

A Survey of Involvement of Chinese Traditional Cultural Events of International Students in Sino-foreign Cooperative Programs

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ABSTRACT: Chinese international students in Sino-foreign programs are important bridges of cross-cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries. Through questionnaire survey, this paper analyzes the situation of international students of Sino-foreign Cooperative Program in introducing Chinese traditional culture during their overseas exchanges. It was found that the international students of Sino-foreign Cooperative Program have some intercultural communication overseas, but there is still much room for improvement, and the main problem lies in the lack of daily communication and social activities between Chinese and foreign students. For these problems, the awareness of Chinese traditional cultural literacy need to be enhanced. In addition, more overseas cultural events should be added, which includes improvement of students' abilities of cross-cultural communication, strengthening the cooperation between colleges in cultural exchanging activities and establishing student clubs.

KEYWORDS -Sino-foreign Cooperative Program, International Students, Intercultural Communication, Chinese Traditional Culture

I. INTRODUCTION

The Chinese traditional culture is the valuable wealth of the Chinese nation through its long history and accumulation, it is the soul of a nation.(1) As the fresh blood of a country, the youth carries the future of the country. At the same time, the youth is also a very important part in the process of inheriting and promoting the traditional culture. Therefore, the education of the young generation, especially the education of traditional culture for college students, is crucial to the development of the country and the nation. Nowadays, more and more young people choose to study and live abroad. With the knowledge of the traditional Chinese cultural, they become a "bridge" for cultural exchange between China and foreign countries. We should provide them a good education of Chinese traditional culture during the student period, so that more young people can bring it to the whole world and realize the "cultural export".

In recent years, international students have continually become a large group in China. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Education, the number of Chinese students studying abroad in 2019 reached 703500, which was an increase of 41400 or 6.25% over the previous year.(2) China is continuing the world's top source of international students, so international students in China have a very important role in introducing Chinese traditional culture to the outside world. In order to meet the increasingly diverse needs of students and families, Chinese universities actively engaged in Sino-foreign cooperative teaching mode. With the increasing maturity and development of Sino-foreign cooperative programs in universities, more and more students choose

to participate in Sino-foreign cooperative majors during their college years. According to statistics, during the 13th Five-Year Plan period, the Ministry of Education approved and filed a total of 580 Chinese-foreign cooperative institutions and projects, including 356 above the undergraduate level. And by the end of 2020, there will be a total of 2332 Chinese-foreign cooperative teaching institutions and projects in China, including 1230 above the undergraduate level.(3)

This study aims to investigate the cultural exchange situation in Germany among the students of Sino-German majors. The main target are the undergraduates of 16th to 19th grades who went abroad successfully from the Sino-German College of Engineering in East China University of Science and Technology. Students of Sino-foreign joint majors receive both domestic and foreign education, and have a greater advantage in transmitting Chinese culture than international students who have been only receiving international education.

The following will be a brief introduction of the Sino-German college of Technology, and the information of the institute is obtained from the official website of Sino-German college of Technology and the undergraduate admission website of East China University of Science and Technology. Sino-German College of Technology is a multidisciplinary engineering college of East China University of Science and Technology (ECUST) with a Sino-foreign cooperation model and is also a platform for cooperation and exchange between ECUST and German-speaking countries. The existing majors of the college are "Chemical Engineering and Technology (Environmental Science and Engineering)" (hereinafter referred to as "EE") and "Electrical Engineering and Automation (Electronics)" (hereinafter referred to as "IT") in cooperation with the Technical University of Applied Sciences of Lübeck (hereinafter referred to as "THL") in Germany. And "Chemical Engineering and Technology" in cooperation with the Technical University of Clausthal in Germany. The joint project with the THL was approved by the Ministry of Education in 2003, and this project was awarded as one of the seven model projects of German-Chinese universities in Germany in 2006. The cooperation project with the Technical University of Clausthal was approved by the Ministry of Education in 2013. The Sino-German Joint Program of East China University of Science and Technology has been developed for nearly 20 years, and is therefore a good reference for this study.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Most of the existing studies on Chinese International students and cultural exchange focus on the cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese students overseas, but there are only a few studies on the cross-cultural transmission of Chinese traditional culture by Chinese students. In the literature search, we used different search terms such as "Chinese students, cultural exchange", "Chinese students, traditional culture" and "Chinese students, cross-cultural exchange", and we found only a few studies on Chinese students' cross-cultural exchange overseas. But nowadays, more and more universities in China are vigorously developing Sino-foreign cooperative education programs, which undoubtedly become another bridge for Sino-foreign cultural exchange, so it can be seen that this study is important and innovative.

In Chen Jinjins study, she mainly used questionnaires and interviews to investigate the intercultural communication of Chinese students in the United States.(4) She pointed out that Chinese international students are more willing to introduce Chinese culture, but there is a slight lack of communication with foreign students; while local students in the U.S. tend to know Chinese traditional culture mainly through two ways, daily communication and cultural exchange activities across schools, among which "daily communication" is formally lacking in Chinese international students today. In addition, Chinese students often play the role of front-line staff in local Chinese newspapers in the U.S., but the content of the newspapers is still decided by the organizers, and the Chinese newspapers are not effective in introducing Chinese culture, so it is unrealistic for Chinese students to introduce Chinese culture through local Chinese newspapers.

In addition, daily communication is also an important way of cultural export. Zhang Huiting conducted a study on cross-cultural communication among Chinese overseas students in view of their communication situation with foreign students overseas.(5) Through questionnaires and interviews, she pointed out that Chinese

students have more difficulties in socializing with locals, and their social scopes are mainly made up of Chinese so they do not have much interaction with local foreign students. Therefore, the problem should be solved from two aspects, the foreign social culture and language practice.

With reference to some related research literature, this study will take into account the level of traditional culture education in colleges and universities before the students of Sino-foreign majors go abroad, and the cultural exchange after they go abroad.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study mainly adopts literature reading method and questionnaire analysis method. The first part is the study of the education level of Chinese culture among college students, and thus we designed and distributed the first questionnaire. The samples came from undergraduate and graduate students of East China University of Science and Technology, mainly from the Sino-German College of Technology and the College of Foreign Languages. 154 samples were collected. The second questionnaire was designed to understand the intercultural communication and the dissemination of Chinese traditional culture in the process of studying abroad. The samples are all come from the Sino-German College of Technology. 64 samples were collected.

IV. RESULT AND ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEY

4.1 Awareness of and access to Chinese traditional culture

How much do you know about Chinese traditional culture?" and "Have you been exposed to Chinese traditional culture?" In the former question, only 5.84% of the students said they knew a lot about Chinese traditional culture, while about 90% of the students said they knew some or a little about Chinese traditional culture. In the latter, 65.58% of the students said that they were not very much in touch with Chinese traditional culture in general, while 22.08% and 9.09% of the students chose the options of "a lot" and "very much" respectively. It can be seen that the prevalence level of Chinese traditional culture in our life is not high.

In this survey, we investigated the ways of being exposed to Chinese traditional culture and the ways students prefer to be exposed to it. In response to the question "In what ways do you often be exposed to things with traditional Chinese cultural elements?", 87.66% of the students chose "online media news and extracurricular reading materials", 80.52% chose "movie and television works", while "classroom" and "campus social activities" were chosen respectively. The percentages of "classroom" and "social activities on campus" were 40.26% and 44.81% respectively. This indicates that there are few cultural education courses in colleges and universities, and not many students are exposed to them; and the existing traditional culture-related courses in colleges and universities cannot arouse students' wide interest in learning, so the number of students taking such courses is also low. At the same time, due to the requirement to finish the required courses and credits in advance in China, students of Sino-foreign majors are under more pressure and have more courses during their time in China. In Sino-German College of Technology, students can not choose elective courses and arrange their own schedules because these are arranged by the college. Therefore, there are fewer courses in the schedule that may be related to Chinese culture, which means they have less opportunity to be exposed to Chinese traditional culture on campus compared to ordinary undergraduates.

4.2 Current situation and ways of overseas cultural exchange

The small sample size of the second questionnaire is mainly due to the small number of students in the Sino-German project and the limited number of students going abroad in each class. Also, the epidemic in recent years has had an impact on the arrangement of the 17th and 18th classes. However, the collected sample includes the students who went abroad within the last 3 years, so the data is convincing.

(1) Students' awareness of introducing Chinese traditional culture

In the question "Do you think the students of Chinese-foreign project should actively introduce the Chinese tradition culture during their study abroad?", 96.88% of the respondents chose "Yes". In the question "Have you ever mentioned Chinese traditional culture to foreign students, teachers or friends?", nearly 80% of the students chose "yes". From the results of these two questions, we can see that most students are willing to introduce Chinese traditional culture, but it may be difficult to communicate with their foreign friends in real life.

(2) Daily communication

In the question "In what ways do you think you can effectively introduce Chinese traditional culture while you are abroad?" About 92% of the students chose "increasing daily communication", while "joining or founding interest groups" and "enriching campus activities" were chosen by 67.19% and 76.56% respectively. This shows that for most students, daily communication is a more direct way of intercultural communication, and it is also the least expensive and most convenient way. About 80% of the students chose "yes" to the question of whether they would arrange a one-to-one foreign friend or roommate. In the Sino-German program in ECUST, the foreign school will arrange a "China Buddy" for the student before he/she goes abroad to help him/her with living and studying in Germany. The one-to-one buddy program plays a very important role in increasing cross-cultural communication between Chinese and foreign students. As shown by the results of the question "How do you feel about roommates or one-to-one communication?(Fig. 1), the majority of the students were in favor of this arrangement. In response to the question "What is the attitude of your foreign friends and teachers towards Chinese traditional culture?" About 70% of the students said that their foreign friends are very interested in Chinese culture, which I suppose is a very positive feedback, indicating that many foreigners are very willing to learn about Chinese traditional culture.

7.您对室友或者一对一交流的看法如何? [多选题]

What do you think of roommates or one-on-one communication? (multiple choice)

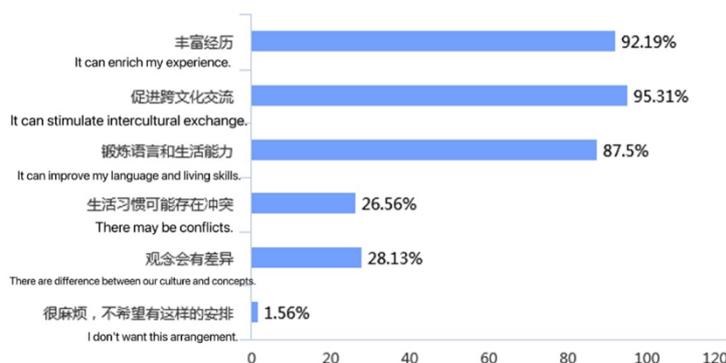
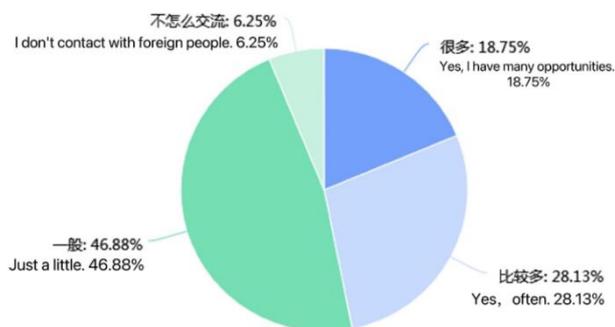


Fig. 1

However, in the question "Do you usually have many opportunities to communicate with foreign students, teachers or friends?", only about 19% and 28% of the students chose the options of "a lot" and "quite a lot", as shown in Figure 2. In many studies, it has been pointed out that Chinese students are prone to the phenomenon of "grouping" and have relatively few foreigners in their social scope, probably due to the language barrier and difficulties in expressing themselves. Additionally, these student only study abroad for about 2 years, which makes it difficult to join in the local social scopes because the time is limited. 6.25% of the students chose "not much communication", which shows that introducing Chinese traditional through daily communication is not effective, which is similar to the results of current studies.

3.您平时与外国师生或朋友交流的机会多吗? [单选题]
 3.Do you have much opportunity to communicate with foreign friends? (single choice)



(3) Overseas traditional Chinese cultural activities and associations

The cooperating universities of Sino-German College of Technology are located in small city in Germany with small populations and almost all of them are local people, so there are not many activities related to Chinese culture in the towns. In terms of the student clubs, 92% of students said they did not have many clubs or were unaware of them. The number of students involved in these clubs was relatively small, about 22%. It is a short period of about two years for students to study abroad, and this period is generally a period for international students to adapt to foreign customs and cultural impact. It is really difficult for students in Sino-foreign programs to participate in or start student clubs in such a short period of time. The lack of language skills and cultural differences may cause international students not to participate in student clubs on campus.

The question "Are there any activities related to Chinese traditional culture on campus?" was asked. More than half of the students (52.13%) chose "No", and through further questioning, we learned that the types of activities held by foreign schools (Fig. 3) are mostly activities for interaction and exchange between Chinese and foreign students. Two students additionally mentioned traditional festivals and folklore activities in the category of "others". In general, the number of activities related to Chinese traditional culture organized by foreign institutions is relatively small. This may be because only a few students involved in Sino-foreign joint projects and Chinese students are a very small group in the local community, so many foreign schools do not hold related activities for Chinese students.

12.1 您所在的外方学校举办过什么类型的中华文化活动? [多选题]
 12.1 What kind of Chinese traditional culture activities have your universities arranged.(multiple choice)

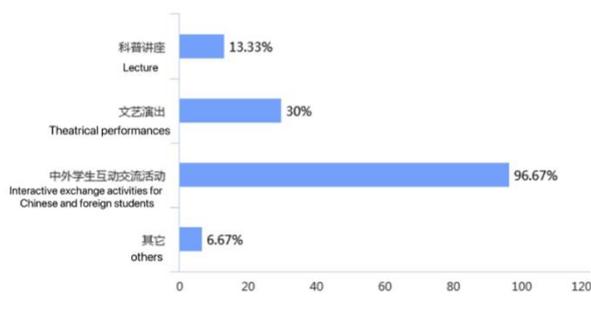


Fig. 3

V. TENTATIVE SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Raise the awareness of Chinese traditional cultural literacy

In order to realize that international students introduce the Chinese traditional culture more effectively

overseas, it is necessary to improve the culture literacy of international students. From the survey analysis of Questionnaire 1, it can be seen that the number of college students who know a lot about one or more Chinese traditional cultures is relatively small, and most of them have a shallow knowledge of traditional culture. If international students want to introduce Chinese traditional culture to foreigners overseas, they not only need to fully understand it, but also need to convert it into foreign languages so that others can understand it, so it is somewhat difficult.

For students of Sino-foreign cooperative studies, their time on college campus in China is much shorter than that of general undergraduates and the curriculum is more compact, so it is difficult to enhance their cultural education by adding some courses, and it may make their academic pressure more heavy. Therefore, universities can start from daily on-campus activities, such as campus cultural festivals, traditional festival parties or activities (Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, etc.), to increase the frequency of the dissemination of Chinese traditional culture on campus. This is not only to provide more opportunities for students in Sino-foreign joint programs to be exposed to Chinese traditional culture after class, but also to cultivate an atmosphere on campus and to increase students' interest and motivation to understand and learn about Chinese traditional culture on their own.

5.2 Promote international students' cultural exchange events

(1) Improve the comprehensive quality of cross-cultural communication of international students

From the above questionnaire results, it can be seen that the main difficulties faced by Chinese international students in introducing Chinese traditional culture abroad are social problems, which mainly include language barrier or lack of self-confidence, impact of cultural differences and small social scope. For example, among the three majors of Sino-German College of Technology, only the major of Chemistry Engineering has a high requirement for students' German language level, while the EE and IT majors of THL are both English-teaching majors. So their German language level is poor, which will cause students to have a heavy burden in daily communication and a rather low confidence in oral expression. Therefore, I believe that students in Sino-foreign joint programs should undergo more rigorous language learning and testing in their home countries so that they can communicate more smoothly in their daily lives after going abroad. In addition, since there are very big differences between Chinese and Western cultures, students often experience a long culture shock after going abroad. Domestic institutions should increase the relevant courses so that students can fully learn and understand some special cultural differences and social habits before going abroad, which will be beneficial to international students to expand their social ranges overseas.

(2) Strengthen cooperation between colleges in cultural exchange activities

According to the questionnaire survey, most students (about 95%) support foreign universities to hold activities of Chinese traditional culture. However, because Chinese students are a small group there and the program managers of foreign universities have limited understanding and knowledge of Chinese traditional culture, there are few activities of Chinese traditional culture held in foreign institutions. In this regard, domestic colleges can provide support and assistance to foreign schools, and both sides can cooperate in organizing activities related to Chinese traditional culture, which can effectively carry out related activities and realize cultural export and exchange. The students' preferences and suggestions on the types of activities were solicited through Questionnaire 2, in which holding folklore exchange activities on traditional Chinese festivals was the most chosen option (98.44%). Traditional Chinese festivals are an important part of the traditional Chinese culture, and they also correspond to many cultural allusions, myths and stories as well as customs and habits respectively. Holding celebrations of traditional Chinese festivals overseas will not only let more foreign friends experience the charm of Chinese traditional culture and the festive customs, but also let Chinese students in other countries feel the atmosphere of the festivals and enhance their sense of belonging and cultural self-confidence.

(3) Encourage students to establish Chinese cultural clubs

Given that student clubs and on-campus activities are important ways for students' extra-curricular activities and communication in campus life, foreign institutions can support international students to found student clubs and encourage students actively participate in these clubs. Among the types of Chinese traditional

culture clubs, "food" and "costume" are the options with high selection rates (Fig. 4), about 83% and 47% respectively. Chinese traditional costumes are also very popular overseas, which can fully reflect the traditional Chinese food and costume culture.

11.如果有，您希望加入什么种类的中华文化社团？ [多选题]

What kind of Chinese traditional culture clubs do you want to join in? (multiple choice)

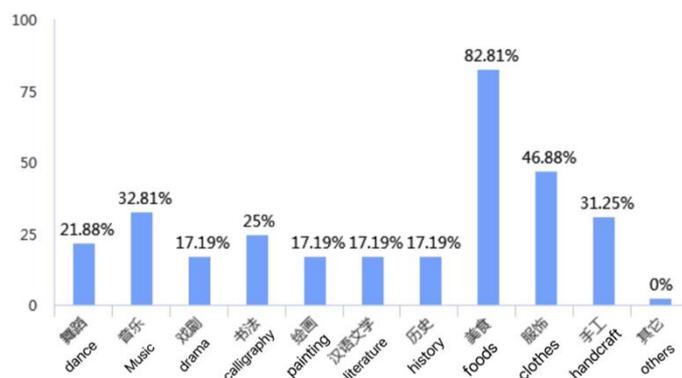


Fig. 4

VI. Conclusion

Through the investigation and research, there is still much room to improve the effect of Chinese traditional culture introduction by international students in Sino-foreign cooperative schools overseas. The key of the main problem is that Chinese international students have less communication with foreigners and there are not many relevant cultural activities, so it is difficult to let their foreign friends to have a fully understand of the Chinese traditional culture.

In order to promote the cultural export of foreign students in Sino-foreign joint ventures overseas, we need to focus on how to increase the daily communication among Chinese and foreign students and avoid the phenomenon of "grouping" of Chinese students overseas. It is suggested to improve the language ability and cross-cultural communication quality of Chinese students. At the same time, domestic institutions should also actively support Chinese international students in introducing the Chinese traditional culture, such as organizing activities of Chinese traditional culture jointly with partner institutions. Besides, since students' club is a good chance for students to exchange their ideas and show their personalities, setting up more students' club related to Chinese traditional culture can also promote the culture exchange between China and foreign countries.

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