

Democratic Civic Education during Chinese Language Classes in South Korea: Focusing on the Democratization Movements of Taiwan and Hong Kong

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This study explores ways to implement democratic civic education during Chinese language classes at secondary schools in South Korea. It does so by examining the democratization movements that occurred in Taiwan and Hong Kong, and then designing a Chinese language class covering the topic. Specifically, first, it explores the slogans and songs used during the democratization movements of Taiwan and Hong Kong in 2014, and then proposes incorporating them into the Chinese language class. Democratic civic competency is currently regarded in South Korea as a core competency for the future. In this respect, this study aims to improve the Chinese communication skills of secondary school students taking the Chinese language class, and additionally nurture their interest in global political issues and foster an appropriate understanding of the relationship between China and surrounding countries and democratic civic education.

Keywords: *Democratic Civic Education, Taiwan Sunflower Student Movement, Hong Kong Umbrella Revolution, Chinese language education in South Korea*

Introduction

Democratic civic education is particularly emphasized in South Korea's public education curriculum. The *2022 Revised National Curriculum* advises its inclusion in all courses conducted in elementary and middle schools. According to the *2022 Revised Curriculum General Guidelines Highlight*, published in November 2021, "democratic civic education to foster citizenship" is necessary for "developing a student's community values and

strengthening competencies,” and is part of an attempt to innovate the curriculum to respond to future changes. Democratic civic education is defined as “education that brings self-awareness among students as the leader of their own lives and of the community and that supports solving the problems occurring in the students’ community based on mutual solidarity using their critical thinking ability” (Ministry of Education (MOE), 2021). In order to develop community values and strengthen competencies, the publication suggests that education about peace, personality, and the liberal arts should be substantialized in relation to democratic civic education. It also states that the civic value of democratic civic education should be reflected in all educational goals at elementary and middle schools and tied to all subjects taught at school. The areas of focus include democracy and social issues, critical thinking, democratic decision-making, and citizen participation and practice (MOE, 2021).

This study will cover the area of “democracy and social issues.” Chinese is one of the eight foreign languages that can be taught at schools in South Korea as a second language. Based on the *2015 Revised National Curriculum*, “Chinese language for daily life (middle school)” and “Chinese language I·II (high school)” were offered as elective classes at secondary schools. According to the *2022 Revised National Curriculum*, “Chinese language for daily life (middle school),” “Chinese language, Speaking in Chinese, Advanced Chinese, and Chinese culture and daily life (high school)” may be offered as either general or career-based elective classes.

It is difficult to directly incorporate democratic civic education in a Chinese language class for two reasons; first, it is a foreign language class that focuses on improving basic communication skills; second, China follows a socialist political system. In this aspect, this study aims to design a class covering “democracy and social issues” by introducing the democratic civic movements that have taken place in Taiwan and Hong Kong, a Chinese-speaking country and a region, respectively. On March 18, 2014, a body of university students in Taiwan entered and occupied the country’s unicameral legislature, the Legislative Yuan, for 24 days in opposition to the signing of the Cross-Strait Services Trade Agreement (CSSTA) between Taiwan and China. This event later became known as the Sunflower Student Movement. The students argued that once the agreement takes effect, the economy of Taiwan will become dependent on China. Later that year, in September 2014, the Umbrella Revolution swept across Hong Kong. On August 31, China’s Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (NPC) had declared that the selection of Hong Kong’s Chief Executive would be through universal suffrage rather than from indirect election, starting from 2017. However, the decision effectively signaled the sinofication of Hong Kong, since it introduced “fake universal suffrage,” prohibiting democratic candidates with over 50% approval rating from running for office. These events in 2014 pushed the youth in Taiwan and Hong Kong to lead revolutionary-like social movements.

Revolutions do not occur incidentally but are a result of “relative deprivation,” as stated by Ted Robert Gurr (2003). Thus, the democratic movements in Taiwan and Hong Kong can be interpreted as having erupted from a sense of relative deprivation and threat from China, especially since the latter has grown to become the second most powerful country in the world

by achieving unprecedented economic growth after the Chinese economic reform of 1978. A collective consciousness seeking a “community of shared destiny” formed among the youth of Taiwan and Hong Kong via the Sunflower Student Movement and the Umbrella Revolution in 2014, respectively, as the two countries faced a common threat from China. Students participating in these social movements, whether in Taiwan or Hong Kong, chanted “Hong Kong today, Taiwan tomorrow,” building an emotional bond among themselves, and sang “Island’s Sunrise (島嶼天光)” and “Raise the Umbrella (撐起雨傘),” strengthening their sense of unity. Furthermore, the Lennon Wall acted as the mediator, bringing Taiwan and Hong Kong together.

This study examines ways to incorporate democratic civic education in the Chinese language class at secondary schools in South Korea and offers a detailed teaching plan that can help students understand the democratization movements in Taiwan and Hong Kong, in addition to improving their Chinese language skills.

Slogan: “Hong Kong today, Taiwan tomorrow”

When the Sunflower Student Movement started in Taiwan in 2014, liberals and students from Hong Kong traveled to Taiwan as they believed they could gain invaluable lessons on the strong teamwork among Taiwanese students, division of labor among participants at the site of the demonstration, and rapid mobilization with the public waiting outside the Legislative Yuan. Hong Kong nationals living in Taiwan also took part in the movement. A photo posted online by a Hong Kong national received much attention during this period. The photo showed a man with a message hanging around his neck that said “I am from Hong Kong. Taiwan, please step on our dead bodies and follow your path (我是香港人, 請臺灣踏在我們的屍體, 上想你們的路).”¹ The photo took the Internet by storm after being posted on Facebook, and people from both regions grieved and expressed their sorrow.

At the peak of the Sunflower Student Movement, the people of Hong Kong held online fundraisers to pay for advertisements in Taiwanese newspapers that stated, “The people of Hong Kong support the people of Taiwan and their protest against the CSSTA and sinofication. Do not follow Hong Kong’s path to deterioration.”² In addition to expressing their support through such measures, the Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) and around 500 Taiwanese students studying in the city marched on the streets of Hong Kong. The HKFS emphasized the union between the two regions, stating that “with democracy as the mediator, this support demonstration will bring Hong Kong and Taiwan together.”³ The term “community of shared destiny” became popular among students who participated in the Sunflower Student Movement and the slogan “Hong Kong today, Taiwan tomorrow” became a catchphrase. The term “slogan” is derived from the Scottish word *slagh-ghairm*, which means a signal that is shouted in an emergency; it refers to a short phrase used to make an appeal or embed certain ideas, statements, or doctrines when society or a group of people are taking collective action. Such slogans carry a significance beyond mere words. “Hong Kong today,

Taiwan tomorrow” embodies the “pursuit of a shared value” between Hong Kong and Taiwan and accentuates mutual cooperation and social solidarity. The slogan served to highlight Taiwan’s anxiety regarding the threat of a Chinese takeover, as was the case with Hong Kong, and also captured the positive perception that the Taiwanese had of Hong Kong. The slogan, shouted by students at sites of demonstration, created a bond of empathy between the two countries. It eventually became a driving force for activists and youths in Taiwan, symbolizing the Sunflower Student Movement.

Although “Hong Kong today, Taiwan tomorrow” originated from the Sunflower Student Movement, it was frequently chanted by activists during the Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong. In particular, during the demonstration against the criminal extradition law in 2019, the slogan was popularized again, representing the sense of “community of shared destiny” between Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Protest songs: “Island’s Sunrise (島嶼天光)” and “Raise the Umbrella (撐起雨傘)”

Songs have long been a tool to strengthen the bond and sense of solidarity between participants at protests, and the Sunflower Student Movement and the Umbrella Revolution were no exceptions. During the Sunflower Student Movement, “Island’s Sunrise (島嶼天光)” by Fire EX, and “Raise the Umbrella (撐起雨傘)” during the Umbrella Revolution, were songs that supported the rightfulness of the protests and reinforced the solidarity among protestors. They were sung in their respective native languages—the former in Cantonese and the latter in Taiwanese. Such protest songs are all the more credible in that they would not be sung if they did not reflect the sentiment of the receivers of the message. Thus, the defiant lyrics of the songs did not solely reflect the resistant spirit of the songs’ creators, but also the active selection of the receiver (Jung, 2008). “Island’s Sunrise (島嶼天光),” produced by the indie band Fire EX, was frequently sung during the Sunflower Student Movement. The song was written in Taiwanese, becoming a testament to the identity of the people of Taiwan and delivering their message of social criticism and resistance against Ma Ying-jeou’s administration. The lyrics of the song are as follows:⁴

親愛的媽媽 請你毋通擔心我 Dear mother, please don't worry 原諒我 行袂開跣我 欲去對抗袂當原諒的人 Forgive, I cannot leave 'cause I must fight those unforgivable ones 歹勢啦 愛人啊 袂當陪你看電影 I'm sorry, my love, I cannot go to the movies with you(omitted)..... 天色漸漸光 遮有一陣人 Dawn is near, there are people here 為了守護咱的夢 成做更加勇敢的人

Who resolve to protect our dreams, and thus vow to become stronger than before
天色漸漸光 已經不再驚惶
Dawn is near, don't be afraid
現在就是彼一工 換阮做守護恁的人
Today is the day, that I protect you for a change
已經袂記哩 是第幾工 請毋通煩惱我
The days seem endless, but please don't worry
因為阮知道 無行過寒冬 袂有花開的彼一工。
Because I know, that when winter comes, spring shall soon arrive

天色漸漸光 天色漸漸光
Dawn is near, Dawn is near
已經是更加勇敢的人
We are braver than before
天色漸漸光 咱就大聲來唱這首歌
Dawn is near, Let's sing it out loud
一直到希望的光線 照光島嶼每一個人
Until the rays of hope, shines upon everyone on this island
.....(omitted).....
現在是彼一工 勇敢的台灣人
Today is the day, for the brave Taiwanese

Using lyrics that are easy to sing along with, Fire EX captured the sense of righteousness and justice prevailing in that period. Ma's government, which had executed pro-China policies, was among the "the unforgivable ones" that "bully" the people of Taiwan. The people who participated in the protests were the ones who had to become "braver than before" to fight against the wrongs in the political and economic policies. The song emphasizes "that when winter comes, spring shall soon arrive" to convey that the Taiwanese people would have to endure the current pains and sufferings in order to achieve a better future that will be more peaceful and content. The lyrics are instigative and use chant-based expressions to encourage and boost the morale of protesting students. Especially, the chorus "Dawn is near, Let's sing it out loud" is repeated multiple times, fueling the protestors' longing for democracy and cementing the legitimacy of the protests, while also strengthening solidarity among them (Hwang, 2020).

Even though the Sunflower Student Movement has ended, "Island's Sunrise" continues to be loved and sung by the public. According to a survey conducted by Daily View, a Taiwanese company specializing in online surveys, between April 10 and October 9⁵, 2014, the most popular protest song, "Island's Sunrise" ranked number one, followed by "Boundless Oceans, Vast Skies" and "Song of Battle." "Raise the Umbrella" ranked 10th in the same survey.⁶

“Raise the Umbrella (撐起雨傘)” was jointly sung by the famous Hong Kong singers Denise Ho (何韻詩), Anthony Wong (黃耀明), and Deanie Ip (葉德嫻) at a protest site of the Umbrella Revolution on October 4. The song managed to rank 10th in the aforementioned survey within a week of its first presentation, indicating that it was well-received and sung widely by the public. The lyrics of “Raise the Umbrella” were written by the celebrated Hong Kong lyricist Albert Leung (林夕) and accentuated the idea of unity and resistance. The lyrics of the song are as below:⁷

靜坐人海 你我非不怕

Sitting quietly in the crowd, you and I are not unafraid

會畏懼這樣下去怎辦

We'd fear about what's next after this

但是人生 到了這一晚

But in this, our life, this very night

更怕未表白內心呼喊

Keeping silent is more terrifying

站在前方 勇氣驅不散

Standing in the front line, our courage cannot be dispersed

卻信越怕命運更黯淡

Fear will only lead us to a bleaker future

但是誰想 要看穿荒誕

Who would want to see through the absurdity?

卻會在催淚下睜開眼

But tear gas opened our eyes

一起舉傘 一起的撐

Raise the umbrellas together, hang on in there together

一起儘管不安卻不孤單 對嗎

Together, although anxious, we are not alone, right?

一起舉傘 舉起手撐

Raise the umbrellas together, hang on in there together

一起為應得的放膽爭取 怕嗎

Together, let's boldly fight for what we deserve, are you scared?

任暴雨下 志向未倒下

Let the hard rain pour down, it won't water down our goal

雨傘是一朵朵的花

umbrellas blossom like flowers,

不枯也不散

They will not wither, nor will they be dispersed

為著明天 要記得今晚

For the sake of tomorrow, we must remember tonight

你我用鎮定面對憂患

We faced atrocity with calmness

若是人生 錯過這一晚

If you miss out this night in your life

怕再沒機會任意呼喊

you may never have the chance to shout freely again

Activists produced the song to express people's strong criticism of reality and their unwavering will for reform. The words "Sitting quietly in the crowd, you and I are not unafraid" and "Keeping silent is more terrifying" reflects the determination of students and citizens participating in the social movement. "Our courage cannot be dispersed" and "Together, let's boldly fight for what we deserve" describe their willingness to face hardships and be defiant to overcome the bleak reality. Furthermore, as expressed in "But tear gas opened our eyes." tear gas bombs brought self-awareness to the people of Hong Kong. By repeating the chorus "Raise the umbrellas together hang on in there together," the student activists boosted the morale of fellow protestors. All demonstrators clapped and cheered together whenever this phrase, which emphasized unity and solidarity, was sung. This song was popularized not only in Hong Kong but spread around the globe through YouTube, as if responding to the note in yellow that said "Please share widely" in the first scene of the video clip posted on the platform.

A video clip for "Raise the Umbrella" was produced on November 30, 2014 in Taiwan and uploaded on YouTube. In addition to the Chinese version, the song was translated into Taiwanese, Hakka Chinese, and the island's indigenous language,⁸ showing that the song and its producers were seeking solidarity from all the people in Taiwan. Over 200 comments were made on this specific video uploaded to YouTube; for instance: "I am from Hong Kong. Thank you for your support. We will make all efforts. Taiwan is our closest friend forever," "Thank you, our Taiwanese friends. People of Hong Kong, let's persist and endure and do not give up," and "Only now I had the chance to listen to the Taiwanese version. Thank you very much. We will not give up. A revolution is not temporary but a long-term process."⁹ There were numerous comments assumed to be written by the people of Hong Kong, expressing their gratitude for Taiwan's action of solidarity. "Raise the Umbrella" was not the only song that was sung by other countries. "Island's Sunrise" was translated into Cantonese and uploaded on YouTube by someone who went by the username Lion during the Umbrella Revolution. Through this song, the people of Hong Kong felt encouraged in their efforts to regain democracy after perceiving the courage demonstrated by protestors during the Sunflower Student Movement.¹⁰ By singing the song in Cantonese, the youth of Hong Kong called for support and solidarity from the people of Taiwan, who already had experienced the democratization movement.

When the Umbrella Revolution ended, Denise Ho, the Hong Kong singer who sang “Raise the Umbrella” in March 2015, held a concert in Kaohsiung City in Taiwan. It was her first public concert after the social movement in Hong Kong. Ho sang “Island’s Sunrise” and “Raise the Umbrella” in Taiwanese, which was met with much enthusiasm from the audience. The corresponding video received close to 3,000 hits immediately after its upload on YouTube, drawing positive responses from netizens of both countries; for instance, “My eyes began to water as soon as I heard the first line,” and “She is the pride of Hong Kong.”¹¹ “Island’s Sunrise” was brought back to people’s attention in Taiwan by Ho during a protest against the extradition of criminals to China in 2019. In September 2019, Ho visited Taiwan to participate in the “929 Taiwan Hong Kong Grand Parade — Support Hong Kong, Fight against Totalitarianism,” organized by a Taiwanese non-governmental organization. When singing Fire EX’s “Island’s Sunrise” at the protest, she changed the last lyrics of “brave Taiwanese” to “brave people of Hong Kong,” stimulating the emotions of people at the protest. “Island’s Sunrise” and “Raise the Umbrella” were sung in Taiwanese and Cantonese, respectively, to better reinforce the people’s identity. Nonetheless, both songs were loved by the people of Taiwan and Hong Kong alike because they were able to build emotional bonds among them.

The Lennon Wall

The 2014 Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong started due to the involvement of China’s Standing Committee of the NPC in Hong Kong’s political affairs; specifically, the Standing Committee proposed a restrictive procedure for the election of Hong Kong’s Chief Executive and Legislative Council. Thousands of Hong Kong citizens took to the streets and protested against China’s decision. They eventually occupied Causeway Bay and Mong Kok to resist China’s interference and to express their frustration against the pro-China Hong Kong government. In September 2014, in an effort to hold talks with the government, several activists created posters explaining the reasons behind the protest and posted them around the Central Government Complex. The “memo wall” quickly became the voice of Hong Kong protestors. It was also called the “Lennon Wall” as it resembled the Lennon Wall in Prague, the Czech Republic. The Lennon Wall in Hong Kong, or the wall surrounding the government complex, was covered in messages from the Hong Kong youth. Unlike the original Lennon Wall, people wrote their messages using colorful sticky notes rather than writing directly on the wall. People poured their thoughts into these notes, and some even posted photos of themselves. The area of Admiralty, where the wall is situated, soon became a site of a silent war.

“Lennon,” written in Cantonese Chinese as “連儂” differs from how it is written in mainland China, “列儂,” embodying the distinct identity of Hong Kong. “連” means “to connect” and “儂” is a personal pronoun that could either mean “me” or “you.” In other words, the word “Lennon” carries the aspirational message of moving toward freedom with an emphasis on the union that “connects you and me.” The Lennon Wall was much more than the voice of the Hong Kong people. It was a medium that symbolized the connection between the community spirit of Hong Kong and that of the outsiders.

A “wall” may act as a barrier to protect oneself from others or as an obstacle that separates one from others. A “wall” can be a tool to separate according to power, like the Berlin Wall or the Great Wall of China, but it can also be a tool to separate from such power. The writings on the walls represented the resistance of oppressed people, while also functioning as a network that connected people. The “Lennon Wall” was the mediator that connected Hong Kong and Taiwan together. This is not the first time a wall was used by the people of Taiwan as a means of communication. A precedent was set in 1978 during the election of the members and president of the National Assembly before the martial law was canceled. Chen Guying (陳鼓應), a philosophy professor who was not rehired due to the “National Taiwan University Philosophy Department Incident (台大哲學系事件),” and Stella Chen (陳婉真), a journalist from The China Times, were running for leadership positions in the leading political party, Kuomintang. The two candidates set up the “Democracy Wall (民主牆)” on the sidewalk across the University of Taiwan and posted hand-written posters to protest against the political and social problems of Kuomintang. The posters drew the attention of the people as they revealed issues that were not mentioned in textbooks or in university classes. Under martial law, since all media outlets, including television and radio broadcasting and newspapers, were controlled by Kuomintang, the public spread their spirit of resistance and communicated with others via the “Democracy Wall.”¹²

As the people of Taiwan were already familiar with building unity through a wall, the “Lennon Wall” was well received by them. In particular, the wall was erected near a university, allowing the Taiwanese people to experience a sense of shared destiny with Hong Kong. Under China’s subjugation, based on the “one country, two systems” style of politics, a consciousness of solidarity formed between Hong Kong and Taiwan, which influenced the perception that the people of Hong Kong had of Taiwan. Between 2007 and 2018, the University of Hong Kong conducted a survey on the “Perception of the People of Taiwan Held by the Citizens of Hong Kong (市民對台灣人民觀感的程度).” The results showed generally high levels of likeability, and the ratio of Hong Kong citizens that viewed Taiwan positively peaked in May 2014 at 63.3%.¹³

Application in Chinese language class

Chinese culture is discussed in almost every chapter of textbooks currently being used in Korean secondary schools. Some examples are appellation and greetings, national holidays and memorial days, leisure activities enjoyed by the Chinese people, food (meal) culture and means of transportation, and school life in China. In order to better understand the culture and way of life in China, students are often given the opportunity to experience traditional games and craftwork, such as papercutting crafts, drawing Lian Pu masks, making Tanghulu, learning tai chi, Chinese jegichagi, and engaging in the Chinese tea ceremony. Students are also made to draw comparisons between the cultures of Korea and China according to different topics (e.g., holiday culture, school life, appellation culture, actions to address low fertility, and pansori

versus Chinese opera). While it is valuable to experience the Chinese culture both directly and indirectly, it is equally crucial to learn about China's political system, which differs from Korea, to comprehensively understand their culture and way of life. However, there are hardly any textbooks that explore this topic.

A solution to this problem could be to include the democratization movements of Taiwan and Hong Kong in Chinese language textbooks used in Korean schools. The background and development of the aforementioned movements could be introduced and elaborated upon using video clips, photographs, and even protest songs. The possible ways to utilize these resources are described below.

First, the lyrics of the protest songs may be used. The lyrics to "Island's sunrise" and "Raise the Umbrella" are made up of vocabulary that are relatively easy and would not pose a problem for even beginner-level Chinese language students. Instead of just providing the Korean translation of the songs, it would be further helpful to make connections between the Chinese words that the students have already learned and the lyrics. This would provide lessons in both democratic civic education and the Chinese language. When comparing between the basic Chinese vocabularies presented in the *2015 Revised Curriculum* and those used in the lyrics of both songs, 37 basic vocabularies (的, 妈妈, 请, 你, 担心, 我, 原谅, 去, 看, 电影, 为了, 做, 已经, 不, 再, 现在, 就, 是, 换, 几, 因为, 知道, 行, 过, 花, 开, 大, 声, 来, 唱, 这, 歌, 一直, 到, 希望, 每个) are found in "Island's Sunrise" and 45 (坐, 人, 你, 我, 不, 怕, 会, 这样, 怎(么), 办, 但是, 到, 了, 这, 晚, 更, 站, 在, 散, 信, 谁, 想, 要, 看, 穿, 下, 开, 一起, 举, 伞, 对, 吗, 手, 为, 放, 倒, 是, 花, 也, 明天, 用, 错, 过, 没, 机会) in "Raise the Umbrella." Since students are familiar with the basic words appearing in the songs, as they have already learned them during class, they would find it easier to appreciate the lyrics and better understand the meaning and usage of those words.

Thereafter, the students can conduct research on the two democratization movements in small groups and present their findings, along with a class-wide discussion on them. In addition to the teacher explaining the events that occurred during the movements in Taiwan and Hong Kong, the students themselves should investigate the protests, compare them with the democratization movement that occurred in South Korea, share their findings, and debate with one another. Through this process, students will be able to understand the differences between socialism and democracy, and also strengthen their understanding of international political affairs by growing their interest in the democratization movements in other countries and regions. By drawing comparisons with South Korea's democratization movements, the students would come to appreciate the virtues of democracy, eventually developing into citizens with healthy democratic values.



Conclusion

The goal of China's "once country, two systems" policy is to bring Hong Kong and Taiwan under its influence. However, China's attempt at political subjugation only reinforced Hong Kong and Taiwan's distinct identities, leading to the formation of an emotional bond between their people. In particular, through the Sunflower Student Movement and the Umbrella Revolution that occurred in 2014, the collective awareness of a "community of shared destiny" became firmly rooted among the youth of Taiwan and Hong Kong. Based on the sense of solidarity that formed during the two movements, these youth maintained a close relationship through social media and actual visits. In particular, during the 2019 protest against the criminal extradition law, the slogan "Hong Kong today, Taiwan tomorrow" and the "Lennon Wall" represented a sense of "community of shared destiny." Moreover, singing the protest songs "Island's Sunrise" and "Raise the Umbrella" in each other's languages, Cantonese and Taiwanese, respectively, further strengthened the solidarity between the students of Taiwan and Hong Kong. Despite being seven years old, both songs are still sung at protest sites and receive love from the public. This study examines the solidarity between the democratization movements of Taiwan and Hong Kong to find a way to incorporate this topic as a part of democratic civic education in Chinese language classes in secondary schools in Korea.

"Fostering basic communication skills in Chinese" and "understanding the culture of China" are deemed to be the two main objectives of the Chinese language class at Korean schools. Almost all textbooks introduce various aspects of the Chinese culture through diverse topics but lack elaboration on the political system of China, which is fundamental to truly understanding China and its culture. Therefore, in line with the further strengthening of democratic civic education, relevant issues such as the democratization movements of Taiwan and Hong Kong should be sufficiently taught and learned during the Chinese language class.

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Notes

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3. Refer to the article details shared in the preceding footnote.
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