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A Study on Chinese Classics Recitation and Chinese Cultural Identity among International Students in China under the "Study in Chongqing" Context

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Abstract

This study, set against the backdrop of "Study in Chongqing," explores the impact of Chinese classics recitation on the Chinese cultural identity of international students through questionnaire surveys and data analysis involving 50 students from Southwest University of Political Science & Law. The findings indicate that the level of participation in recitation is significantly positively correlated with the cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions of cultural identity. The intrinsic motivation centered on "understanding the culture" is identified as a key psychological mechanism driving participation and deepening identity. Furthermore, an enhanced cultural identity effectively reduces cross-cultural communication conflicts. The study also highlights that language proficiency, length of study in Chongqing, and teaching resources are crucial conditions supporting the effectiveness of recitation. Based on these findings, it is recommended that universities systematically integrate classics recitation into international student education through structured curriculum design, the development of tiered teaching resources, enhanced inter-departmental collaboration, and the creation of an immersive cultural environment, thereby fostering their cultural identity and cross-cultural adaptation capabilities.

Keywords

Study in Chongqing; Chinese Classics Recitation; International Students in China; Chinese Cultural Identity; Cross-cultural Adaptation

1. Introduction

Promoting Chinese cultural identity among international students is central to enhancing cultural exchanges and their own socio-psychological adaptation in China (Dervin & Jacobson, 2021; LI & DEANEY, 2022). Local initiatives like "Study in Chongqing" offer a concrete context for this mission. Within this framework,

Chinese classics recitation serves as a key pedagogical tool, proven to aid language acquisition and foster deeper cultural engagement through immersive experience (LIU, L., 2019; SUN & LI, 2019; WANG, B., 2020).

However, a significant research gap exists. Few studies systematically examine how classics recitation specifically influences the cultural identity formation of international students, particularly within localized "study in" contexts such as "Study in Chongqing" (ZHAO, Y., 2023; LIU, S. H., 2021). To address this, the present study, focusing on students at Southwest University of Political Science & Law, empirically investigates the role of classics recitation. This research is based on the language and literature research project of Chongqing, namely The study on the Recitation of Chinese Classics and the Enhancement of Chinese Cultural Identity Among International Students Under the Background of "Studying in Chongqing" (project number: yyk24223). And the educational reform research project of the university where I am employed, namely the Innovative Research and Practice of Chinese Classic Recitation for International Students in China (project number: 2024C16). It aims to verify its correlation with cultural identity, explore the mediating role of intrinsic cultural motivation, and identify crucial supporting conditions, thereby providing evidence-based insights for effective educational practice.

2. Literature Review

Cultural identity is central to international students' construction of belonging and self-perception in cross-cultural environments (Dervin & Jacobson, 2021). For international students in China, learning Chinese is not merely a language acquisition process but a crucial avenue for negotiating their identity and sense of belonging in China (LI & DEANEY, 2022). Research indicates that systematic classics recitation can effectively enhance the educational outcomes of universities (LIU, L., 2019), and realizing its value requires universities to optimize implementation strategies (WANG, B., 2020). For teaching practices targeting international students, aesthetic teaching exploration has become an important direction for deepening their cultural experience (ZHAO, Y., 2023).

The connection between classics recitation and international students' cultural identity has garnered empirical attention. Chinese classics recitation has a significant positive impact on the cultural identity of international students (SUN & LI, 2019). As an important component of international Chinese language education, classics recitation, while facing both pathways and challenges (LIU, S. H., 2021), can effectively stimulate students' intrinsic motivation for learning Chinese, which is closely related to the formation of cultural identity (ZHOU & LI, 2020). From the perspective of the internal mechanism of cultural adaptation, classics recitation helps international students integrate into Chinese culture cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally, thereby promoting their overall adaptation (DONG, Y., 2019). To

accurately measure this complex construct, researchers have developed and validated a Chinese Cultural Identity Scale suitable for international students in China (HUANG & CHEN, 2018).

The formation of international students' cultural identity is not isolated but is deeply influenced by the external environment and support systems. The cultural identity of international students is significantly correlated with their perceived campus climate and interpersonal support (WANG & MALLINCKRODT, 2021). A systematic review of factors influencing the cross-cultural psychosocial adaptation of international students further reveals that language proficiency, social interaction, and cultural contact are key predictive variables (ZHANG & GOODSON, 2019). This provides a macro-framework for understanding how classics recitation promotes identity by offering structured cultural contact and social interaction scenarios.

3. Research Subjects

This study primarily focuses on degree-seeking international students at Southwest University of Political Science & Law, conducting a systematic exploration of classics recitation education under the "Study in Chongqing" context.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Population and Sampling

This study takes degree-seeking international students at Southwest University of Political Science & Law as the population. Using purposive sampling, 50 international students were selected as the research sample, representing 25% of the total number of degree-seeking international students at the university (approximately 200). The sample includes both postgraduate and undergraduate students from 10 countries: Thailand, South Korea, Russia, Japan, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

4.2. Research Instruments

A mixed-methods approach was employed, primarily using questionnaires supplemented by semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire utilized a five-point Likert scale (5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neutral, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree) and consisted of two parts. Part One: Demographic information (gender, age, nationality, etc.). Part Two: Items related to participation in Chinese classics recitation and cultural identity (see **Table 1**).

Table 1. Chinese Classics Recitation and Chinese Cultural Identity among International Students in China

Items
1. My current Chinese proficiency helps me read Chinese classics well.
2.My length of study in Chongqing influences my understanding of Chinese classics.
3. I usually participate in classics recitation in various forms.

Items
4. My primary motivation for participating in classics recitation is to learn more about Chinese culture.
5. Through reciting Chinese classics, I have gained a deeper understanding of traditional Chinese culture.
6. Because of reciting classics, I am more willing to actively engage with Chinese cultural activities.
7. Classics recitation makes me feel closer to the local culture of Chongqing.
8. I believe the teaching resources for classics recitation at the university a re sufficient.
9. I believe classics recitation should be included as a compulsory course fo r international students in China.
10. Chinese classics recitation has reduced my cross-cultural communication conflicts.

4.3. Data Collection and Organization

Microsoft Excel was used for data organization and coding. The valid sample size was 50 (N=50). SPSS 26.0 was used for descriptive statistics and correlation analysis, and AMOS 20.0 was used for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) testing.

4.4. Data Analysis Methods

The following analytical methods were used in this study: 1) Descriptive Statistics: Calculation of mean, standard deviation, skewness, etc., for each variable. 2) Correlation Analysis: Pearson product-moment correlation analysis to examine correlations between variables. 3) Structural Equation Modeling (SEM): AMOS was used to test path relationships and model fit among variables.

5. Results

5.1. Sample Demographic Characteristics

Regarding demographic characteristics, there were 50 respondents, with females comprising 51% and males 49%. In terms of age, the 18-20 age group had the highest proportion at 30%, the 21 and above group comprised 29%, and the remaining age groups accounted for 41%. Regarding study level, undergraduates outnumbered postgraduates, comprising 56% and 44% respectively. In terms of nationality, the top three nationalities were Thai, Laotian, and Vietnamese. Thais had the highest proportion at 20%, followed by Laotians at 19%, and Vietnamese at 16%.

Table 2. Sample Demographic Characteristics (N=50)

Items	Category	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	51
	Male	49
Age	18–20 years	30
	21 years and above	29
	Other age groups	41
Study Level	Undergraduate	56
	Postgraduate	44
Nationality (Top 3)	Thailand	20
	Laos	19

	Vietnam	16

5.2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix of Variables (N=50)

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix of Variables (N=50)

Items	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.Lang. Ability	3.50	0.85	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.Study Time	3.20	1.02	0.18*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.Recitation	3.10	1.15	0.32**	0.22*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4.Cultural Mot.	3.80	0.91	0.28*	0.15*	0.45***	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5. Cult. Under.	3.65	0.88	0.35***	0.25**	0.52***	0.60***	-	-	-	-	-	-
6.Behavioral Will.	3.55	0.95	0.30**	0.20*	0.50***	0.58***	0.68***	-	-	-	-	-
7.Chongqing Close.	3.40	1.05	0.25**	0.40***	0.42***	0.48***	0.55***	0.62***	-	-	-	-
8.Teach. Resour.	3.30	1.10	0.10	0.08	0.35***	0.20*	0.25**	0.22*	0.18*	-	-	-
9.Support Required	3.75	1.12	0.15	0.12	0.40***	0.50***	0.45***	0.42***	0.38***	0.30**	-	-
10.Conflict Reduce	3.25	0.98	0.20*	0.15**	0.38***	0.45***	0.52***	0.55***	0.48***	0.22*	0.40***	-

A*M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation; * indicates $p < 0.05$, ** indicates $p < 0.01$, *** indicates $p < 0.001$

Variable numbers correspond to the items in Table 1.

6. Findings and Discussion

1) Chinese Classics Recitation is an Effective Way to Enhance Cultural Identity.

The level of participation in recitation (Variable 3) showed significant positive correlations with the three core dimensions of cultural identity: deepened cultural understanding (Variable 5, r=0.52***), behavioral willingness (Variable 6, r=0.50***), and local cultural closeness (Variable 7, r=0.42***). This indicates that the more diverse the forms and higher the frequency of international students' participation in recitation, the stronger their cognitive, affective, and behavioral identification with both Chinese culture and the local culture of Chongqing.

2) The Motivation of "Understanding Culture" is a Key Psychological Mechanism Driving Participation and Deepening Identity.

The primary motivation of understanding culture (Variable 4) was not only significantly correlated with recitation participation (Variable 3, r=0.45***) but also showed stronger correlations with all dimensions of cultural identity (r values of 0.60***, 0.58***, and 0.48*** with Variables 5, 6, and 7, respectively). This suggests that when students participate out of a proactive desire to explore the culture, the effect on their cultural identity is more profound.

3) Enhanced Cultural Identity Helps Improve Cross-Cultural Adaptation.

The three core dimensions of cultural identity—deepened cultural understanding (Variable 5, r=0.52***), behavioral willingness (Variable 6, r=0.55***), and local cultural closeness (Variable 7, r=0.48***) — were all significantly positively correlated with reduced cross-cultural conflict (Variable 10). This indicates that the enhanced cultural identity gained through recitation can tangibly help international students reduce misunderstandings and conflicts in their lives in China.

4) Language Proficiency and Environmental Immersion are Foundational Conditions for Recitation Education.

Self-assessed Chinese proficiency (Variable 1) was significantly correlated with the

effect on cultural cognition (Variable 5, r=0.35***) and behavioral willingness (Variable 6, r=0.30**), indicating that language ability is the foundation for cultural understanding. The length of time in Chongqing (Variable 2) was closely related to local cultural closeness (Variable 7, r=0.40***), suggesting that prolonged immersion in the cultural environment facilitates the formation of local identity.

5) Teaching Resources and Course Value Recognition Form a Virtuous Cycle.

The evaluation of teaching resource sufficiency (Variable 8) was significantly correlated with recitation participation (Variable 3, r=0.35***) and support for making it a required course (Variable 9, r=0.30**). Concurrently, the attitude supporting making it a required course (Variable 9) was significantly correlated with cultural motivation (Variable 4, r=0.50***) and various dimensions of cultural identity. This indicates that resource support promotes participation, and positive experiences further reinforce students' recognition of the course's value.

7. Conclusion

Based on a survey of 50 degree-seeking international students at Southwest University of Political Science & Law, this study finds that Chinese classics recitation can significantly enhance international students' identification with both Chinese culture and local culture, and that this enhanced identity aids cross-cultural adaptation. Language proficiency, length of study, cultural motivation, and teaching resources are important factors influencing the effectiveness of recitation. It is recommended that universities strengthen the construction of classics recitation courses, provide diverse forms of participation and resource support, to promote international students' cultural identity and cross-cultural integration.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended to advance relevant applications in the following three areas:

1) In teaching practice: Given that "understanding culture" is the core motivation for student participation in recitation and has a significant predictive effect on enhancing cultural identity, universities should prioritize stimulating students' intrinsic cultural interest through diverse cultural engagement activities. Although the influence of language proficiency is relatively weaker, it remains significant. This suggests the need for curriculum innovation—such as developing bilingual tiered recitation materials, VR-supported immersive cultural experiences, local culture workshops—to lower language barriers and deepen cultural context immersion.

2) In policy support: The research reveals the importance of sufficient teaching resources and a supportive institutional environment for sustaining recitation participation and strengthening course recognition. Therefore, it is necessary to enhance inter-departmental collaboration and establish dedicated funding for classics recitation to form a systematic support system.

3) In research design: Although this study clarified correlations between key variables, longitudinal tracking is recommended to further reveal the dynamic process of cultural identity formation. Demographic differences (e.g., nationality, age, gender) also require more detailed socio-cultural analysis to support the development of targeted intervention measures.

Overall, these findings provide evidence-based implementation pathways for universities, policymakers, and researchers to enhance cultural identity through classics recitation.

9. Limitation

This study validates the pathway through which classics recitation promotes cultural identity but is limited to samples from the Chongqing region. Future research is recommended to conduct cross-regional comparative studies to examine the impact of different regional cultural environments on recitation effectiveness; simultaneously, cultural adaptation interventions in real-world settings could be designed and their integrated effects evaluated; and the mechanism of digital recitation carriers on cultural affect and behavioral willingness could be explored. The above can provide a basis for constructing a systematic cultural identity promotion system.

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