

## *Original Paper*

# The Application of Experiential Culture Teaching in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

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### **Abstract**

*The accelerated process of globalization has increasingly underscored the significance of Chinese as a world language, with the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language assuming a crucial role in cross-cultural communication. Traditional cultural teaching methods, which often rely on unidirectional knowledge transmission, frequently fail to engage learners fully, resulting in superficial cultural understanding. Experiential cultural teaching, centered around the learners, utilizes immersive activities and interactive experiences to effectively address this shortcoming, allowing learners to perceive and comprehend the rich connotations of Chinese culture in authentic contexts. This paper will analyze the application of experiential teaching in Chinese cultural education for foreigners, exploring its unique advantages in enhancing learners' cultural identity and practical language proficiency, and propose specific implementation strategies and considerations, aiming to provide new perspectives and methodological foundations for teaching Chinese as a foreign language.*

### **Keywords**

*experiential teaching, Chinese as a foreign language, teaching culture*

## **1. Introduction**

The essence of teaching Chinese as a foreign language lies not merely in the impartation of linguistic skills but in a profound understanding and recognition of the culture. Culture, as the vessel of language, is not only reflected in vocabulary and grammar but also permeates every aspect of daily communication and social interaction. Traditional methods of cultural instruction are often confined to classroom explanations and textbook knowledge, which seldom ignite the learner's intrinsic curiosity. This approach frequently overlooks the learner's role as an active participant in culture, rendering cultural education superficial. The introduction of experiential teaching concepts offers a novel solution

to this issue. By immersing learners in authentic or simulated cultural contexts, experiential teaching not only enhances the immediacy and practicality of cultural learning but also fosters cultural sensitivity and adaptability. This pedagogical method emphasizes interaction and emotional engagement during the learning process, enabling learners to perceive cultural differences through practice, thereby deepening their language skills and cultural understanding. Consequently, researching the application of experiential teaching in the realm of teaching Chinese culture to foreigners holds significant theoretical and practical value.

## **2. Cultural Teaching of Chinese as a Foreign Language**

### *2.1 Content of Teaching Chinese Language and Culture as a Foreign Language*

The core content of teaching Chinese as a foreign language should encompass multiple dimensions of Chinese culture, integrating material culture, institutional culture, and spiritual culture. Material culture includes tangible cultural expressions such as cuisine, clothing, and architecture, which represent the most immediate manifestation of culture and are the aspects learners can directly experience and observe. Culinary traditions and architectural styles are not only crucial avenues for learners to form their initial impressions of Chinese culture but also serve as essential materials for teaching Chinese culture to foreigners. Institutional culture includes politics, economics, education, and family structure, providing learners with the background needed to understand the operational mechanisms of Chinese society, and helping them perceive the deeper logic behind the culture from an institutional perspective. Concepts such as respect for elders and intergenerational responsibilities in family culture can be better understood through role-playing and situational simulations, allowing learners to grasp how these social structures manifest in daily life. More crucially, teaching spiritual culture—which encompasses values, moral systems, religious beliefs, and aesthetic standards—is central as it constitutes the core of culture. The transmission of spiritual culture involves not only conveying the underlying philosophical systems of the language but also enabling learners to appreciate unique Chinese concepts such as “moderation” and “harmony in diversity”, which are key to understanding the meaning of Chinese language and culture. Spiritual culture is often the most challenging to impart directly and typically requires the aid of classic works from literature, art, and philosophy, as well as interactive discussions and analyses, to enable learners to deeply appreciate it. This multi-dimensional cultural content not only serves as background knowledge for language learning but also acts as an important medium through which learners can truly engage with and comprehend the essence of Chinese thinking and culture (Youzhen, 2006).

### *2.2 Methods of Teaching Chinese Language and Culture as a Foreign Language*

The methods of teaching Chinese as a foreign language are diverse and have become increasingly sophisticated and refined with the progression of time. In the teaching process, it is imperative not only to focus on imparting language skills but also to deeply understand and grasp the essence of the culture.

The methods of cultural instruction are not merely about conveying knowledge but are also a process of guiding students to immerse themselves in and perceive the culture. Cultural teaching methods should emphasize a combination of “experiential” and “immersive” approaches. By simulating authentic cultural scenarios, students are able to experience the diversity and complexity of the culture in an environment akin to that of native speakers. For instance, through role-playing and live experiences of cultural festivals, students not only practice the language but also personally encounter the values and customs behind the culture. This approach not only deepens students’ understanding of the culture but also stimulates their interest and intrinsic motivation. Moreover, cross-cultural comparative methods are also of paramount importance. Teachers can use comparisons between the students’ native cultures and Chinese culture to help students find resonance and reflect on their own culture, thereby enhancing their understanding and acceptance of Chinese culture. This method not only increases students’ cultural sensitivity but also assists them in finding balance amid cultural differences, thereby improving their cross-cultural communication skills. It is noteworthy that teachers should maintain an open mindset in cultural teaching, respecting students’ cultural backgrounds and individual differences. The choice of teaching methods should be student-centered, tailored to individual needs, and flexible and inclusive, avoiding a one-size-fits-all, didactic approach. Only in this way can cultural teaching truly serve as a bridge, making language learning more vivid and meaningful.

### **3. Experiential Teaching and Teaching Chinese Language and Culture as a Foreign Language**

#### *3.1 Connotation of Experiential Teaching*

Experiential learning, as a student-centered pedagogical approach, underscores the active engagement and practical involvement of students in authentic contexts. Its essence lies in the element of “experience”, which encompasses hands-on activities, scenario simulations, and problem exploration to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and skills through perception, reflection, and practice. In the realm of teaching Chinese as a foreign language, experiential learning serves not only as a method for knowledge transmission but also as a crucial conduit for conveying cultural nuances. The essence of experiential learning involves multifaceted understanding and application. Firstly, experiential learning aims to ignite students’ intrinsic motivation, transforming learning from a passive reception into an active exploration. This approach is particularly vital in teaching Chinese culture to foreigners. Learning about culture extends beyond superficial knowledge acquisition; it involves a profound grasp of the emotions, values, and social norms underlying that culture. Such deep understanding can only be attained through direct experience. For instance, engaging students in traditional Chinese festival activities allows them to immerse in the festival atmosphere and appreciate the cultural significance and the subtle dynamics of interpersonal relationships. Secondly, experiential learning emphasizes the interactive and collaborative nature of learning. In the context of teaching Chinese culture to foreigners, this interaction is manifested not only between teachers and students but also between students and the

cultural environment. Through immersive cultural experiences, students can more directly encounter cultural shocks and, through interactions with peers and instructors, jointly explore and reflect on cultural differences and commonalities (Wang, 2024). This interaction helps to overcome the unidirectional nature of traditional teaching, making the learning process more multidimensional and vivid. Thirdly, experiential learning highlights the applicability of knowledge. Learning about culture is not merely about mastering linguistic skills but also about the flexible application of this knowledge in real-life situations. In teaching Chinese culture to foreigners, experiential learning simulates real-life communicative scenarios, enabling students to grasp the essence of cultural acquisition through practical use. For example, by simulating business negotiations or dining etiquette, students learn not only how to use language appropriately but also how to engage in effective communication and interaction within different cultural contexts. The true value of experiential learning lies in its transformation of learning from a mere accumulation of knowledge into a comprehensive, multi-sensory experience. In teaching Chinese culture to foreigners, experiential learning enhances students' cultural comprehension and aids in maximizing their self-worth in cross-cultural communication. This teaching method represents a significant innovation in the field of Chinese culture education and an important direction for the future of education.

### *3.2 The Superiority of Experiential Teaching in Teaching Chinese Language and Culture as a Foreign Language*

The superiority of experiential learning in the context of teaching Chinese culture to non-native speakers lies in its capacity to transform abstract cultural concepts into tangible, perceptible experiences. This pedagogical approach, through the recreation of authentic scenarios and active student engagement, allows cultural transmission to extend beyond traditional classroom lectures, delving into students' lives and emotions. Experiential learning effectively addresses the cognitive barriers students might encounter in cross-cultural education. Traditional methods often emphasize rote knowledge, yet in cultural studies, mere memorization falls short in conveying the profound meanings of culture. Through experiential learning, students immerse themselves in simulated cultural settings, directly experiencing behavioral patterns and thought processes inherent to different cultural backgrounds. For instance, participation in traditional Chinese festivals enables students to intuitively grasp the social significance and values underlying these celebrations, fostering a deeper understanding of the culture. Moreover, experiential learning possesses unique advantages in terms of interaction and emotional resonance (Song, 2022). In cultural education, interaction occurs not only between teacher and students but also between students and cultural contexts. By actively engaging, students not only deepen their comprehension of cultural content but also reflect on their own cultural backgrounds and learning processes through peer exchanges. This interaction enhances students' awareness of cultural differences and develops their adaptability within multicultural settings. The emotional involvement inherent in experiential learning renders the educational process more vivid and meaningful, with

emotional resonance often sparking stronger motivation to learn. Crucially, experiential learning also cultivates students' intercultural communication skills. In authentic or simulated cultural contexts, students face real challenges posed by different cultural customs and social norms. Through continual adjustment and adaptation, they master communication skills essential for navigating cross-cultural environments. This development not only enhances their language proficiency but also establishes a solid foundation for future intercultural exchanges. With its distinctive advantages, experiential learning makes the teaching of Chinese culture to non-native speakers more dynamic and immersive, offering students a profound opportunity to engage deeply with and comprehensively understand Chinese culture. This approach transcends the limitations of traditional methods, transforming cultural learning into a rich and profound journey of experience.

### *3.3 Mode of Experiential Teaching*

Experiential teaching is an educational method centered on students' active participation and sense of immersion, which demonstrates its richness, diversity and flexibility in teaching Chinese as a foreign language and culture. This teaching mode not only promotes the transmission of cultural knowledge, but also provides students with an intuitive and profound learning experience. The following are several major modes of experiential teaching in teaching Chinese language and culture as a foreign language:

- (1) Situational simulation mode allows students to role-play or problem-solve in specific scenarios by constructing near-authentic cultural situations. This mode helps students understand the social customs and behavioral norms in Chinese culture while developing their cross-cultural communication skills. For example, by simulating the interactive scene of Chinese table manners, students can learn the traditional manners of Chinese culture, such as "saluting tea" and "letting the dishes be served", and thus master the application of these cultural practices more naturally.
- (2) The project-oriented mode allows students to explore and experience Chinese culture through the design of culture-centered learning projects. Projects can be cultural research reports, planning and execution of festivals, or experiences about the making of traditional Chinese crafts. This model allows students to gain an in-depth understanding of cultural themes while enhancing their perception of cultural details through hands-on practice. For example, by making paper cuttings or experiencing the art of calligraphy, students can visualize the charm and connotation of traditional Chinese culture (Luo & Yang, 2018).
- (3) The immersion experience mode enables students to have an all-around cultural experience from listening, speaking, reading and writing by placing them in an all-around Chinese cultural environment. For example, by organizing students to visit traditional Chinese buildings, tour historical and cultural attractions, or participate in the daily life of Chinese families, students can experience the diversity and complexity of Chinese culture in an authentic cultural environment. This all-round immersion experience allows students to understand and integrate the cultural content they have learned more

deeply.

The diversity of experiential teaching modes provides a rich choice of teaching methods for teaching Chinese as a foreign language and culture. These modes strengthen students' cultural cognition and stimulate their positive initiative in the learning process through practical experience. Each mode can be flexibly adjusted according to teaching objectives and students' needs to ensure that the teaching effect is maximized. Through these experiential teaching modes, students not only learn the Chinese language, but also deeply comprehend the essence of Chinese culture, laying a solid foundation for future cross-cultural communication.

#### *3.4 Points of Attention of Experiential Teaching*

In the realm of teaching Chinese as a foreign language, experiential learning emerges as a novel and highly effective pedagogical approach, necessitating meticulous planning and flexible adjustments for successful implementation. To ensure the optimization of teaching outcomes, instructors must pay particular attention to several key aspects during the process. Firstly, the implementation of experiential learning must take into account the students' backgrounds and individual differences. Students from diverse cultural backgrounds often exhibit varying levels of understanding and acceptance of Chinese culture, which requires educators to design activities that are mindful of students' cultural cognition and language proficiency. This consideration not only enhances student engagement but also aligns cultural experiences more closely with their real-life contexts. For beginners in Chinese culture, activities might begin with simple daily etiquettes or festive customs, while those with a certain cultural foundation could be guided towards more profound cultural discussions or on-site experiences, such as exploring the application of traditional Chinese philosophy in modern society. This tailored approach not only boosts teaching effectiveness but also fosters a sense of respect and attention among students, enhancing their cultural identity. The preparation and utilization of teaching resources constitute another critical factor for the success of experiential learning. Unlike traditional lecture-based teaching, experiential learning requires the creation of a realistic cultural ambiance through physical objects, settings, and even multimedia resources. Hence, instructors must prepare and integrate resources thoroughly before activities. For example, when organizing an experience focused on Chinese calligraphy, besides traditional tools like paper, ink, brush, and inkstone, modern technological methods can be employed, such as showcasing masterpieces through videos or using virtual reality to immerse students in the ambiance of ancient Chinese academies. Such multi-layered, multi-sensory experiences not only stimulate students' interest but also deepen their understanding of the essence of Chinese culture. The design of experiential activities should revolve around clear teaching objectives and ensure that every aspect effectively conveys cultural content. This implies that activities should be both engaging and meaningful. Simple cultural entertainment that lacks cultural depth risks becoming superficial and failing to achieve educational goals. For instance, when discussing Chinese tea culture, a tea ceremony performance can be organized, but it is equally important to guide students in

understanding the philosophical underpinnings of the tea ceremony, such as the principles of “Harmony, Respect, Purity, and Tranquility.” Such designs enable students to not only learn the art of tea-making but also appreciate the profound wisdom of “observing changes quietly” inherent in Chinese culture (Yang, 2024). Cultural sensitivity is paramount in experiential learning. Given that teaching Chinese involves students from various cultural backgrounds, educators must be particularly cautious to avoid cultural misunderstandings or conflicts when designing and implementing cultural activities. Providing thorough cultural background explanations before activities can help students understand the content and its underlying cultural values. This approach not only mitigates discomfort arising from cultural differences but also allows students to more openly embrace and appreciate Chinese culture based on respect and understanding. The successful implementation of experiential learning requires thoughtful consideration and skillful arrangement at every stage. Only through such careful planning can this unique educational approach truly fulfill its distinctive educational value in teaching Chinese culture, allowing students to acquire knowledge while deeply experiencing the unique charm of Chinese culture.

#### **4. The Application of Experiential Teaching in Teaching Chinese Language and Culture as a Foreign Language**

In the realm of teaching Chinese as a foreign language, the application of experiential learning extends beyond merely being a pedagogical choice; it represents a dual guidance towards learners’ cultural perception and linguistic cognition. Compared to traditional classroom teaching methods, experiential learning fosters deep immersion and perception within a cultural ambiance through the construction of authentic scenarios and active participation. This approach facilitates students’ natural understanding and acceptance of the target culture. For instance, when teaching about the “Spring Festival”, educators might engage students in traditional activities such as paper cutting and dumpling making. These experiences are not mere entertainment but tangible expressions of cultural essence. Through hands-on practice, students not only learn language expressions related to the festival but also experience the values of family reunion and social harmony inherent in the Spring Festival—insights that are difficult to obtain from textbooks alone. Another significant value of experiential learning lies in its ability to stimulate students’ motivation (Onishchuk, Ikonnikova, Antonenko et al., 2020). Many learners of Chinese as a foreign language may feel alienated or intimidated when confronted with complex cultural knowledge. Experiential learning, through activities, communication, and interaction, simplifies cultural concepts, making them concrete, vivid, and engaging, thereby igniting students’ interest in learning. For example, rather than merely explaining the types and history of tea culture, it is more effective to have students brew tea themselves, savor its aroma, and appreciate its essence. In this hands-on involvement, students not only retain related knowledge but may also develop a profound interest in Chinese culture. However, the effective implementation of experiential learning requires

educators to possess flexible adaptability and a deep understanding of the culture. Activity design must consider both the students' language proficiency and cultural background, and guide them towards a deeper cultural insight through their experiences. For instance, when organizing an activity related to traditional Chinese festivals, teachers should not only make students aware of the customs but also encourage them to reflect on the social psychology and cultural values behind these practices. This ensures that the experience transcends superficial engagement and leads to an understanding and resonance with the cultural spirit. Through experiential learning, cultural transmission evolves from a one-way impartation to a two-way exchange and interaction. In this process of engagement and experience, students' language skills are enhanced, and their cultural identity gradually forms. This teaching model not only enriches the methods of teaching Chinese as a foreign language but also provides a productive avenue for cross-cultural communication. The power of experience lies in its ability to make abstract cultural concepts tangible, touchable, and approachable, thereby revitalizing the teaching of Chinese culture with greater vitality (Moloney & Xu, 2015).

## 5. Conclusion

The application of experiential cultural teaching in the realm of teaching Chinese as a foreign language reveals its unique educational value. By intertwining cultural and linguistic learning, it allows learners to grasp the profound nuances of culture within authentic contexts, thereby significantly enhancing their language proficiency and cross-cultural communication skills. In contrast to traditional teaching methods, experiential teaching more effectively stimulates learners' interest and initiative, encouraging deeper reflection and interaction within a multicultural framework. Future foreign language instruction should increasingly integrate experiential teaching principles, employing innovative pedagogical designs and diverse practical activities to ensure that Chinese language learners not only master linguistic skills but also become bridges for cross-cultural exchange. Amidst the ever-evolving global landscape, the promotion and application of this teaching model will chart new paths for Chinese language education, facilitating the widespread dissemination and profound impact of Chinese language and culture globally.

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