



Statistical Analysis of Cultural Items in the International Chinese Education Network Course Resource Database: Based on the “Chinese Bridge” Delegation Online Experience Platform

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze cultural items in the international Chinese education network course resource database found in the “Chinese Bridge” delegation online experience platform. Data were collected from 878 culture-themed courses implemented by 106 schools (including 64 universities, and 39 vocational colleges, 3 high schools) around China during the year 2023. After utilizing “The Framework of Reference for Chinese Culture and Society in International Chinese Language Education” as classification criteria and applying statistical analysis method, three primary cultural items categories and 27 secondary cultural items categories were showcased. The results showed that schools focused more on society and lifestyles ($N=350$; 39.9%) and traditional culture ($N=301$; 34.2%) compared to contemporary China ($N=227$; 25.9%) in the primary category. The most popular secondary category items were leisure ($N=178$), art ($N=109$), cultural heritage

	<p>(N=102), food (N=83), and inventions (N=59) the above five accounted for more than 60%. These two category levels systematically reflected the synchronic and diachronic characteristics of cultural teaching from supra-regional and regional cultural content. However, two shortcomings were identified, namely homogenization of cultural items presentation and simplification of teaching medium language. The high-frequency recurring cultural items were Chinese tea, Chinese painting, and Tai Chi, which in total were presented in 107 courses and accounted for more than 12%. English is the most important medium language after Chinese, while teaching other languages is relatively lacking. The results of this study also provide valuable insights of improvement strategies proposed by precise learning demands, diversified cultural narration and technology assisted teaching to inspire the schools' international Chinese education network course resources.</p> <p>Keywords: International Chinese Education, Cultural Items, “Chinese Bridge” Online Experience Platform, Network Chinese Course Resource Database</p>
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Introduction

In recent years, with the continuous elevation of China’s international status, more and more people have begun to learn Chinese. The role of Chinese in international communication is increasingly prominent, and the international influence of the Chinese language continues to rise. As of 2023, Chinese teaching has been conducted in over 180 countries and regions, with 81 countries incorporating Chinese into their national education systems. There are over 80,000 schools and training institutions offering Chinese courses.¹ Chinese language and culture have attracted unceasing attention from countries around the world, and the trends of “China fever” and “Chinese fever” has led to the vigorous development of international Chinese language education (Tao et al., 2020). Chinese language learners have different motivations and purposes for learning Chinese. On the one hand, they want to communicate with Chinese people, and on the other hand, they want to deeply and systematically understand and explore the cultural connotations and essence of Chinese culture.

However, in the early stages of the development of international Chinese education, cultural teaching did not receive sufficient attention. In the process of intercultural communication, Chinese learners from different cultural backgrounds relied on their own native culture to decode the

information they receive, leading to the distortion of information (Zhang, 1990). Teaching methods that focus only on grammar rules and ignore cultural factors cannot cultivate students' communicative abilities (Lu, 1990; Zhao, 1989). Therefore, as international Chinese education continues to develop, higher demands should be placed on the teaching of Chinese culture. Despite the growing attention to cultural teaching in international Chinese education since the mid-1980s (Zhang, 2006), the long-awaited cultural syllabus has not yet been introduced, and there are still no standards for cultural teaching. Scholars generally agree that cultural content is the most important component of the cultural syllabus and is fundamental for implementing teaching and curriculum development (Zhou et al., 2019).

Learning about culture requires the provision of specialized cultural courses, and international Chinese online learning platforms have rich course resources and convenient spatial and temporal conditions. The design and teaching of cultural items in the international Chinese education network course resources have a great impact on students' understanding of culture. International Chinese network courses not only serve teaching purposes but also have cultural dissemination functions (Liu, 2023). The research on international Chinese cultural items aims to give new connotations and functions to Chinese culture through the cultural items system, and to achieve efficient teaching of Chinese cultural knowledge and vivid storytelling of Chinese stories through the course resource database. The "Chinese Bridge" Delegation Online Experience Platform, relying on the brand recognition and good reputation of the "Chinese Bridge", is an online international Chinese education course resource database serving global Chinese enthusiasts. It also aims to enhance the mutual understanding of language and culture between Chinese and foreign youth and strengthen the exchange of language education between China and other countries. Telling Chinese stories to the world and presenting a real, multidimensional and comprehensive picture of Chinese culture is a major issue in enhancing international Chinese education. Against this background, actively developing Chinese cultural teaching and building international Chinese online learning platforms and resources will help the world to develop a deeper and more accurate understanding of Chinese culture and promote exchanges and mutual learning among diverse civilizations.

In this context, this study utilizes cultural items classification standards to conduct an in-depth examination of the cultural course resources in the "Chinese Bridge" platform. It analyzes the deficiencies and problems related to the presentation of cultural items in the international Chinese education network course resource library. Furthermore, it proposes diverse pathways and improvement strategies for the continuous optimization of international Chinese education network courses. This study aims to contribute to research

on cultural teaching in international Chinese education networks and assist in the development of resources for international Chinese online learning platforms.

Literature Review

International Chinese Education Network Course Resources

Since the 1990s, many institutions have established international Chinese language education network teaching platforms. Currently, research on international Chinese language education network teaching platforms mainly focuses on the development status, platform resources and teaching models.

In terms of the development status of international Chinese language education network teaching platforms Zhou et al. (2007) conducted a questionnaire survey of 115 international students. The results showed that the main factors causing learner dissatisfaction with existing Chinese language network teaching platforms were the lack of effective guidance and the difficulty of learning content. Zheng (2015) conducted a survey and analysis of nearly a hundred Chinese teaching websites at home and abroad over the past 20 years, selecting 29 websites that could operate normally and categorizing them into three types: course teaching, cultural resources, and learning tools. Lv and Zhang (2017) analyzed the basic situation, online design mode, teaching design, and operation promotion mode of five Chinese online interactive teaching platforms, and pointed out the problems existing in the theoretical foundation, platform design and operation, platform evaluation system, and learners' experience. Wu (2021) proposed the mechanism of co-construction and sharing of resources between teachers and students, as well as the structural form of the collecting fragments to form a system resource, and promoted the development of a global community of Chinese teachers through a resource development platform. Liang et al. (2023) conducted a study using 77 international Chinese education-related courses and learners on the Coursera platform as research subjects. They centered around the syllabus of international Chinese education and MOOC classification and built a multi-dimensional and multi-level quality evaluation system for MOOCs.

In terms of resources on international Chinese language education network teaching platforms Chen (2018) took courses on the Coursera platform as an example, attempting to analyze with particular focus on the aspects of course nature, teaching content, and form, in order to obtain some insights beneficial for the future construction of similar resources. Zeng and Lu (2021) categorized international Chinese digital teaching resources from

the perspective of resource organization into eight main types: digital textbooks, multimedia materials, corpora (resource libraries), test papers, educational websites, teaching software, literature materials, and teaching tools. Yu (2022) proposed that the support of information technology should be strengthened in the process of constructing MOOC resources in universities, thereby producing systematic and visual high-quality MOOC courses. Li and Wu (2024) through comparing the two learning platforms in terms of their construction, teaching and management marketing, found that both platforms teach the Chinese language to overseas young children through live online courses, and have both established their own official websites and clients.

In terms of teaching models on online Chinese language teaching platforms Ma (2016) discussed the existing online teaching models, including assisted classroom-style and self-learning models, and proposed the development of an interactive teaching model for Chinese language learning suitable for the Internet. Chen (2018) took courses on the Coursera platform as an example, attempting to analyze them from aspects such as course nature, teaching content, and format, in order to gain insights beneficial for future development of such resources. Liu (2022) conducted survey-based research on the online blended learning demands and teaching practices of international Chinese MOOCs. Xu and Fan (2023) took the international Chinese education TikTok account “Hanyuqiao” as a case study, selecting 275 videos as samples, and evaluated its content quality as regards four dimensions: scene quality, expression quality, access quality, and communication quality. The study came to the conclusion that the TikTok account currently suffers from issues such as chaotic content orientation, excessive entertainment focus, poor promotional effects, and lack of operational thinking.

Cultural Course Teaching in International Chinese Education

The international Chinese language teaching community began to focus on cultural education in the early 1980s. This development can be divided into three phases over time. In the initial stage, the research primarily aimed to illustrate the role of culture in language teaching. During the succeeding developmental phase, the research centered around the issues within cultural education. Finally, in the concluding and prospective phase, the research direction shifted towards discussing various aspects of teaching practice in cultural education. Sun (2009) pointed out that research on cultural teaching in international Chinese education can be roughly categorized into three phases. During the first two phases, studies on cultural teaching mainly revolved around the relationship between cultural teaching and language

teaching. In the initial phase, emphasis was placed on highlighting the significant role of cultural teaching in facilitating language learning. Meanwhile, in the second phase, research primarily addressed the primary and secondary issues regarding the relationship between cultural teaching and language teaching. The third phase saw an emergence of more discussions on the principles of cultural teaching.

During the initial phase of the development of international Chinese language education, cultural teaching did not receive sufficient attention. This did not begin to occur until Zhang (1990) pointed out that in the process of communication between native speakers, the influence of culture on communication was not prominent, which was overlooked by both parties. However, during cross-cultural communication, both parties decode messages based on their own native cultural backgrounds, leading to the distortion of information. Neglecting cultural factors and only teaching grammar rules cannot sufficiently cultivate students' communicative abilities (Lu, 1990; Zhang & Bi, 1991; Zhao, 1989). Wang (2001) emphasized the development of students' cross-cultural communication abilities, requiring students to go beyond the limitations of their own culture in communication.

Regarding the relationship between culture and language teaching, Wang (1991) believed it was difficult to clearly define the primary and secondary relationships between the two. Zhang (1984) suggested that background knowledge about language should be taught in language teaching. Chen (1994) argued that culture in teaching should be language-oriented, focusing on interpreting cultures directly related to communication rather than other cultural knowledge. In other words, both believed that language is primary, and culture is secondary. Zhang (2004) studied the proportion of cultural and language teaching in education. Through the above studies, it was generally confirmed that language teaching takes precedence over cultural teaching. However, the ratio of language to cultural teaching should change as students' proficiency levels increase, with a common understanding that language is emphasized in the beginner stage, while cultural lessons become more prominent in the intermediate and advanced stages (Wang, 1991). Zu (2023) systematically discussed three questions regarding cultural teaching: the theoretical foundations and characteristics of the framework structure; and the objectives and focal points of cultural teaching; the principles and characteristics of organizing cultural content.

Regarding the principles of cultural teaching, Wang (1993) believed that the levels of cultural teaching should not only be based on students' proficiency levels but also consider students' individual factors, such as educational and native cultural background, and carry out cultural teaching in a targeted and moderate manner. Zhang (2006) pointed out that the objectives of teaching cultural factors and cultural knowledge are different,

and both the content and teaching methods should be different. Li (2011) emphasized that cultural teaching should be impartial and pragmatic, advocating for the transmission of universal cultural values. Ding (2024) reassessed the value of the new definition of international Chinese education and proposed effective dissemination of the concepts and ideas of Chinese excellent culture through analyzing the cultural teaching system in three aspects: requirements for teachers' quality, selection of cultural teaching content, and promotion of communication.

Cultural Items Systems of International Chinese Education

In order to improve students' communicative abilities, it is necessary to study the influence of cultural factors on communication and classify these factors to better suit the practical situation of Chinese language teaching, thereby establishing effective cultural outlines to guide teaching. Current research on cultural syllabi can mainly be divided into three parts: principles of compilation, studies on cultural topics, and syllabus development.

In terms of writing principles, many scholars have proposed suggestions for the classification principles of culture. For example, Zhao (1989) starts from the essence of culture and proposes multiple classification standards for culture, including categorizing culture into material culture and spiritual culture based on their nature, and further dividing it into categories such as religious culture and architectural culture. Lu (2015) both believe that communicative culture and contemporary synchronous culture are more important in second language teaching. Zhang (2006) believes that it is necessary for cultural teaching to determine the form of culture in teaching Chinese as a foreign language and its impact on cross-cultural communication abilities, and to define the content or scope of cultural teaching.

Wei and Bian (1992) defined cultural items as follows: In the cultural system, there are a series of cultural elements that are both related and distinct. Cultural items refer to cultural elements that contain certain detailed characteristics. They pointed out that cultural items are components of cultural teaching materials and emphasized the introduction of modern culture, mainstream culture, and subculture in teaching. Zhou et al. (2019) similarly regarded cultural items as the most important content of cultural outlines, serving as the basic elements for teaching implementation and textbook compilation.

In the actual process of syllabus development, scholars believe that establishing a cultural syllabus similar to vocabulary and grammar syllabi is feasible. Zhang and Bi (1991) explored cultural items that influence communication at both surface and deep levels, and summarized a table for discussing communication cultural items. Wei and Bian (1992) provided

principles and methods for dividing cultural items, and designed a hierarchical division method for cultural items. Lin (1997) discussed different approaches and main content for developing cultural outlines. Ma (2019) developed a five-level Chinese proficiency test cultural grading outline in the form of “4 major categories - 21 subcategories - 101 sub-subcategories - 371 cultural points - examples of content”. Zhou et al.(2019) established a three-level “Chinese Culture Items Table” based on the Global Chinese Teaching Resources Pool. In 2022, the Center for Language Education and Cooperation, the Ministry of Education of China formulated the “The Framework of Reference for Chinese Culture and Society in International Chinese Language Education”, which sorted out the current content and objectives of teaching Chinese culture, providing a reference and basis for the setting and teaching of cultural courses in Chinese teaching at home and abroad.

Methodology

Research Objects

The research focuses on the “Chinese Bridge” Delegation Online Experience Platform course resource (online video courses). The “Chinese Bridge” is hosted by the Center for Language Education and Cooperation, and serves as the official platform for Chinese language and cultural experience courses. Schools across the country provide online course resources, and learners from all over the world access and share these resources through the online platform. The content of “Chinese Bridge” online courses covers various aspects of Chinese language, national conditions, cultural skills etc. As the official platform for Chinese language and cultural experience courses, the “Chinese Bridge” serves as a crucial link in international the Chinese language and cultural education, bridging cultures, friendships, and minds around the world. The “Chinese Bridge” delegation online course resource database fully leverages the advantages of online tools, breaking through spatial and temporal limitations and attracting numerous learners worldwide. This study, based on the concept of cultural items classification framework, conducts statistical analysis of the cultural items in the “Chinese Bridge” delegation online course resource database for the year 2023.

Research Instrument

This study utilizes the “The Framework of Reference for Chinese Culture and Society in International Chinese Language Education”

(hereinafter referred to as the “Classification Framework”) (Center for Language Education and Cooperation, 2022) to examine the quantity of cultural items in the “Chinese Bridge” delegation online course resources and conduct relevant analysis.

The classification framework provides a systematic and descriptive overview of the content and objectives of teaching Chinese culture and national conditions. It divides Chinese cultural teaching content into two levels, including the 3 primary categories (society lifestyles, traditional culture, contemporary China) and 32 secondary categories (referring to Table 1), demonstrating the cultural content encompassed in international Chinese education from various perspectives. The classification framework considers the systematic and comprehensive nature of cultural teaching content while emphasizing the uniqueness of Chinese culture and national conditions, encompassing both ancient and modern aspects and stressing the relationship between the inheritance and promotion of traditional culture and contemporary society.

Table 1

Classification Structure of the Classification Framework

No.	Primary Category	Secondary Category
1	Society and Lifestyle	Food/Housing/Clothing/Transportation/Family/Festivals Celebrations/Leisure/Consumption/ Employment/Verbal Communication/Non-verbal Communication/Socializing/Language and Culture
2	Traditional Culture	History/Cultural Heritage/Literature/Art/Philosophy/Religion/Inventions/ Exchanges Between China and Other Countries
3	Contemporary China	Geography/Population and Ethnicity/Politics and Government/Economy/Social Security/Education/Spoken and Written Language /Literature and Art/Science and Technology/Media/External Exchanges

The cultural items classification framework aims to help students understand both traditional and contemporary Chinese society and culture, and to grasp the similarities and differences between Chinese culture and the culture of the learners’ own countries. The overarching goals include dimensions of cultural knowledge, cultural understanding, cross-cultural awareness, and cultural attitudes. This approach enables students to adopt an inclusive and respectful attitude towards Chinese culture.

Table 2

Goal Dimensions of the Classification Framework

N0.	Objective Dimensions	Elaboration
1	Cultural Knowledge	Understanding the general overview and main characteristics of Chinese traditional culture, contemporary China, society, and life.
2	Cultural Understanding	Recognizing the diversity and dynamics of Chinese culture; Understanding the connection between traditional culture and contemporary society and lifestyles; Understanding the cultural connotations and concepts embodied in cultural products, institutions, and behaviors.
3	Cross-cultural Awareness	Understanding the similarities and differences between Chinese culture and the culture of the learners' own countries; Fostering sensitivity to cultural similarities and differences between different cultures.
4	Cultural Attitudes	Adopting an attitude of respect, tolerance, and empathy towards the characteristics of Chinese culture and the differences between cultures; Transcending stereotypes and cultural biases.

According to Table 2, the framework covers various aspects of language and culture teaching, and sets corresponding requirements for different levels based on students' cognitive and learning characteristics, rather than setting hierarchical goals based on the difficulty of cultural items and students' Chinese proficiency levels.

The more comprehensive cultural items classification provides a clearer presentation of the timeliness of cultural items and sets teaching content and goals, which allows educators and researchers to have a clearer understanding and control over cultural teaching. It also provides a basis for researching the orientation of cultural items in cultural teaching.

However, it must be noted that since this study aims to analyze the presentation status of cultural courses and cultural items within a single platform, it does not involve comparative analysis across multiple platforms. Therefore, there is a certain limitation in the study due to the absence of multiple intercoders to enhance the validity of the results under the classification framework.

Statistical Methods

This research classifies the quantity and distribution of cultural items in the “Chinese Bridge” delegation online course resources database according to the standards of the classification framework. The statistics are conducted on a per-course basis, with one themed course calculated as one cultural items and each course counted once (episodes of the same course are not cumulatively counted). During sample analysis, the cultural elements presented in the courses are classified into primary and secondary categories of cultural items according to the classification framework.

One example of this is a course titled “Mural Art of Fahai Temple” offered as part of the “Crossing Millennia Silk Road–Exploring Cultural Impressions: Chinese-Arab Cultural Encounter” online exchange program hosted by Beijing Language and Culture University (referenced in Table 3, below), which introduced the Beijing Fahai Temple Mural Art Museum and its collection of mural treasures through video presentations. The cultural element of this course sample is summarized as “mural” categorized under the “art” secondary item and belonging to the “traditional culture” primary item. Illustrated as this example, this research will conduct a statistical analysis of all cultural items covered by the cultural courses in the “Chinese Bridge” delegation online course resources database in 2023, thereby discovering the overall characteristics and related issues of the presentation of cultural items. Based on this, effective teaching suggestions will be proposed.

Table 3

Example of Cultural Items Statistics

Themed Course Name	Cultural Element	Primary Category	Secondary Category	Cultural Items Quantity
Mural Art of Fahai Temple	Mural	Traditional Culture	Art	1

Results and Discussion

Overall Analysis

The “Chinese Bridge” delegation online course resource database had a total of 106 schools offering 878 themed courses, covering 3 primary cultural items categories and 27 secondary cultural items categories.

The statistics were conducted on a per-course basis, with one themed course calculated as one cultural items and each course counted once

(episodes of the same course are not cumulatively counted (see statistical methods). 878 themed courses (i.e. 878 cultural items) covered a wide range of cultural categories with abundant cultural elements. It encompassed three primary cultural items categories: Society and Lifestyles, Traditional Culture, and Contemporary China.

Combined with Table 4, in terms of the number of courses related to cultural items, the primary cultural items category “Society and Lifestyles” had the highest number with 350 cultural items, accounting for 39.9% of the total cultural items. “Traditional Culture” followed with 301 cultural items, accounting for 34.2% of the total cultural items, while “Contemporary China” had the lowest number with 227 courses, accounting for 25.9% of the total cultural items.

Table 4

Quantity and Proportion of Primary Cultural Items

No.	Primary Cultural Items Category	Cultural Items Quantity	Proportion
1	Society and Lifestyles	350	39.9%
2	Traditional Culture	301	34.2%
3	Contemporary China	227	25.9%

Additionally, among the total of 878 courses, there were 27 secondary cultural categories that actually presented, including Food, Leisure, History, Cultural Heritage, Literature, Geography, Economy, Science and Technology, etc. According to Table 5, the top five secondary cultural items in terms of course quantity were Leisure ($N=178$), Art ($N=109$), Cultural Heritage ($N=102$), Food ($N=83$), and Inventions ($N=59$). The total number of these five cultural items ($N=531$) accounted for 60.5% of all cultural items.

Table 5

Quantity and Proportion of Secondary Cultural Items

No.	Secondary Cultural Items Category	Cultural Items Quantity	Proportion
1	Leisure	178	20.3%
2	Art	109	12.4%

3	Cultural Heritage	102	11.6%
4	Food	83	9.5%
5	Inventions	59	6.7%
6	Economy	41	4.7%
7	Science and Technology	38	4.3%
8	Transportation	33	3.8%
9	Media	29	3.3%
10	Spoken and Written Language	29	3.3%
11	Literature and Art	27	3.1%
12	Geography	26	3.0%
13	Education	23	2.6%
14	Festivals Celebrations	15	1.7%
15	Clothing	14	1.6%
16	Consumption	13	1.5%
17	Philosophy	11	1.2%
18	Literature	9	0.9%
19	Population and Ethnicity	7	0.8%
20	External Exchanges	7	0.8%
21	Exchanges Between China and Other Countries	5	0.6%
22	Verbal Communication	4	0.5%
23	Socializing	4	0.5%
24	History	4	0.5%
25	Family	3	0.3%
26	Language and Culture	3	0.3%
27	Religion	2	0.2%

Among the primary cultural items categories, schools showed more interest in Society and Lifestyles and traditional culture compared to contemporary China. Regarding the secondary cultural items categories, schools focused more on cultural items related to leisure, art, cultural heritage, and food, while topics related to religion had the least coverage.

The statistics also revealed that there were five secondary cultural categories (Housing, Employment, Non-verbal Communication, Politics and Government, Social Security) that were not included in the cultural curriculum. The possible reasons were as follows: Employment, Politics and Government, Social Security might involve current Chinese policies and systems, often requiring audiences to have deeper and more specialized knowledge reserves; Non-verbal Communication mainly involved gestures or body postures, which were often practiced in language teaching classrooms; and Housing involved housing styles and interior decoration, which may be too private to display and thus items were mainly focused on teaching in traditional cultural architecture. Therefore, it was possible that due to considerations such as learners' comprehension abilities, practical conditions, and maximizing the representation of cultural elements, schools had not included the above five secondary cultural categories as important content in cultural teaching.

Cultural Items in the Society and Lifestyles

As shown in Table 6, there were a total of 350 cultural items in the “Society and Lifestyles” primary category, accounting for 39.9% of the total cultural items. This primary category covered 10 secondary categories that actually showcased. In terms of the quantity of cultural items in the secondary category, the top three were leisure (N=178), food (N=83), and transportation (N=33). The total number of cultural items in these three categories accounted for 84% of all items in the “Society and Lifestyles” primary category.

Table 6

Quantity and Distribution of Cultural Items in the Society and Lifestyles

No.	Secondary Cultural Items Category	Cultural Items Quantity	Proportion	Cultural Elements
1	Leisure	178	50.9%	Travel/Tai Chi/Sports/Movies/Games/Animation

2	Food	83	23.7%	Snacks/Cuisine/Tea
3	Transportation	33	9.4%	Bike Sharing/High-speed Rail/Airports/Subway
4	Festivals Celebrations	15	4.3%	Dragon Boat Festival, Spring Festival, Winter Fishing Festival
5	Clothing	14	4.0%	Hanfu/Qipao/Tibetan Clothing/Makeup
6	Consumption	13	3.7%	Digital Payment/Online Shopping/Logistics
7	Verbal Communication	4	1.1%	Greetings/Apologies/Congratulations/Asking for Directions
8	Socializing	4	1.1%	Social Etiquette
9	Family	3	0.9%	Family/Marriage Customs
10	Language and Culture	3	0.9%	Idioms/“Fu” Culture(Culture of Good Fortune)

Hammerly (1982) categorizes culture in second language teaching into information culture, behavioral culture, and achievement culture. Behavioral culture refers to people’s lifestyles, actual behaviors, attitudes, values, etc., and it is the most important factor for successful communication. Zhou et al. (2019) further explains behavioral culture as what people do and think in the target language culture. Through statistics, behavioral culture, especially content related to the lifestyle of Chinese people, is highly emphasized in the “Chinese Bridge” delegation online course resource database. Cultural items reflecting the lifestyle of Chinese people, such as leisure, food, and transportation, are widely used in cultural teaching. Referring to Table 6, the secondary category “Travel” with 33 cultural items showcased the most popular modes of transportation in China today, including bike-sharing, high-speed rail, airplanes, and subways. This helps learners gain a multi-dimensional and comprehensive understanding of the lifestyle of Chinese people.

Chinese culture encompasses both a supra-regional, mutually recognized Han culture and regional variations of Han culture (Wei & Bian, 1992). In other words, the presentation of Chinese culture in teaching should be diverse and rich, rather than singular. Moran (2001) once differentiated cultural understanding as progressing from understanding specific cultures to understanding multiple cultures. Chinese culture possesses its own complexity and diversity. From a regional perspective, Chinese culture not only reflects the characteristics of multiple ethnic groups but also demonstrates significant differences among different regions and ethnicities.

Tourism can serve as an instructive example in this context. In the “Chinese Bridge” delegation online course resource database of 2023, there were 110 courses related to tourism, making it the most frequently presented theme within leisure cultural items and the highest frequency cultural element among all courses. These cultural items cover a wide range of Chinese regions, including Beijing, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Shanghai, Xi’an, Chongqing, Guangzhou, Pingyao, Lijiang, Tianjin, and others. For example, East China Normal University’s “Embracing Diversity and Inclusiveness” allows students to experience various aspects of Shanghai culture; Jilin Normal University offers a themed course called “Gathering Online to Learn Chinese, Appreciating Jilin Culture Across Screens”; Chengdu University offers a themed course called “Traveling Sichuan with Giant Pandas,” highlighting the distinctive cultural features of Sichuan Province; and Xi’an International Studies University offers a course titled “Experience the Cultural Charm of the Ancient Capital,” exploring the historical culture of Xi’an.

Through different regional cultural items, students gain insights into a diverse China and deepen their understanding of Chinese culture and lifestyles in different regions through the presentation of various Chinese cities.

Cultural Items in the Traditional Culture

Combining with Table 7, there were a total of 301 cultural items related to the “Society and Lifestyles” primary category, accounting for 34.2% of the total, covering 8 secondary category that actually revolved. In terms of the number of cultural items in the secondary category, the top three were art (N=109), cultural heritage (N=102), and items related to ancient Chinese inventions (N=59). The total quantity of items in these three categories accounted for 89.7% of the “Society and Lifestyles” primary category.

Table 7

Quantity and Distribution of Cultural Items in the Traditional Culture

No.	Secondary Cultural Items Category	Cultural Items Quantity	Proportion	Cultural Elements
1	Art	109	36.2%	Chinese Painting/Dance/Instruments/Flower Arrangement/Traditional Opera/Calligraphy

2	Cultural Heritage	102	33.9%	Ancient Architecture/Museums/Lacquerware/Shadow Puppetry/Embroidery/Paper Cutting/Acrobatics/Kites
3	Inventions	59	19.6%	Banknotes/Dujiangyan Weir Irrigation System/Traditional Chinese Medicine/Solar Terms/Printing/Paper Making
4	Philosophy	11	3.6%	Confucianism/Confucius
5	Literature	9	3.0%	Mythology/Three Kingdoms Journey to the West/Ancient Poetry
6	Exchanges Between China and Other Countries	5	1.7%	Silk Road/Tea Horse Ancient Road
7	History	4	1.3%	Flourishing Periods of the Sui and Tang Dynasties
8	Religion	2	0.7%	Taoism/Laozi

The selection of cultural content generally involves two aspects: whether to focus on contemporary culture or ancient culture, and whether to emphasize communicative culture or knowledge culture (Zhou et al., 2010). Through statistics, it can be observed that traditional culture receives more attention from schools compared to contemporary Chinese culture, with 227 courses dedicated to contemporary China.

The rich traditional cultural elements of China's long history are fully showcased in the "Chinese Bridge" delegation online course resource database. Internationally, China's splendid traditional culture serves as an important carrier for cultural dissemination. Chinese traditional culture, crystallized from China's long history, continues to evolve with the changing times. According to Table 7, the "Chinese Bridge" delegation online course resource database presents a wide range of traditional Chinese cultural elements, including literary works, painting and calligraphy, audiovisual productions, traditional crafts, and religious philosophy, all reflecting the charm of China's long history and traditional culture.

Cultural Items in the Contemporary China

As shown in Table 8, there were 227 cultural items related to "Contemporary China" as the primary category, accounting for 25.9% of the total. These cultural items were comprised of 9 secondary categories. In terms of the quantity of cultural items presented in the secondary categories, the

top three were related to the Economy ($N=41$), Science and Technology ($N=38$), and items related to Media ($N=29$) (tied with the Spoken and Written Language item), with the total number of courses in these three categories accounting for 47.6% of the primary cultural category of Contemporary China.

Table 8

Quantity and Distribution of Cultural Items in the Contemporary China

No.	Secondary Category	Course Quantity	Proportion	Cultural Elements
1	Economy	41	18.1%	Strawberry Cultivation, Soilless Cultivation, Hybrid Rice, Made in China
2	Science and Technology	38	16.7%	5G, New Energy, Drones, Optoelectronics, Lunar Exploration, Tiangong, Artificial Intelligence
3	Media	29	12.8%	Internet, Short Videos
4	Spoken and Written Language	29	12.8%	Slang, Chinese Characters, Tones
5	Literature and Art	27	11.9%	Modern Poetry, Online Novels, Empresses in the Palace, Story of Yanxi Palace, Folk Songs
6	Geography	26	11.5%	Wetlands, National Parks, Northeast Tigers, Giant Pandas, Low-Carbon Environmental Protection
7	Education	23	10.0%	Campus, Smart Education, Youth Education
8	Population and Ethnicity	7	3.1%	Korean Ethnicity, Manchu Ethnicity, Tibetan Ethnicity, Mongolian Ethnicity
9	External Exchanges	7	3.1%	Belt and Road Initiative, Cross-Border E-Commerce

Cultural phenomena are temporally bound. Thus cultural introductions need to be adjusted accordingly over time (Lu, 1990). Using “synchronic culture” to represent modern culture, the focus of cultural teaching should be on contemporary synchronic culture (Zhang, 1990). Blind collection of historical cultural content should be avoided. Therefore, cultural teaching should balance between ancient and modern, avoiding an overemphasis on the past. Learners are studying modern Chinese and they

interact with modern Chinese society. Although ancient China has left behind many valuable treasures, cultural content should still emphasize the integration of ancient and contemporary cultures, helping international students to integrate into the life circle of modern China more quickly.

Based on the views above, when designing cultural items, the “Chinese Bridge” delegation online course resource database conducted horizontal exploration of cultural phenomena in today’s real society and selected popular cultural elements in contemporary China. At the same time, it focused on hot Chinese cultural elements with wide international influence, such as “Made in China,” 5G network, lunar exploration, short videos, “Empresses in the Palace (popular TV drama)” and the Belt and Road Initiative. By introducing and explaining the current social and cultural landscape of China, it allows Chinese learners to see a close and authentic view of China. The “Chinese Bridge” delegation online course resource database used appropriate and effective methods to help learners correctly understand the social development of contemporary China, the historical origins of profound cultural foundations, behavioral norms, life concepts, and the enterprising spirit of contemporary Chinese people. This not only benefits international students in correctly understanding China but also helps to ignite their enthusiasm for learning Chinese.

Cultural Items Presentation Issues

Homogenization of Cultural Items Presentation

There was a certain degree of homogenization observed in the course content of the “Chinese Bridge” delegation online course resource database. Some contents overlapped significantly, leading to the potential for low-level duplication of resources. For instance, cultural elements such as traditional Chinese medicine, calligraphy, Chinese painting, paper cutting, tea art, and Tai Chi appeared in multiple courses. Some items hosted by different universities also designed similar courses focusing on Chinese tea culture, such as learning to brew Chinese tea, Chinese tea customs, an introduction to Chinese tea culture, and tea art experience, resulting in a certain degree of content homogeneity.

Table 9

Distribution of High-Frequency Cultural Elements

No.	High-Frequency Cultural Elements	Cultural Items (Primary: Secondary)	Course Quantity	Course Proportion	School Quantity	School Proportion
1	Chinese Tea	Society and Lifestyles: Food	38	4.30%	26	24.50%
2	Chinese Painting	Traditional Culture: Art	36	4.10%	23	21.70%
3	Tai Chi	Society and Lifestyles: Leisure	33	3.80%	24	22.60%
Total			107	12.20%	73	68.80%

Table 10 highlights the top three recurring cultural elements in the “Chinese Bridge” delegation online course resource database, namely Chinese tea, Chinese painting, and Tai Chi. The cultural items related to these three elements alone reached in total of 107, accounting for 12.20% of all 878 items. These cultural items are offered by 73 schools, representing 68.80% of all 106 schools. In other words, nearly 70% of schools offered courses related to the cultural items of Chinese tea, Chinese painting, and Tai Chi, and the sum of these three types exceeds 12% of all cultural items. As representatives of traditional cultural items, Chinese tea, Chinese painting, and Tai Chi undoubtedly enjoy high visibility internationally. However, the repeated occurrence of a large number of homogeneous contents exposes the problem of excessive use of certain cultural elements in the “Chinese Bridge” delegation online course resource database.

Simplification of Teaching Medium Language

Table 10

Distribution of Teaching Languages

No.	Teaching Language	Presentation Quantity	Proportion
1	Chinese	608	69.30%
2	Bilingual (Chinese and English)	139	15.80%
3	English	131	14.90%

Table 11

Distribution of Subtitle Languages

No.	Subtitle Language	Presentation Quantity	Proportion
1	Bilingual (Chinese and English)	545	62.1%
2	Chinese	131	14.9%
3	English	118	13.4%
4	No Subtitles	61	6.9%
5	Other Languages	19	2.2%
6	Chinese with Chinese Pinyin and English	4	0.5%

Table 10 and Table 11 respectively reflect the situation of language used in course explanations and language for video course subtitles. The teaching language of the courses was primarily Chinese ($N=608$), followed by bilingual (Chinese and English) ($N=139$) and English ($N=131$). The video course subtitles mainly used bilingual (Chinese and English) subtitles ($N=545$), followed by Chinese subtitles ($N=131$), English subtitles ($N=118$), no subtitles ($N=61$), subtitles in other languages ($N=19$), and subtitles with Chinese and English accompanied by Chinese Pinyin ($N=4$).

Overall, the teaching language in the “Chinese Bridge” delegation online course resource database is relatively homogeneous, with Chinese being predominant (constituting 69.3% of the teaching language). English is the most important medium language after Chinese, while teaching other languages is relatively lacking. English is the most widely used medium language after Chinese, possibly because English is the most globally used language and relatively easy to use in China compared to other languages of different countries. Additionally, the simplification of the medium language may also result from the simplification of course design, as mentioned in the earlier section on the Homogenization of Cultural Items Presentation, indicating a lack of in-depth research on learners. For example, Japanese Chinese learners may find it easier to accept Japanese as a medium language than English.

Therefore, it is essential to consider selecting teaching languages based on the countries of the audience, choosing suitable subtitle languages, appropriate media language and ensuring accurate translations.

Pedagogical Implications

Precise learning demands. Language and cultural education are closely related to economics, society, international relations, and other fields. Schools should conduct in-depth and detailed analysis of nationalities and demographics. Successful scientific advance of the dissemination of Chinese internationally requires consideration of the nature of demand for learning Chinese in various countries, fully meeting the needs of learners in terms of teaching standards, materials, methods, examinations, teacher supply, etc. Audience demand determines the teaching orientation and specific design. In project design and resource construction, it is essential to emphasize preliminary research and build cultural items based on audience needs, considering factors such as nationality, age, cultural background, basic national conditions, cultural customs in the host country, and internet technology proficiency to meet diverse audience needs and focus on content segmentation.

Diversified narration of culture. As an in-depth medium product that interprets Chinese society and lifestyles, traditional culture, and contemporary development, the International Chinese Online course resources should fully explore Chinese elements with rich local characteristics based on explaining traditional Chinese culture. Cultural items can be presented from the perspective of ordinary people to showcase the grand historical narrative, tell Chinese stories from the perspective of foreigners/international learners, and narrate stories of Sino-foreign exchanges and cooperation through multi-modal means. Host schools should utilize their respective regional cultural advantages to tell regional cultural stories well. Cultural education needs to strengthen cross-cultural communication awareness and narrative skills, taking into account the speech habits and expression methods of different countries. By interpreting cultural elements through stories with authenticity and vivid characteristics, learners can improve their understanding and comprehension of Chinese cultural heritage implicitly.

Technology-assisted teaching. The internet and technology should be fully utilized for diverse interactions. When designing online courses, educators should leverage the advantages of work to promote interaction. For example, short videos can provide language and cultural dissemination, and corresponding interactive quizzes or games can be designed based on multi-modal resource content on the experiential platform. Digital platforms should be continuously optimized so that users can search for relevant resources quickly and easily using keywords, such as elements of Chinese culture after logging into the experiential platform. The experiential platform should also recommend personalized resource content based on user needs.

Conclusion

In international Chinese education practice, the International Chinese Education Online course resources plays an indispensable role as a high-quality platform for learners to deeply study and experience the charm of Chinese culture. To a large extent, it directly influences the effectiveness of learning and the level of understanding of Chinese culture. In addition, the cultural items courses in the International Chinese Education Online Course Resource Library also play a role in cultural dissemination and exchange. For learners, “seeing is believing,” and what they see in cultural courses represents the image of China in their cognition. Therefore, it is necessary to study the cultural items of international Chinese course resources.

The “Chinese Bridge” delegation online course resources transcends the limitations of time and space, better meeting the needs of learners around the world to understand China, learn Chinese, engage in cultural exchanges, and to be exposed in a real, meaningful way to multi-dimensional, and comprehensive Chinese cultural vibes. The design and implementation of international Chinese education online courses should be centered on audience demands, using diverse narrative methods and media, enhancing narrative interactivity, optimizing audience participation, improving cultural teaching effectiveness, and enabling learners to deeply and extensively study Chinese and Chinese culture.

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Endnotes

¹ Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China Official Website:http://www.moe.gov.cn/fbh/live/2023/55470/mtbd/202308/t20230817_1074704.html

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