteristic of that social formation, thereby contributing to the reproduction of the power relations which put that cultural arbitrary

into the dominant position. (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000, p. 10)

Bourdieu and Passeron (2000) characterise such education as a form of symbolic violence against people from the lower classes, indicating that a precondition for symbolically violent education to prevail is that people remain unaware of its nature through camouflage by pedagogic authorities. They identify two layers of pedagogic authority delegates: institutional (e.g., education ministries, bureaus, schools, and degrees) and vicarious—the teachers and the regulatory apparatus (syllabuses and textbooks). An example of an encounter with pedagogical authorities is that of a student who works hard on a subject from his/her admiration for a teacher, without considering the hidden cultural arbitrariness that the teacher may be delivering. Bourdieu and Passeron (2000) defined pedagogic authority as a default position that legitimises everything students learn in school.

Therefore, from a Bourdieusian perspective, education delivers cultural arbitrariness, as do textbooks. As Apple and Christian-Smith (1991) asserted, textbooks are a site of the reconciliation of social, cultural, and political power, and reflect their writers' preferences and interests. However, for ordinary students, textbooks are frequently perceived as absolute authoritarian and legitimate sources of knowledge (Gulliver, 2010).

3. Research Methodology

Corpus-based critical discourse analysis (CDA) is used here to examine the portrayal of China and its synonyms (e.g., the Chinese mainland, continent) and Hong Kong across the seven LST targeted in this study. Fairclough (2015) believed that the relationship between language and society is both internal and dialectical. The goal of CDA is to go beyond the text, considering sociocultural contexts (Bednarek & Caple, 2012). Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional conception of discourse (i.e., text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice) is adopted herein. However, as CDA has been criticised for its arbitrary selection of small-scale research texts (Fowler, 1996; Stubbs, 1997; Widdowson, 2000), cherry-picking (Baker & Levon, 2015; Mautner, 2007), or decontextualization of meaning, the corpus linguistics method is included in view of its empirical and quantitative potential (Cheng, 2013) to handle large-scale textual data. The present study should thus be understood, following Tognini-Bonelli (2001, p. 65), as corpus-based rather than corpus-driven, where the former involves "mak[ing] use of the corpus itself to expound, test, and exemplify theories and descriptions that were generated before a large corpus become available to inform language study." In contrast, the corpus-driven approach functions inductively, using the data and patterns observed in the corpus itself to identify regularities and exceptions (Baker, 2006). Baker and McEnery (2005, p. 223) point out that the

corpus-based approach has the advantage of affording discourse analysts a more complete and detailed understanding of the meanings and functions of certain word choices in texts. Corpus-based CDA is particularly effective for examining ideological issues in textbooks; a good example is the work of Hong and He (2015). Here, a corpus-based study seems appropriate for gaining a relatively detailed understanding of the meanings of the terms "China" and its synonyms and "Hong Kong" in the chosen commercial LST. Indeed, commercial LST were once reported to contain their writers' subjective preferences (Wu, 2021), thus not entirely embodying the intended enquiry-based learning spirit of the LS course.

In practice, a specialised corpus, named LST, was compiled from seven commercial LST, totalling 248,339 words. Convenience sampling was used in selecting the textbooks, although this inevitably risks introducing subjectivity. However, the authors were based elsewhere than Hong Kong, and as by the time the research was conducted, border travel was restricted due to Covid-19, they only had access to the LST in their local libraries. When selecting which LST to include in the corpus, the first criterion was that it considers the theme of "Hong Kong today" or "modern China," because these two themes of LST have been found to be controversial (see Li & Wu, 2022; Wu, 2021). The second criterion was that different versions of a textbook from the same publisher (like the third and fourth *New Horizon Liberal Studies: Today's Hong Kong*, published in 2016 and 2020, respectively, by the Hong Kong Educational Publishing Company) should contain obvious revisions. Supplementary File 1 provides details of the LST corpus and information on the textbooks included.

The Corpus tool AntConc Version 3.59 (Anthony, 2020) was used to process the data and generate concordance lines containing the keywords. Each concordance line was analysed manually to identify the semantic preference and prosody of the keywords. Semantic preference refers to "the restriction of regular co-occurrences to items which share a semantic feature" (Sinclair, 2004, p. 142) and semantic prosody is the determiner of the meaning as a whole, expressing attitudinal and pragmatic meaning (Sinclair, 2004). Both semantic preference and prosody belong to Sinclair's (2004) descriptive model of the co-selection of lexical items. The present study examined lexical items because individual words do not create meaning; instead, "meaning resides in extended units" (Cheng, 2012, p. 154). The coding scheme of descriptions of Hong Kong and China's synonyms in the corpus is based on Chen (2014) and Ross and Caldwell's (2020) articulation of Martin and White's (2005) language appraisal system for interpersonal meaning at the level of discursive semantics. Of Martin and White's (2005) key elements of attitude, engagement, and graduation of the appraisal system, Chen (2014) particularly emphasised attitude in labelling texts' negative and positive meanings, and subdivided attitude into three semantic regions: affect, judgement, and appreciation. Affect is the polarity of emotional response of an expression, which Ross and Caldwell (2020, p. 16) exemplified thus: "Trump is calm/angry." Judgement presents a moral evaluation of behaviours, which Ross and Caldwell (2020, p.16) exemplified with "Trump is cool/weak." Appreciation is defined as the aesthetic quality of semiotic texts and natural phenomena, exemplified thus: "His speech was brilliant/horrible." Table 1 presents examples of the coded texts for affect, judgement, and appreciation in the present study, and lists the coding author's general judgement of the texts as positive or negative.

Table 1. Examples of text coding (highlighted words are indicators of positive or negative expressions).

Semantic regions of attitude	Sentence examples from the LST	Coding author's judgement
Affect	After the "*black-hearted* vaccines" outbreak in China in 2016, parents could not pursue the case and were eventually forced to protest on the streets, while some were jailed (Ming Pao Educational Publications Editorial and Advisory Board, 2020, p. 181)	Negative description
Judgement	In 2016, China's Gini coefficient reached 0.465, suggesting *a severe gap* between the rich and poor (Zang et al., 2019, p. 49)	Negative description
	To a certain extent, *the spirit of the rule of law* protects the civil rights of Hong Kong residents and motivates them to fulfil their civic obligations (Chan et al., 2013, p. 132)	Positive description
Appreciation	China has a *serious* acid rain problem (Wu et al., 2013, p. 89)	Negative description
	Hong Kong's culture has been influenced by Chinese and Western cultures such that it has developed into a *unique* local culture (Hung et al., 2020, p. 47)	Positive description
	The court system in Hong Kong is *clear*, its commercial rules are *thorough*, and there are laws governing how to invest (Ng et al., 2016, p. 112)	Positive description

4. Results

4.1. China and Its Synonyms

4.1.1. About China

Four primary semantic preferences and prosodies were identified across 289 instances in the concordance lines relating to China. The first was "China's environmental issues" (189 out of 289 instances, 65.39%), as China was co-selected with phrases related to several types of environmental pollution, such as "environmental pollution," "sea water pollution," "groundwater pollution," "air pollution," "water pollution," and "the largest polluter," showing that China's environmental issues are frequently discussed in the LST corpus. Regarding "China's environmental issues," "China" is found to co-occur with phrases and clauses with negative connotations (96 out of 189 instances, 50.79%), such as "China's looming environmental crisis," "the country with the most serious soil erosion," "disaster," "still deteriorating," "seriously damaged," "deterioration of ecological environment," "worsening pollution problem," "severe pollution of underground water," "deteriorating air pollution," "acid rain," and "a serious threat to the health of civilians." All the co-occurring phrases and clauses used with China in the LST corpus highlight China's severe environmental pollution; thus, the semantic prosody is unfavourable, confirming that China's environmental situation is depicted negatively in the LST. Some examples are shown in Table 2. In contrast, only three concordances were found to mention China's environmental issues positively, representing 1.58% (three out of 189).

The second semantic preference regarding China in the LST corpus concerns "social issues in China," and represents 9.69% (28 of 289 instances), as evidenced by co-occurrence with phrases concerning social events in China. Corresponding semantic prosody

concerning "social issues in China" was "negative" (17 out 28, 61.71%), as evidenced by its co-occurrence with phrases with negative meanings, such as "black heart/contaminated food," "black-heart vaccines," "unscrupulous merchants," "unsafe drinking water," "imbalance in gender ratio," and "negative social events," whose semantic prosody highlights negative aspects of China. Examples are given in Table 3.

The third semantic preference noted in reference to China relates to "China's economic development," amounting for 14.19% (41 out of 289) of instances with the surrounding phrases "China's economic development," with the semantic prosody of "problematic and full of challenges," accounting for 63.41% (26 out of 41 instances), e.g., "the side effect of population stagnation," "low birth rate," "facing challenges," "the emergence of a series of social problems," "disparity between the urban and rural areas," "regional disparity," "gap between the rich and the poor," "social polarization," "a series of environmental problems," "meeting a bottleneck," "having traditional culture shock," "corruption," "pose a serious problem," and "a massive waste of resources." The prosody of this language use shows China's "reform and opening up" led to many problems and challenges for China. Examples are presented in Table 4. By comparison, only five out of 41 concordance lines (12.20%) portray China favourably.

The final semantic preference relating to China is the "Chinese legal system," which represents 14.19% (31 out of 289) of the cases, as evidenced by co-selection with the words "legal system" and "judicial system." The corresponding prosody contends that the system is "flawed and needs to be improved," as evidenced by co-occurrences with phrases such as "full of challenges," "denial of justice," "many problems and shortcomings in the Chinese judicial system," "needs to be improved," "the rule of law has not yet become widespread," "China's judicial system is not complete," and "flawed

Table 2. Examples of negative descriptions of China's environment in the LST corpus.

1   *China's groundwater pollution* is also severe (Ming Pao Educational Publications Editorial and Advisory Board, 2020, p. 146)

2   In recent years, *air pollution in China* has been a significant issue, with sandstorms ravaging the nation, with the first resulting from preventing and controlling sandstorms. However, a new issue has emerged (Ming Pao Educational Publications Editorial and Advisory Board, 2020, p. 147)

3   China's economic recovery, which relies heavily on the steel, cement, and energy industries, has caused *air pollution* (Wu et al., 2013, p. 89)

4   *Water pollution* has also led to the emergence of "cancer villages" in China, with many residents around water sources drinking untreated sewage discharged into the rivers by enterprises upstream, resulting in large-scale cancer in villages (Zang et al., 2019, p. 141)

5   *Water pollution* has grave consequences for human life. Approximately 30% of China's freshwater is no longer drinkable and cannot even be utilised to irrigate farms; there is also a risk of agricultural product contamination (Zang et al., 2019, p. 141)

6   China has a serious *acid rain* problem (Wu et al., 2013, p. 89)

Note: Authors' English translations.

Table 3. Examples of negative descriptions of China's social issues in the LST corpus.

1	After the "*black-hearted vaccines*" outbreak in China in 2016, parents could not pursue the case and were eventually forced to protest on the streets, while some were jailed (Ming Pao Educational Publications Editorial and Advisory Board, 2020, p. 181)
2	In China, counterfeiters and low-quality goods are common, and *unscrupulous merchants* show no regard for people's health as it is not to their benefit (Zang et al., 2019, p. 67)
3	Three hundred and twenty million *Chinese citizens drink unsafe drinking water* (Wu et al., 2013, p. 88)
4	China's long-term economic development and overall national strength may be adversely affected by the decline in population. In contrast, other demographic issues such as an insufficient birth rate, a rising elderly population, and *an imbalance in gender ratio* will seriously undermine China's sustainable development (Ming Pao Educational Publications Editorial and Advisory Board, 2020, p. 91)

Note: Authors' English translations.

legal system." A further semantic prosody of the "legal system" is "needing improvement," only accounting for 54.83% (17 out 31 instances). Examples are presented in Table 5. Notably, only one out of 31 concordance lines (3.23%) mentioned the Chinese legal system positively.

4.1.2. About the Chinese Continent

In the LST corpus, we found two other synonyms for China: the Chinese continent and the Chinese mainland. "Chinese continent" appears 14 times in the LST corpus, co-occurring with negative phrases in 50% of cases (seven out of 14 instances): "the deteriorating human rights in China," "contaminated food is rampant on the continent of China," "against indiscrimi-

nate admission of continental students to universities in Hong Kong," "Chinese continent tourists' clamour," and "Hong Kongers fight the continentals in the metro." This reveals that the term "continent" is portrayed negatively. Examples are given in Supplementary File 2 and Table 6. However, no concordance lines represented "Chinese continent" positively.

4.1.3. About Mainland China

"Mainland China" is another term used to refer to China occurring 121 times in the LST corpus, tending to co-occur with words and phrases having predominantly negative connotations, representing 12.40% (15 out of 121 instances), such as "fake products," "unscrupulous

Table 4. Examples of negative descriptions of China's economic development in the LST corpus.

1	China's long-term economic growth and overall national strength may be influenced by a declining population and consequently *low birth rate* (Ming Pao Educational Publications Editorial and Advisory Board, 2020, p. 91)
2	An increasing *disparity between urban and rural areas* and unequal social development accompanies China's rapid economic expansion (Hung et al., 2020, p. 178)
3	*Corruption occurs endemically among the Chinese authorities*, and corruption cases continue unabated (Zang et al., 2019, p. 64)
4	In 2016, China's Gini coefficient reached 0.465, suggesting a severe *gap between the rich and poor* (Zang et al., 2019, p. 49)

Note: Authors' English translations.

Table 5. Examples of negative descriptions of China's legal system in the LST corpus.

1	Increased corruption has resulted from *China's flawed legal system* and the inadequate supervision of officials, who are not required to declare their assets (Zang et al., 2019, p. 80)
2	Coupled with *China's flawed legal system* and lack of routes of recourse, disputes can quickly lead to widespread rallies and demonstrations, which does not benefit social stability (Zang et al., 2019, p. 80)
3	The awareness of *the rule of law has not yet become widespread in China*, and many people still look to petitions and other channels to defend their rights (Zang et al., 2019, p. 132)
4	*Corruption among officials in China* is still a severe problem, and government officials are holding back the pace of judicial reform (Zang et al., 2019, p. 131)

Note: Authors' English translations.

Table 6. Examples of negative descriptions of Chinese continent in the LST corpus.

1	A social media page titled "Against *Indiscriminate Admission of Continental Students* to Universities in Hong Kong'' asks universities to restrict the number of mainland China students accepted (Ng et al., 2016, p. 208)
2	Some *continental Chinese guests were angry* because they could not obtain chips from the China Pavilion. In contrast, others *rushed into* the China Pavilion and *assaulted* the public security agents distributing chips. The situation was somewhat chaotic (Wu et al., 2013, p. 164)
3	The human rights situation in *continental China continued to deteriorate* in 2017 (Zang et al., 2019, p. 70)

Note: Authors' English translations.

businessmen," "fake drugs," "flaws exist in the mainland Chinese judicial system," "numerous reports of poisoned food in mainland China," "poisoned milk powder," "corruption in the mainland," "counterfeit tourist attractions," "poor petrol quality in the mainland," and "the mainland tourists behave in a uncivilized manner." The Chinese mainland is thus represented unfavourably in the LST corpus (Table 7). As with "Chinese continent," no corresponding concordance lines favourably portray the Chinese mainland.

4.1.4. About Chinese

In the 119 concordance lines relating to Chinese, we found an apparent semantic preference for "identity," accounting for 29.41% of cases (35 out 119 instances), as in phrases such as identity, multiple identities, and identity recognition. Analysis of the concordance lines shows that Chinese national identity and Hong Kong identity are juxtaposed for comparative purposes, indicating that identity issues are prominent in the LST corpus. The predominant semantic prosody is "contradictory," accounting for 37.14% (13 times out 35 instances), as in phrases such as "a strong contrast between the identity of being Hong Kongers and of being Chinese mainlanders," "the conflicts between Hong Kong people and Chinese," "the younger generations' sense of belonging toward Chinese national identity is weakened," "the younger generations' sense of belonging toward Chinese national identity is reduced," "therefore, they began to reject their Chinese identity," "the younger generations do not necessarily recognize their Chinese identity," "they hold a reserved attitude towards Chinese identity," "their recognition of their 'Chinese' identity is relatively weak," "Hong Kong inhabitants began to distance them-

selves from being Chinese," "make them distance themselves from being Chinese," "it inevitably reduced Hong Kong people's self-identification as Chinese," and "Hong Kong people tend to think of themselves as Hong Kongers rather than Chinese."

The semantic prosody of the Chinese people regarding "identity" in the LST corpus indicates a division between two identities (Chinese national identity versus Hong Kong identity) presented as contradictory. Chinese national identity is projected as distanced from Hong Kong's identity. A concordance analysis demonstrates that the LST corpus considers Hong Kong people's perceptions of their Chinese national identity to be negative, so much so that they have rejected it. This division is further underscored by emphasising Hong Kongers' unique identity as distinct from Chinese identity. This is illustrated in the following examples (see Table 8).

An LST cited an anonymous survey as a method to discount Chinese identity:

> A mainland website conducted a survey on "if there is an afterlife, would you like to be Chinese again?" The results showed that 65% of the respondents no longer wanted to be Chinese. What a surprise! We cannot imagine Chinese mainlanders rejecting their Chinese national identity. (Chan et al., 2013, p. 248)

By contrast, only one concordance line mentioned Chinese favourably, by quoting a positive view of Chinese identity.

4.2. About Hong Kong

Two primary semantic preferences and prosodies are found in 117 concordance lines mentioning *Hong Kong*.

Table 7. Examples of negative descriptions of Chinese mainland in the LST corpus.

1	There have been numerous reports of *poisoned food in mainland China* (Hung et al., 2020, p. 84)
2	*Corruption in mainland China* is a significant issue (Ming Pao Educational Publications Editorial and Advisory Board, 2020, p. 199)
3	Combined with the *low quality and high sulphur content of mainland China*'s gasoline, this has compounded the environmental damage caused by car emissions (Zang et al., 2019, p. 142)
4	*Income disparity among mainland Chinese* households is a severe problem (Wu et al., 2013, p. 61)

Note: Authors' English translations.

Table 8. Examples of negative descriptions of Chinese identity in the LST corpus.

1	Some young people believe it is impossible to create a trusting relationship with those in authority and propose severing links with China; as a result, their sense of *Chinese identity is eroded* (Hung et al., 2020, p. 181)
2	In recent years, the increasing number of Individual Visit Scheme visitors from mainland China has impacted the daily lives of Hong Kong residents and eroded *their sense of belonging* to a group with Chinese identity (Hung et al., 2020, p. 184)
3	In terms of economic development, Hong Kong is ahead of mainland China. The residents' superior financial standing has led them to view themselves as separate from the "Chinese" and to discriminate against and demean mainland Chinese, *preventing them from identifying as "Chinese"* (Ng et al., 2016, p. 220)
4	Before the handover, the British Hong Kong government systematically "removed the sense of national identity'' by infrequently discussing China's modern development in primary and secondary school curricula, which developed *feelings of unfamiliarity with Chinese identity* (Ng et al., 2016, p. 224)

Note: Authors' English translations.

First, *Hong Kong* often appears with phrases such as "law-ruled region," "the rule of law," and "judicial system," such that there is a semantic preference for "Hong Kong's judicial system" in 91 out 117 instances (82.05%), in which the dominant semantic prosody regards "Hong Kong's judicial system" as "solid and good" 57 times (62.64% of the 91 instances). It co-occurs with phrases with positive connotations, such as "autonomous judicial system," "good legal foundation," "fairness," "that Hong Kong ranks the top in terms of the rule of law," "the rule of law is the core value of Hong Kong," "Hong Kong people's evaluation of the law has maintained a high level for many years," "the government of Hong Kong attaches great importance to and actively upholds the rule of law," "high transparency in the judicial system of Hong Kong," "Hong Kong has always been a society ruled by law," "Hong Kong has a solid foundation in the rule of law and a sound judicial system," "the court system in Hong Kong is clear," and "making Hong Kong a fair and clean metropolis." Both Hong Kong and China share a semantic preference for "judicial system," but with differ-

ent semantic prosody; while China's is "flawed and problematic," Hong Kong's is "good and solid." Examples are presented in Table 9. Only one out of 91 concordance lines (1.09%) portrays Hong Kong's legal system negatively: "I don't think Hong Kong can be called a society ruled by law as Hong Kong's laws cover the rich" (Chan et al., 2013, p. 114).

In addition, Hong Kong appeared with phrases associated with "culture," "different cultures," "unique local culture," "Western cultures," "diverse culture," "inclusive and diverse society," and "diverse cultural environment." This shows that Hong Kong's second semantic preference (26 out 117, 22.22%) is "Hong Kong's local culture." Of these, 17 instances (65.38%) carry a meaning of "diversity and inclusion," e.g., "Hong Kong, a confluence of Eastern and Western cultures, has formed a diverse, free, and pluralistic culture," "Hong Kong is a pluralistic and inclusive society," "Hong Kong has a pluralistic culture," and "Hong Kong's cultural diversity." Table 10 provides examples.

Table 9. Examples of descriptions of Hong Kong in the LST corpus.

1	Hong Kong has *an autonomous judicial system*, so its citizens have the law to follow, and the law constrains the power of those in authority (Hung et al., 2020, p. 103)
2	Hong Kong's *legal and judicial institutions maintain the rule of law*, and law enforcement agencies (such as the Police, Customs and Excise Department, Independent Commission Against Corruption, etc.) have collaborated to make Hong Kong a fair and clean metropolis (Chan et al., 2013, p. 114)
3	The court system in Hong Kong is *clear*, its commercial rules are thorough, and there are laws governing how to invest (Ng et al., 2016, p. 112)
4	According to the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index, a non-governmental organisation, the international community *recognised* the legal situation in Hong Kong (Hung et al., 2020, p. 38)
5	To a certain extent, *the spirit of the rule of law* protects the civil rights of Hong Kong residents and motivates them to fulfil their civic obligations (Chan et al., 2013, p. 132)
6	Hong Kong has *a strong foundation in the rule of law and a robust judicial system*, which enabled it to maintain a high standard of the rule of law both before and after the handover (Ng et al., 2016, p. 32)

Note: Authors' English translations.

Table 10. Other example descriptions of Hong Kong in the LST corpus.

1	Hong Kong is an *inclusive and diverse* society (Chan et al., 2013, p. 266)
2	Regarding food, architecture, language, and religion, Hong Kong's *cultural diversity* offers a unique blend of the old and the new, the East and the West (Hung et al., 2020, p. 45)
3	Hong Kong's culture has been influenced by Chinese and Western cultures such that it has developed into *a unique* local culture (Hung et al., 2020, p. 47)
4	Hong Kong-style cafés are accessible to all classes in Hong Kong, and the food is a blend of cuisines, reflecting Hong Kong's *diverse* culinary culture (Hung et al., 2020, p. 47)

Note: Authors' English translations.

5. Conclusions

The LST corpus shows a division between positive images of Hong Kong and negative images of China's synonyms in the LST, corroborating Li et al. (in press) and Li and Wu (2022). The LST corpus analysis also revealed language discouraging the self-acknowledgement of Chinese identity, also echoing Li and Wu (2022), who asserted that LST directly called for Hong Kong people to distance their identity from that of mainland Chinese. These findings demonstrate a key feature of populism, the heightened division between the inner and outer groups (Silberberg & Agbaria, 2021). Therefore, the textbooks can be understood as containing populist elements that exclude the outer group, China, from the local inner group, Hong Kong. This echoes Ng and Kennedy's (2019, p. 112) framing of Hong Kong's emerging populism as localism-based "populist radical regionalism.''

By August 2020, eight LST publishers had submitted their LST to the EDB for revision, and these newly revised LST are now in use (Li & Wu, 2022), containing less language distancing Hong Kong from the Chinese mainland and including references to Chinese national role models, Nobel Prize winners, and Olympic champions (Li & Wu, 2022) to inculcate Chinese nationalism among Hong Kong students. The National Security Law of China has also been enacted in Hong Kong, and many radical populists, such as Joshua Chi-Fung Wong and Jimmy Chee-Ying Lai, have been prosecuted. Some Hong Kong tertiary institutes recently included the ceremony of raising the national flag and singing the national anthem in their weekly assemblies for the first time. Chinese nationalism seems to have won over populism in Hong Kong, but what is noteworthy is that nationalism is often a symbiont of populism (Mizushima, 2018), also creating a distinct inner group and outer group (Bergmann, 2020). Perhaps nationalism could be seen more clearly as quasi-populism. Thus, using one kind of populism to counter another, as appears to be happening now, will temporarily alleviate but likely not resolve chronic social cleavages in Hong Kong. Rather than developing anti-populist fantasies, the stakeholders of Hong Kong education are advised to develop peace education and a more inclusive environment. This is certainly an area that demands further study in the future. As the LS course was originally designed as an enquiry-based subject, encouraging students' inclusiveness and critical thinking (Chiu et al., 2018), biased textbooks do not represent the true spirit and original educational intention of the course; however, Bourdieu and Passeron (2000) warned that the textbook as a pedagogical authority serves to legitimise the content it delivers, even if the contents involve cultural arbitrariness. Therefore, it is equally important for educational watchdogs in Hong Kong to provide more guidance on the writing and publishing of LST in the future.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

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