



# The orientation of Teacher's Role in Teaching Chinese Festival Culture as a Foreign Language

## -- A Case Study of the Spring Festival

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**Abstract.** With the enhancement of China's comprehensive national strength and the increasingly close foreign exchanges, the global demand for Chinese learning is growing. Confucius Institutes have been established in many countries around the world, providing an important platform for the promotion of Chinese language and culture. At the same time, many Chinese teachers also actively go abroad to undertake the important mission of spreading Chinese. However, in terms of the role positioning and cognition of Chinese as a foreign language teacher, there are problems and challenges to some extent, whether it is a general Chinese teacher who enters the teaching field through non-professional channels or a student majoring in international Chinese education who has been trained by the higher education system. Cultural teaching, as an indispensable part of teaching Chinese as a foreign language, is increasingly attracting extensive attention and in-depth research. Among them, the Spring Festival, a traditional Chinese festival, has become a hot topic in the field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language with its rich and diverse cultural connotations. Therefore, this paper aims to explore the orientation and function of teachers in the teaching of Chinese festival culture as a foreign language.

**Keywords:** Teacher role; Festival culture teaching; The Spring Festival

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 The significance of festival culture inheritance

Traditional festivals, as Chinese intangible cultural heritage, carry the profound historical and cultural heritage of the Chinese nation for more than 5,000 years. These festivals embody rich values and unique thinking patterns, which not only highlight the national spirit, but also are the concentrated embodiment of the “living soul” of the Chinese nation. General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out, “The extraordinary traditional Chinese culture is our deepest cultural soft power, and also the fertile cultural soil for socialism with Chinese characteristics<sup>[1]</sup>.” As a treasure of the long history and splendid culture of the Chinese nation, the display of firecrackers, Spring Festival

couplets and other unique Chinese culture and customs symbols have been deeply engraved in the hearts of the Chinese people, and become their common memory and pride. The spiritual connotation of reunion, harmony and festival contained in the Spring Festival constitute the spiritual pursuit and values of the Chinese nation, which not only strengthens the national cohesion, but also promotes the development and progress of the nation, and provides strong support for the prosperity of the nation.

Therefore, in today's cultural confidence, the Spring Festival inheritance is of far-reaching and great significance. It is not only a common memory of the Chinese nation, but also a bridge between the past and the future. We should cherish this precious cultural heritage and make it shine brightly in the new era.

## **1.2 The significance of festival culture applied in the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language**

In teaching Chinese as a foreign language, the integration of festival culture is essential. First, it not only shows the image of China, but also spreads the core values of the Chinese nation. Teaching is based on the profound heritage of festival culture and closely combined with the current social development style of China, which is helpful to promote learners to systematically master the language and the cultural knowledge they carry, and dispel the stereotypes they may form about China, so that they can fully understand the true features of Chinese culture and society. Secondly, the implementation of festival culture teaching has a positive effect on promoting the great rejuvenation of Chinese national culture and enhancing the sense of cultural identity. Whether it is the clever integration of cultural elements into language teaching, the establishment of special cultural courses, or the organizing of a variety of extracurricular cultural activities, it can show the diverse customs and profound connotations of the Spring Festival culture, and enhance the international communication and influence of the Spring Festival. At present, several countries have officially listed the Spring Festival as a national festival, and even set it as a statutory holiday, which highlights the importance of the Spring Festival on the international stage, promotes Chinese culture to the international stage, and enhances the cultural confidence of the nation<sup>[2]</sup>.

Liu Xun mentioned in Chinese Teaching concept of "Structure-function-Culture Combination": "structure is the form of language, culture is the content of language... understanding the culture of the destination language country, and enhancing the concept of multi-culture, is also the important purpose of the second language learning<sup>[3]</sup>." As an indispensable part of traditional culture in the Spring Festival, the Spring Festival is not only a concentrated embodiment of the Chinese spirit, but also an important display of China's image and a key force of Chinese expression. Therefore, it is of certain significance to integrate the Spring Festival cultural elements in the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language.

## **2 The embodiment of teachers' role in cultural teaching**

### **2.1 Stimulating students' interest in learning**

#### **2.1.1 Creating the Spring Festival theme teaching situation.**

In the process of second language learning, people often pay attention to the language learning theory of “situational cognition”. Under the guidance of this theory, Chinese learners can acquire and improve language knowledge and skills more effectively by simulating practice in nearly real situations <sup>[4]</sup>. At the same time, the theory also emphasizes that the practice of the target language in the corresponding situation not only helps the learners to preserve and remember the knowledge, but also stimulates the learners' enthusiasm and interest in Chinese learning.

In class, teachers can introduce the situational teaching method to create a more vivid and practical learning scene. For example, in the teaching situation of the word “fu”, the red paper, pen, scissors and other materials should be prepared in advance. In the teaching process, students are guided to experience the pronunciation and meaning of the “fu”, to understand the artistic value of the “fu”, and to feel and experience the unique charm of Chinese language. This teaching method can not only change the monotony of traditional language teaching, but also encourage Chinese learners to participate personally, so as to improve the teaching effect.

#### **2.1.2 Introducing vivid and interesting Spring Festival stories.**

Professor William Smith, an outstanding scholar in the field of English education, first proposed the story teaching method, which is based on the principle of “edutainment”. Its application scope is not limited to English classroom teaching, but permeates the teaching activities in various educational fields. In this teaching method, teachers according to the specific teaching content and actual situation, transfer the educational significance and cultural concepts contained in it through the story of the narrative, so that learners in a relaxed and happy atmosphere to absorb knowledge <sup>[5]</sup>.

In the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language, teachers will integrate the Spring Festival related stories, enrich the teaching content, stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning, and provide them with opportunities to understand the Chinese traditional festival culture, so as to cultivate their cross-cultural awareness and international vision. For example, when the teacher explains the stories and legends of the annual animals, he discusses the customs of wearing red clothes, sticking red couplets, hanging red lights and setting off firecrackers on New Year's Eve, and gradually sublimated into the symbolic meaning of unity and prosperity. Teachers adopt the story teaching method, close to the actual life scene, which can not only improve the acceptance degree of learners, stimulate the emotional resonance of learners, but also increase the interest of teaching, activate the classroom atmosphere, and improve the teaching effect.

## **2.2 Improving students' cross-cultural communication skills**

### **2.2.1 Cultivating students' cultural sensitivity.**

Under the tide of globalization, the communication between different cultures has become more frequent. In this context, cultivating students' cultural sensitivity not only helps them to have a deep insight into the differences between different cultures, but also encourages them to communicate and cooperate in a more confident attitude on the international stage.

Cultivating students' cultural sensitivity can be carried out from multiple dimensions. Firstly, building a rich case base. By collecting a large number of real cases of cross-cultural communication and misunderstanding, including misunderstanding and disputes, etc., students are guided to deeply analyze the significant differences in values and thinking patterns in eastern and Western cultures. It can foster students' acuity to identify cross-cultural differences. Secondly, the targeted situational simulation training is designed. Based on the typical examples in the case library, the simulated situation is constructed, so that students can experience cultural conflicts in the simulated cross-cultural communication activities. Through repeated simulations and trial exercises, students learn to examine problems from the perspective of exotic cultures and gradually master strategies to deal with cross-cultural differences. Ultimately, translating these strategies into practical skills to coping with cultural differences <sup>[6]</sup>. In addition, students are organized to participate in international cultural exchange internship programs. Students learn valuable experience in dealing with actual cultural differences through real interaction with people from different countries. Through these training methods, students' cultural sensitivity is gradually enhanced, and their practical ability to deal with complex cross-cultural environments can be enhanced.

### **2.2.2 Guiding the students on cross-cultural comparison and discussion.**

Cultural comparison teaching refers to the comparative analysis of another culture relying on one language to reveal the commonality and differences between cultures. For Chinese beginners, they can master the Chinese language and its cultural background knowledge more efficiently with the help of their mother tongue background knowledge. Lv Bisong put forward: "Cultural differences not only reflect the characteristics of the language itself, but also reflect the use of the language. Therefore, when people use the second language, it is inevitable to encounter the obstacles caused by cultural differences <sup>[7]</sup>." Kramasch Also pointed out that in order for learners to understand foreign culture, it is necessary to link foreign culture with learners' own culture <sup>[8]</sup>. Therefore, in the process of teaching Chinese as a foreign language, teachers should understand the individuality and generalities of different cultures in advance, and use the positive transfer of learners to help students quickly build the basic framework of Chinese learning, so as to reduce the possible obstacles of cultural differences to the learning process.

Taking "dragon" as an example, as a symbol of our nation, it carries very different connotations in Chinese and western cultures. In Chinese culture, the dragon is a symbol of power and wisdom. In Chinese history and culture, the ancient emperors described themselves as "the rightful king", the title that highlights the supremacy of the

dragon in the feudal dynasties. At the same time, in the classical literary masterpiece "Romance of The Three Kingdoms", Zhuge Liang is known as "Mr. Wolong", which shows the noble status of the dragon in Chinese culture. These phenomena show that the dragon is a spiritual symbol of the Chinese nation for a long time. While in Western culture, "dragon" is regarded as a symbol of evil, it is often described in literary creation as a fierce creature, and is therefore regarded as a synonym for blood and cruelty. By comparing the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, it can help learners to solve their doubts about understanding. When we declare ourselves the descendants of dragons, this statement is more about expressing our desire for a better future than being mistaken by foreigners for a sign of militant or evil. Therefore, educators should pay attention to the differences of cultural teaching and help students to compare and analyze their culture.

To sum up, teachers play an important role in cultural teaching, which can stimulate students' interest and motivation in learning, and further improve students' cross-cultural communication ability.

### **3 Challenges and strategies of cultural teaching**

#### **3.1 Challenges**

The challenge of cultural teaching mainly stems from the teaching dilemma brought about by cultural differences. The three basic elements of the teaching process include teachers, students and teaching materials, among which teachers and students are the main body of teaching activities, while the teaching materials act as the intermediary role, and the teaching content is the object of teaching activities. These three elements form four basic relationships: teachers and students, students and students, students and teaching materials, and teachers and teaching materials. In these relationships, different cultural conflicts may arise due to cultural differences, which may have different degrees of influence on teaching.

##### **3.1.1 Teachers.**

As the leader of educational activities, when living and teaching in a new working environment, teachers will inevitably encounter some frictions and challenges, facing a new group of students and colleagues. This requires teachers to invest time and energy to adapt to the new teaching environment. In the process of adaptation, cultural conflicts are unavoidable, which will have a direct impact on the physical and mental health of teachers, and then may further affect the smooth progress of teaching activities. Therefore, the physical condition of teachers is very important to promoting the smooth progress of teaching activities.

##### **3.1.2 Students.**

In the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language, students, as the main body of learning activities, will inevitably encounter problems caused by cultural differences in the process of acquiring Chinese, leading to the obstacles of cultural adaptation and lack of

understanding. In this context, if teachers fail to resolve these potential conflicts in time and effectively, students may gradually lose their interest in Chinese language learning and Chinese culture, and even have a misunderstanding of Chinese culture. Therefore, teachers should actively treat cultural differences to ensure that students obtain correct cultural understanding in Chinese learning.

### **3.1.3 Teaching materials.**

Textbooks play an intermediary role in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. The adaptation of their content and progress has an important impact on students' learning effect. Textbooks are the key factor to ensure the smooth progress of teaching. Due to the diversified characteristics of students in different learning stages, the setting of the content and progress of the textbooks should be closely aligned with the needs and interests of the teaching objects, which should be regarded as the key aspects of the schools and teachers.

In short, we must treat the teaching dilemma brought about by the cultural conflict with a prudent attitude, and seek proper solution strategies to promote the development of teaching.

## **3.2 Teaching strategies**

### **3.2.1 Breaking through the “text + explanation” mode.**

For a long time, subject to the restriction of traditional educational concepts and external conditions, the main mode of cultural teaching is “in the classroom, read the text, teachers speak, students listen”. Although this model has a certain objective rationality, it is obviously not the only feasible way. Today, with the rapid development of modern science and technology, multimedia is being more and more used in the teaching class of Chinese as a foreign language, which greatly enhances the interest and flexibility of the foreign Chinese language teaching. The integration of modern technology makes the classroom space change from traditional two-dimensional to multi-dimensional, the teaching mode gradually changes from one-way teaching to two-way teacher-student interaction and human-computer interaction, and the teaching content gradually changes from monotonous textbook knowledge to contain colorful pictures, animations, video images and other materials. At the same time, the wide application of the Internet has set up a broad platform for learners' independent learning. In addition, the Chinese as foreign language teaching classroom is undergoing a transformation from teacher-led explanatory teaching to a teaching mode of students participating in discussion and teacher-assisted guidance. Through the use of modern technology, teachers can show the Spring Festival customs and cultural symbols, build more vivid visual effect, put the original isolated words and boring history into vivid image symbol, which can fully display the cultural connotation behind the language, deepen the Chinese learners' cognition of Chinese festival culture and realize the integration of language teaching and culture teaching. This reflects the significant advantages of modern educational technology in teaching Chinese as a foreign language, and effectively promotes the innovation of traditional teaching mode.

### 3.2.2 Innovating teaching methods.

In China's new curriculum reform, innovation is regarded as the core concept, and teachers' innovative spirit and ability are the key to shaping their unique teaching style and improving their teaching quality. This spirit is reflected in the innovation of teaching methods, educational ideas, teaching content and evaluation system. Therefore, teachers should actively cultivate the innovative spirit and innovative ability, better adapt to the development needs of education, and cultivate more excellent talents.

#### 3.2.2.1 Immersive teaching method.

Immersive teaching method, also known as immersive bilingual education, this mode is to restore realistic language environment, make the students directly contact in the context and experience the real language through the creation of learning environment and language culture situation, so as to deepen the visual, listening, speaking, writing multi-dimensional immersive learning experience, finally achieve the purpose of cultural guidance<sup>[9]</sup>.

(1) Creating a language and humanistic situation to enhance the atmosphere and experience. When teaching the Spring Festival culture, teachers should use traditional decorations such as red lanterns, Spring Festival couplets, fu characters and so on in advance to decorate the classroom to create a strong festive atmosphere for the Spring Festival. In addition, Chinese knots can be hung, and paper cutting and other Spring Festival handicrafts can be displayed to enrich the classroom environment. In the teaching process, teachers should use Chinese as much as possible to communicate with students, and gradually deepen from the basic teaching instructions to the teaching of learning content, and strive to create a real language environment. Such as, teachers can teach Spring Festival greetings and encourage students to experience and practice each other, so as to enhance the interaction and effectiveness of learning. (2) Learning language knowledge and enriching activity forms. In the organization of activity form, it can be divided into two types: class and after-class. The class activities cover fun games, group collaboration and personal style display; After-class activities involve homework assignment, semester study practice, etc. The class session can have cultural elements be integrated into the Spring Festival, showing a brief introduction of related poems and Spring Festival symbols (such as Spring Festival couplets, lanterns, firecrackers, etc.); After class, students are organized to participate in the dumpling making activity, guided to describe the making process in Chinese, and share personal experience and perception in the subsequent classes, so as to improve the learning effect. The implementation of this series of immersive activities can break through the shackles of the traditional Chinese teaching mode and highlight the students' dominant position and personal experience in the learning process. (3) Sublimate the cultural emotion, close to the life of empathy and resonance. When teachers teach the customs of the Spring Festival, they skillfully use the examples of dumplings in daily life to expand to the comparison of Chinese and Western catering culture. Whether in the campus canteen, family table, or dining out, students can fully understand, practice and experience the use of chopsticks, knives and forks through observation and practice, so as to realize the unique differences between Chinese and Western food. This intuitive experience

not only enriches students' mastery of Chinese language knowledge, but also promotes their experience of internalized culture in mind and externalized in emotion.

### 3.2.2.2 *Flipped classroom model.*

Flipped classroom transforms the traditional teaching mode of “imparting knowledge in class + internalization after class” into a new teaching mode of “learning knowledge before class + classroom internalization”. This mode makes full use of the advantages of modern media technology, and puts the link of teachers teaching knowledge before class in multimedia ways such as video and recording, requiring students to download videos and study independently, finally they complete the preview task before class. Teachers use the valuable time in class to answer all kinds of doubts encountered by students in the process of self-study, promote students' understanding, digestion and absorption of the knowledge learned, so as to realize the effective integration and internalization of knowledge <sup>[10]</sup>.

Before class, teachers make concise and clear bilingual micro videos according to teaching objectives and content. The video opens with a theme song about the Spring Festival, igniting students' interest in learning, and skillfully incorporating key words and phrases closely related to the Spring Festival. Then, the festival customs are visually presented by displaying the pictures. Teachers design the inspiring questions of videos and pictures, encourage students to watch videos independently and conduct preliminary self-examination of learning results. In this process, students need to record their own mistakes and understanding of the confusion in the process of answering questions, in order to get answers in class; In class, students communicate with their learning results and questions both within the group and between the groups. The unsolved problems are explained by the teacher, so that each student can understand and master the knowledge. In class, the teacher focuses on the problems existing in the preview, and the rest of the time is fully reserved for students to conduct language output and exercise students' expression ability and comprehensive language application ability. After class, teachers can take writing or practice homework to consolidate knowledge. In terms of written homework, students are required to collect cultural legends related to the Spring Festival, or compare them with important festivals in their own country, and then share and communicate with them. In terms of practical homework, students show their parents the Spring Festival greeting cards or handicrafts made by themselves, so that deepen the experience and perception of festival culture.

### 3.2.2.3 *Output-oriented method.*

The theory emphasizes that students' learning is output-oriented, rather than simply pursuing the mastery of knowledge points or the completion of homework. Teachers set learning objectives and evaluation standards according to the social literacy requirements of students, and plan teaching activities and evaluation systems according to objects and standards. The teaching process of output-oriented method is divided into three links: drive, facilitation and evaluation <sup>[11]</sup>.

(1) Drive link: Teachers can arouse students' interest and attention by showing pictures or video materials related to the Spring Festival. In the link of clarifying the teaching objectives, the teacher emphasizes the two main output objectives of this lesson.

First of all, students need to master the vocabulary and grammar points learned in this lesson, and be able to read and write accurately. Secondly, after learning the new words and grammar points involved in this lesson, the students can use the knowledge they have learned to answer the questions raised by the teacher. (2) Facilitation link: The teacher explains the origin, development process and customs of the Spring Festival in a simple way, involving the key words related to the Spring Festival. Then, teachers ask questions to test whether the students can use Chinese to accurately express what they have learned. In order to improve the learning effect of students, teachers should mark their corresponding mother tongue-assisted learning beside Chinese characters to help students better understand and remember. (3) Output and evaluation link: After learning the Spring Festival, the teacher distributed red paper and scissors to the students, encouraging them to draw and cut out their favorite lanterns. In small groups, they shared and discussed the lanterns created by their own countries. Then, the teacher invited the students to the stage to show the work, and guided the students to explain the cultural meaning of the lantern with concise words. In the whole process, the teachers pay close attention to the students' performance, and give timely correction and feedback for the pronunciation, grammar and other details, to ensure that the students can make continuous progress in practice.

### **3.2.3 Interdisciplinary nature of teacher knowledge.**

As a teacher of Speaking Chinese as a foreign language, it is far from enough to master the Chinese language knowledge only. The teaching work should go beyond the teaching of basic knowledge to the students' cross-cultural communication and the comprehensive cultivation of Chinese language thinking. Therefore, teachers need to actively broaden their own knowledge system, enhance their understanding of Chinese culture, appropriately absorb foreign cultural knowledge, so that students can have a comprehensive understanding of the culture, history and customs of the nation. In this way, in the teaching process, teachers can hold a rational attitude and start from the perspective of students to deeply analyze and properly deal with the language communication problems caused by cultural differences, so as to ensure the optimal level of teaching quality and effect. In addition, frequent discussion and exchange of cultural knowledge with students is not only a process of mutual learning, but also helps us to understand foreign folk customs and communication etiquette, and stimulates students' enthusiasm for learning Chinese culture, which further highlights the indispensable position of culture in the process of language learning.

To sum up, in the context of globalization, cultural diversity has become an indispensable part of our life. In order to enable students to navigate in this multicultural world, we need to pay attention to the use of cultural teaching strategies.

## **4 Conclusion**

With the development and progress of the society, international exchanges and cooperation are particularly important, and Chinese culture has gradually become the focus of global attention. In this context, international Chinese education has experienced a

change from simple language teaching to equal emphasis on language and culture, and gradually developed to the stage of setting up cultural courses. As an important representative of the Chinese tradition, the Spring Festival has gone from Chinatown to the whole world, and some countries have listed the Spring Festival as a legal holiday. Teachers, as knowledge transmitters and cultural inheritors, help students understand the essence of traditional Chinese culture with the form of cultural teaching activities, and promote cross-cultural exchanges and communication.

The author believes that the future development trend of Chinese culture teaching as a foreign language will tend to meet the personalized needs of students, integrate teaching into technical means and promote the internationalization process of teaching. Teachers should cultivate students' cross-cultural communication skills, deepen their understanding of Chinese culture, so that they can express friendship and goodwill to the Chinese people, be willing to support China's development, eliminate the misunderstanding of "China threat theory", and work together to promote the beautiful vision of harmonious coexistence in the world.

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