

# Analysis of the Acquisition and Teaching Strategy of Chinese Culture by Foreign Students

Fan Chen\*

School of Law, Literature and Foreign Languages  
Wuchang University of Technology  
Wuhan, China

**Abstract**—In the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language, cultural teaching is an indispensable and important content. This paper uses the quantitative research method of questionnaires to investigate the acquisitions and feed-backs of Chinese culture learning of eighty-five foreign students at Wuchang University of Technology. It is found that the foreign students are generally interested in Chinese culture but their preferences are unbalanced, they cognition are not deep as well as not comprehensive, and they are confronting cultural shocks. Thus, strengthening their interest of learning, improving their level of Chinese, reducing the phenomenon of cultural shocks, and upgrading the teaching mode of the curriculum are effective strategies to solve the problems existing in the current situation.

**Keywords**—foreign students; Chinese culture; acquisition; teaching strategy

## I. INTRODUCTION

With the expansion of the “One Belt and One Road” strategy and the continued growth of the Confucius Institutes around the world, more and more international students choose to study in China. In the current “Chinese fever” trend, how to better export Chinese culture and enhance the recognition of Chinese culture by foreign students are important propositions of teaching Chinese as a foreign language. In order to discover the acquisition of Chinese culture by foreign students, to explore the factors affecting foreign students' cognition of Chinese culture and to improve the teaching strategies of teaching Chinese as a foreign language, the author conducted in-depth investigation and analysis.

## II. CURRENT STATUS OF FOREIGN STUDENTS' ACQUISITION OF CHINESE CULTURE

This survey compares and analyzes the acquisition of Chinese culture by 85 sophomores from Wuchang University of Technology, including Ethiopia (34 people), Zimbabwe (33 people), and Kazakhstan (18 people). They are all sophomores, aged among 19-21. Their majors are computer science, business, and civil engineering. They finished the A Glimpse of Chinese Culture course in the second year. The survey found that foreign students have the following four characteristics of the acquisition of Chinese culture:

### A. Widespread general interest for Chinese culture

The indivisibility of language and culture determines the important position of culture teaching in teaching Chinese as a foreign language [1]. Through the data analysis of “What is your interest to Chinese culture?”, it is found that the foreign students are basically interested in Chinese culture.

TABLE I. WHAT IS YOUR INTEREST TO CHINESE CULTURE?

	<i>Very interested</i>	<i>Pretty interested</i>	<i>Generally interested</i>	<i>No interest</i>
Ethiopia	15%	24%	61%	0%
Zimbabwe	18%	24%	49%	9%
Kazakhstan	22%	56%	22%	0%

As shown in table 1 that Ethiopian and Zimbabwe students focus more on the option of “generally interested”, while Kazakhstan students choose “Pretty interested” and have a higher enthusiasm for Chinese culture. All in all, they all generally like Chinese culture.

### B. Unbalanced cultural preferences

Chinese culture is profound and colorful. As one of the four oldest recorded civilizations in the world, China has a long history without being interrupted.

TABLE II. WHAT PARTS DO YOU LIKE ABOUT CHINESE CULTURE? (MULTIPLE CHOICE)

	<i>Diet</i>	<i>Scenic Spots</i>	<i>Festivals and idioms</i>	<i>Literature and Arts</i>
Ethiopia	35%	22%	35%	8%
Zimbabwe	58%	29%	33%	6%
Kazakhstan	33%	32%	43%	8%
	<i>Costume</i>	<i>Education and Technology</i>	<i>Chinese medicine</i>	<i>Others</i>
Ethiopia	7%	6%	5%	3%
Zimbabwe	9%	7%	4%	1%
Kazakhstan	11%	9%	6%	6%

Currently, Han nationality and other ethnic groups are continuing creating and developing unique Chinese culture. In recent teaching of Chinese culture in, a majority of teachers introduce Chinese culture by various topics. Through the data

analysis of the question "What parts do you like about Chinese culture? (multiple choices)", it is found that the preference of Chinese students for Chinese culture is unbalanced [2].

As shown in table 2, generally speaking, foreign students tend to choose "Diet, Scenic spots, Festivals, Idioms" in the overall trend, while "literature and Arts, Costume, Education and Technology, Chinese medicine, Others" are relatively few, which formed an obvious contrast on the Chinese cultural themes.

C. Cultural mastery does not go deep

This questionnaire has fifteen representative questions selected from the various themes of A Glimpse of Chinese Culture. The survey found that foreign students have a shallow grasp of Chinese culture. Except for traditional festivals, food, and tourist spots, China's national conditions, literature and art, religion, science and technology, and sports are basically unknown for them. In view of the fact that the students of this survey have already completed the Chinese Culture course, the results of such a survey is very discouraging and attracted corresponding reconsideration.

D. Cultural cognition is not synchronized

By comparing the questionnaire data one by one, it is found that Kazakhstan students are better than Ethiopian and Zimbabwean students in the overall cognitive situation of Chinese culture. It is reflected in the learning attitude, learning enthusiasm, and learning evaluation results [3]. For example, table e 3, table 4, and table 5.

TABLE III. HOW MANY NATIONALITIES ARE THERE IN CHINA?

	Ethiopia	Zimbabwe	Kazakhstan
Right ratio	41%	33%	72%

TABLE IV. WHO IS THE FOUNDER OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA?

	Ethiopia	Zimbabwe	Kazakhstan
Right ratio	44%	51%	56%

TABLE V. IS THE CHINESE CULTURE COURSE BENEFICIAL TO YOU?

	Extremely helpful	Pretty helpful	Generally helpful	Useless
Ethiopia	12%	15%	69%	4%
Zimbabwe	30%	24%	43%	3%
Kazakhstan	11%	67%	19%	3%

As shown in Figure 3, 4 and 5, Kazakhstan students are significantly better than Ethiopian and Zimbabwe students in mastering of "China's national conditions" and teaching feedback. Besides, other topics analysis is generally similar.

E. Cultural adaption is not easy

Teaching Chinese as a foreign language is essentially a cross-cultural communication teaching. Since the teaching objects come from all over the world and have different cultural backgrounds, there must be collisions and conflicts between Chinese cultural and different national cultures in

teaching Chinese as a foreign language [4]. Cultural Shock refers to the psychological anxiety caused by cultural differences in one cultural transition from one culture to another in intercultural communication. In the question of "What culture shocks have you been experienced?" It can be seen that the cultural adaptation of foreign students is not easy and should be considered during the process of teaching.

TABLE VI. WHAT IS YOUR INTEREST TO CHINESE CULTURE?

	Diet	Study pressure	Living condition	Weather	Lonely
Ethiopia	6%	9%	18%	62%	9%
Zimbabwe	33%	6%	33%	58%	12%
Kazakhstan	17%	6%	28%	67%	6%

As shown in table 6 that the total proportion of cultural shocks from high to low is "Weather conditions, living condition, diet, lonely, and study pressure", which embodies the actual challenges that foreign students are confronting and should be attached more attention.

III. THE FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CULTURAL COGNITION OF FOREIGN STUDENTS

A. differences in motivation for studying abroad

Psychologists define motivation as an internal process that stimulates, guides, and maintains behavior over time [5]. The writer clearly found in the actual teaching that Kazakhstan students are much better than those of Ethiopian and Zimbabwean students in the enthusiasm and academic performance of Chinese culture Learning [6]. The survey proves that students' motivation of studying abroad has a positive correlation with their learning attitude and performance.

TABLE VII. WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO STUDY IN CHINA? (MULTIPLE CHOICE)

	Learning majors	Learning Chinese	Interested in Chinese culture	Obtain a better job when back home	Others
Ethiopia	55%	29%	9%	38%	15%
Zimbabwe	61%	21%	6%	27%	12%
Kazakhstan	40%	56%	33%	23%	6%

As shown in table 7 that the common motivations for international students to study in China include "learning majors", but in terms of "learning Chinese" and "Interested in Chinese culture", the proportion of students in Kazakhstan is much higher than the other students. Besides, Ethiopian and Zimbabwe students more inclined to choose "Obtain a better job when back home", which shows more emphasis on "utilitarian" and "practical." This is one of the reasons why Kazakh students are more enthusiastic and better able to learn Chinese culture.

**B. Language level differences**

Language is the carrier of culture and an effective medium for cultural communication. The language of a nation is defined by the culture of the nation, and it is a manifestation of national culture [7]. According to statistics, 61% of Kazakhstan students who have a good grasp of Chinese culture have studied Chinese for two years or more, while Zimbabwe and Ethiopian students are generally one to two years.

TABLE VIII. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN STUDIED CHINESE?

	<i>1-6 months</i>	<i>7-12 months</i>	<i>1-2 years</i>	<i>2-3years</i>	<i>More than 3 years</i>
Ethiopia	9%	0%	85%	3%	3%
Zimbabwe	12%	15%	70%	3%	0%
Kazakhstan	6%	11%	22%	33%	28%

As shown in table 8 that the significant influence of foreign students' language level on their cultural acquisition. Because Kazakhstan students have been learning Chinese for a longer period of time, they can better understand what they have learned in the class and self-studying after the class as well. In contrast, Ethiopian and Zimbabwean students have a shorter time to learn Chinese, and there are facing more obstacles on the understanding of Chinese and Chinese culture.

**C. Cultural shock differences**

Regardless of approaches, almost all researchers think that, culture is characterized the life of activity of person, group, as a whole society. No society, social group or a person can exist without culture [8]. In the above question of "What cultural shocks have you experienced?" we can know that Zimbabwe students have a particularly high proportion of "diet difference". Besides, it can be seen that there is a widespread cultural shock phenomenon among foreign students which is a problem that we should pay attention to in the teaching. As we all know, Kazakhstan is neighboring to China and belongs to the Asia cultural circle, while Zimbabwe and Ethiopia are much more far from China and have a bigger cultural difference. This also made their various cultural shocks in the life in China.

**D. Differences in the teaching mode**

Currently, the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language is still dominated by language teaching. The basic goal of teaching is to communicate in daily life in Chinese. The significance of Chinese culture teaching is only to satisfy the daily life culture, and the deep cultural connotation and cultural beliefs are not carried out and understand deeper [9]. Through actual investigations, it was found that the Chinese culture teachers mainly used power points, video materials, group presentations and translation methods in actual teaching. This reflects that the current cultural teaching model still adopts the traditional "rote education" method, lacking the "situation method", "visiting method" and other practical methods, and the students have few real experience of Chinese culture.

**IV. THE TEACHING STRATEGY OF CHINESE CULTURE**

Through the above analysis and influencing factors of foreign students' cultural acquisition, the author puts forward the teaching strategy of Chinese as a foreign language, expecting to improve the classroom teaching effect and help foreign students to better learn and apply Chinese culture.

**A. Strength the learning interest of foreign students**

As an old saying goes, "Interest is the best teacher". After the end of the semester, the author clearly found that the degree of the acquisition of students is directly proportional to their final exam scores. The students that thought about questions positively and offering deep questions in the class, for example, "Why the things of claws that the stone lions are holding are different?" "Why do you use tea sets for tea? Can you use a water cup?" obtained more knowledge than others. During the cultural teaching, teachers should be good at using students' curiosity and freshness about Chinese culture and strengthen their interest in the learning process. First of all, teachers must improve their cultural ability. If students see teachers who are very familiar with their own national culture, they will be largely inspired to learn Chinese culture in turn. For instance, if the teacher can speak a few words about the language of the country where the students are come from and know some cultural knowledge of their country, the students will have great pride in the culture of their country and greatly stimulated on the learning of Chinese and Chinese culture. Secondly, teachers should explain Chinese culture in stages and at different levels, from shallow to deep, from easy to difficult, from material culture to institutional culture and spiritual culture. For example, introducing the food culture, communication culture first and then introduce the Chinese medicine culture and Confucian culture. It is imperative to make Chinese culture lively and interesting, and therefore make foreign students not feeling boring or too difficult to keep learning.

**B. Improve the Chinese language level of foreign students**

Cultural teaching is not only an important means of language and cultural integration, but also a key content in teaching Chinese as a foreign language [10]. Language is a part of culture and an important medium for the spread of culture. To learn a language, you must learn the culture that the language is loaded at the same time [11]. In language teaching, in addition to pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, the interpretation of cultural connotations is also cardinal. For example, "red" has the cultural meaning of "auspicious and fortunate" in Chinese culture; "Apple" and "safe" are homophonic, so people eat apples on Christmas Eve; "Have you eat?" In fact, not means you will treat but expresses your concern and greetings and so on. A right sentence depends on the accurate pronunciation, the correct words, and the correct grammar. However, a god sentence depends on the expression is consistent with the communicative culture or not. Chinese is an important carrier of Chinese culture, especially in cultural words, taboos, and proverbs. Such as "Chinese tunic suit", "cheongsam", "iron rice bowl", "eat tofu", "fried squid" and so on. In actual teaching, language and cultural teaching should be unified together. However, only when the students' Chinese

proficiency reaches a certain level can they have a deeper understanding of Chinese culture.

### *C. Reducing the cultural shocks of foreign students*

Helping international students overcome cultural shock is an important issue in the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language. As a teacher, we can start from the following aspects in the actual teaching: First, try to understand the similarities and differences between the cultures of the two countries, and actively achieve the “positive migration” of cultural teaching. Secondly, strive to build more platforms for exchanges and cooperation between Chinese and foreign students, such as cafe, Chinese corner, debating Competition, etc., helping foreign students to better integrate into life in China, making Chinese friends, and reduce the sense of loneliness. Finally, we must scientifically manage the study and life of international students and help them solve related problems in time, such as accommodation, diet and others. Sincerer consideration, more feedback, more guidance, such as holding international cultural festival shows, organizing cultural tours, visiting local folk towns and other activities are available to help them understand Chinese culture more directly and deeply.

### *D. Upgrade the teaching mode of foreign students*

In the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language, the level of awareness of educators themselves affects teaching thinking, educational attitudes and teaching models [9]. As a teacher of Chinese as a foreign language, we must have “cultural consciousness and innovation”, actively understand the culture of the country where the students are located, and teach the students in accordance with their aptitude. For the textbook, we should not stick to a textbook from beginning to end, but study more and think more and integrate the contents of the text. In addition to the translation and multimedia method, other method like carry out immersive cultural experience activities should also be used together. For instance, go to the teahouse to experience tea, choose tea, make tea, taste tea, and comprehend the tea culture of “tea as life”; go to the Forbidden City, Beijing Quadrangles and other places to experience the architectural culture of “Balance between Heaven and Man”.

## V. CONCLUSION

In summary, this paper summarizes the acquisition of Chinese culture by foreign students through questionnaire, knowing that foreign students generally have interest on Chinese culture but having an unbalanced preferences, not deeply as well as not synchronized understanding. Besides, Analyzed the influencing factors of students' cognition on Chinese culture, which are differences among study motivation, language level, cultural shock and teaching mode.

What's more, putted forward four teaching strategies to promote cultural identity of foreign students.

This paper based on the real questionnaire and originally compared the mastery of Chinese culture among students in Kazakhstan, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia. In addition, related issues deserved further and deeper study. Hoping foreign students can better adapt to life in China and truly appreciate the connotation and charm of Chinese culture, enriching the current study of Chinese as a foreign language, and promoting Chinese culture to better go to the world.

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