

Research on the Effect of Disseminating English Versions of Chinese Stories in Foreign Language Education and Strategies for Improvement

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Abstract

In the context of globalization, cultural soft power has become a crucial component of a country's comprehensive competitiveness. Foreign language education, serving as a bridge for cross-cultural communication, shoulders the important mission of disseminating Chinese culture and telling Chinese stories well. However, the current English dissemination of Chinese stories faces issues such as "cultural discount" and monotonous dissemination forms. This study systematically analyzes the current dissemination situation of English versions of Chinese stories in foreign language education through literature analysis, case studies, questionnaire surveys, and experimental research. It reveals core issues such as a high proportion of traditional culture, official channels dominating, and an imbalance in language-culture adaptability. The study explores key factors influencing dissemination effectiveness from three aspects: language proficiency, cultural cognition, and teaching strategies. It proposes strategies for improvement, including constructing a "language-culture-communication" trinity curriculum system, innovating situational teaching and project-based learning models, and improving a diversified evaluation system. The aim is to enhance the precision and effectiveness of China's international cultural dissemination, providing theoretical support and practical paths for cultivating international communication talents and implementing China's "going global" strategy for culture.

Keywords

Chinese Stories; English Dissemination; Cross-cultural Communication; Teaching Innovation; Trinity Curriculum System.

1. Introduction

With the deepening of globalization, cultural soft power has emerged as a vital part of a nation's overall competitiveness. As a major cultural country with a 5,000-year-old civilization, China faces the critical task of effectively spreading Chinese culture and telling Chinese stories well to elevate its international discourse power. Foreign language education, acting as a bridge for cross-cultural exchanges, bears the important mission of nurturing talents with international communication capabilities.[1]

However, the English dissemination of Chinese stories currently confronts the "cultural discount" phenomenon, where some translated works, due to rigid language and a lack of cultural connotations, are difficult for international audiences to truly comprehend and accept. For example, although the English translation of contemporary Chinese literary works has made some headway, it has not yet achieved a profound transition from "going global" to "going deep." The dissemination forms are still mainly text-based, lacking multi-modal forms such as images and videos, resulting in limited overseas influence.[2]

This study aims to systematically analyze the current situation and issues of the English dissemination of Chinese stories in foreign language education and propose operable

improvement paths, providing theoretical support and practical references for enhancing the effectiveness of China's international cultural dissemination. Theoretically, this study will enrich the cross-disciplinary research between cross-cultural communication studies and foreign language education.

Practically, the research findings can offer decision-making bases for foreign language teaching reforms in universities, the cultivation of international communication talents, and the implementation of China's "going global" strategy for culture.

2. Research Status

2.1. Dissemination Content and Forms

Existing research indicates that the English translation of contemporary Chinese literary works suffers from monotonous dissemination forms and a single subject, necessitating the enhancement of attractiveness through multi-modal dissemination such as film and television adaptations and picture book publications.

The success of Li Ziqi's short videos demonstrates that life-like narratives and visual expressions can significantly lower the threshold for cultural understanding. [3] However, historical allusions (such as Confucius and the Four Great Inventions) account for 72% of the Chinese story content in foreign language textbooks in universities, while themes such as modern technology and social governance only account for 18%. This tendency of "emphasizing the ancient over the modern" leads international audiences to perceive China's image as remaining at the level of an "ancient civilization" and makes it difficult for them to sense the vitality of contemporary China. For example, in an English speech contest at a certain university, only 12% of the contestants chose modern themes such as the "Belt and Road Initiative" and "poverty alleviation."

2.2. Dissemination Subjects and Channels

University foreign language majors, due to insufficient cross-cultural communication capabilities, struggle to effectively convey the essence of Chinese stories. Confucius Institutes, as official dissemination platforms, need to further penetrate into the grassroots level and enhance interactivity. For example, on the YouTube platform, the video views of individual creators such as Li Ziqi and Grandpa Amu far exceed those of official accounts, indicating that "decentralized" dissemination is more appealing. However, foreign language education in universities still mainly focuses on classroom teaching and lacks the cultivation of students' self-media dissemination capabilities.

2.3. Dissemination Effect Evaluation

Existing research mostly constructs evaluation systems from three aspects: language accuracy, cultural adaptability, and audience acceptance. [4] However, it lacks a systematic exploration of the linkage mechanism between "dissemination effect-teaching strategies." For example, Luo Yingfang proposed the need to avoid the dilemma of "self-talk" in dissemination but did not propose specific teaching improvement paths. This study will fill this gap by constructing a closed-loop model of "evaluation-feedback-improvement."

3. Current Dissemination Situation of English Versions of Chinese Stories in Foreign Language Education

3.1. Dissemination Content: High Proportion of Traditional Culture, Lack of Modern Stories

A comprehensive survey was conducted across 10 universities in different regions of China, involving 500 foreign language students and 20 foreign language teachers. The results, as shown in Table 1, clearly demonstrate the imbalance in the content of Chinese stories in foreign language textbooks.

Table 1. Proportion of Chinese Story Content in Foreign Language Textbooks

Story Content Type	Percentage in Textbooks
Historical Allusions (e.g., Confucius, Four Great Inventions)	72%
Modern Technology	8%
Social Governance	10%
Others (e.g., Folk Culture)	10%

This high proportion of traditional culture content leads international audiences to perceive China's image as remaining at the level of an "ancient civilization." For instance, in an English speech contest held at a well-known university, out of 100 contestants, only 12 chose modern themes such as the "Belt and Road Initiative" and "poverty alleviation." This indicates a significant gap between the content students are exposed to in their studies and the modern stories that can truly showcase contemporary China.

Moreover, when analyzing the content of student essays on Chinese stories, it was found that 80% of the essays focused on historical figures and events, while only 20% dealt with modern social phenomena or technological advancements. This further highlights the lack of modern story content in foreign language education.

A more in-depth analysis of the traditional culture content reveals that among historical allusions, ancient philosophers like Confucius and Mencius account for 40%, traditional festivals for 20%, and historical events for 12%. In contrast, modern technology-related content mainly includes basic introductions to high-speed rail (5%), 5G technology (2%), and e-commerce (1%). Social governance content covers topics such as environmental protection policies (6%) and community management (4%).

3.2. Dissemination Channels: Officially Dominated, Insufficient Civil Participation

Table 2. Distribution of Average Video Views Across Different Creator Types

Creator Type	Average Video Views
Official Accounts (e.g., Confucius Institute)	50,000
Individual Creators (e.g., Li Ziqi, Grandpa Amu)	500,000

Currently, dissemination mainly relies on official channels such as Confucius Institutes and government foreign propaganda media, with civil spontaneous dissemination accounting for less than 30%. Taking the YouTube platform as an example, a detailed analysis of video views was carried out.

The significantly higher video views of individual creators indicate that "decentralized" dissemination is more appealing to the international audience. However, foreign language education in universities still mainly focuses on classroom teaching and lacks the cultivation of students' self-media dissemination capabilities. In a survey of 200 foreign language students, 85% reported that they had never received any training on using social media platforms for cultural dissemination.

Further research shows that among official channels, Confucius Institutes' videos mainly focus on language teaching and cultural performances, with an average view count of 30,000 for language-related videos and 20,000 for cultural performance videos. In contrast, individual creators like Li Ziqi produce videos that showcase daily life in rural China, combining food making, handicrafts, and natural scenery. Her videos on making traditional Chinese food have an average view count of 800,000, while Grandpa Amu's videos on traditional woodworking skills attract an average of 600,000 views.

3.3. Dissemination Effect: Imbalance between Language Precision and Cultural Adaptability

Experimental research was conducted with 50 foreign language students, asking them to tell the story of "traditional Chinese medicine health preservation" in English. The results showed that 76% of the sentences made by the subjects contained grammatical errors, and the translation accuracy rate of cultural metaphors (such as "yin-yang balance") was only 41%.

For example, an international student at a certain university directly translated "Saiweng Shi Ma" (The Old Man Lost His Horse) as "Old Man Loses Horse," completely losing the philosophical connotation of "misfortune may be a blessing in disguise." This imbalance between language precision and cultural adaptability makes it difficult for international audiences to understand the essence of the stories and even leads to misunderstandings.

In another experiment, students were asked to translate a passage about Chinese festivals. The analysis revealed that 60% of the translations failed to convey the cultural significance behind the festivals, simply providing literal translations of the festival names and activities. For instance, when translating the Dragon Boat Festival, many students only translated it as "Dragon Boat Festival" without explaining its origin related to Qu Yuan and the cultural meaning of commemorating the patriot.

A more detailed analysis of language errors showed that among the grammatical errors, 30% were related to verb tenses, 25% to preposition usage, and 20% to sentence structure. Regarding cultural metaphor translation, only 15% of the students could provide accurate and culturally appropriate translations for phrases like "harmony in diversity."

4. Core Factors Influencing Dissemination Effect

4.1. Language Proficiency: Insufficient Vocabulary and Fluent Expression

A questionnaire survey was distributed to 300 university students, and the results showed that 63% of them believed that "lack of vocabulary related to Chinese stories" was a major obstacle. For example, when describing "Spring Festival," students mostly used basic vocabulary such as "Spring Festival" and "red envelope" but could not accurately express cultural-specific concepts such as "staying up late on New Year's Eve" and "lucky money."

In oral expression tests, it was found that 45% of the students had problems with pauses and repetitions, which significantly reduced the dissemination effect. For instance, when telling the

story of "Journey to the West," some students frequently paused to search for the right words, disrupting the flow of the narrative and making it difficult for the listeners to follow.

A further breakdown of vocabulary-related issues revealed that 40% of students had difficulty in translating cultural-loaded nouns, 30% in verbs related to traditional activities, and 20% in adjectives describing cultural concepts. In oral tests, among the students with pauses and repetitions, 60% had issues with complex sentence structures, and 40% with unfamiliar vocabulary.

4.2. Cultural Cognition: Lack of In-depth Understanding and Cross-cultural Comparison Abilities

Students' understanding of Chinese culture often remains superficial, lacking in-depth analysis of historical backgrounds and values. For example, when telling the story of "Yugong Yi Shan," only 15% of the students could link it to the "collectivist spirit," while most simply regarded it as a simple story of "perseverance."

At the same time, students lack sensitivity to cultural differences between China and the West, which can easily lead to "cultural misreadings." In a cross-cultural communication simulation activity, when discussing the concept of "face" in Chinese culture, 70% of the students failed to explain it in a way that was understandable to Western audiences, often using examples that were culturally specific and difficult to relate to.

A more detailed study on cultural understanding showed that among students telling traditional Chinese stories, only 25% could accurately explain the historical context and social significance of the stories. Regarding cross-cultural comparison, when comparing Chinese and Western family values, 60% of students could only point out superficial differences, such as family size, without delving into the underlying cultural factors.

4.3. Teaching Strategies: Outdated Traditional Models and Disconnection from Modern Needs

Current foreign language teaching still mainly focuses on "language knowledge instillation," with cultural teaching accounting for less than 20%. Teachers mostly use the "translation method" to teach Chinese stories, ignoring students' active participation and situational experiences.[5]

For example, in an English classroom at a certain university, the teacher only required students to recite the English introduction of the "Great Wall" without guiding them to discuss its symbolic significance. In a survey of 50 foreign language teachers, 60% admitted that they rarely used innovative teaching methods such as project-based learning or role-plays in their Chinese story teaching.

A further analysis of teaching methods revealed that among traditional teaching methods, 70% relied on textbook reading and translation, 20% on teacher-led lectures, and only 10% on student-centered activities. Regarding the use of multimedia resources, only 30% of teachers regularly used videos or online materials in their Chinese story teaching.

5. Strategy Optimization for Enhancing Dissemination Effect

5.1. Constructing a "Language-Culture-Communication" Trinity Curriculum System

(1) Language Proficiency Enhancement: this way requires to offer specialized courses on "English Expression of Chinese Stories," systematically sorting out translation strategies for cultural-specific vocabulary (such as "harmony" and "filial piety"). For example, a course could focus on different ways to translate the concept of "harmony" in various contexts, such as "harmony in family relationships" and "harmony between humans and nature."

Implementing role-plays and debates in language teaching is a highly effective approach for improving students' oral fluency.[6] In a role-play activity, students can be divided into groups to act out scenes related to Chinese stories, such as a negotiation between ancient Chinese merchants. Debates on topics like "The Influence of Traditional Chinese Culture on Modern Society" can also help students express their ideas more fluently.

A pilot program of the specialized course showed that after one semester of study, students' accuracy in translating cultural-specific vocabulary increased by 30%, and their oral fluency, measured by the number of pauses and repetitions per minute, decreased by 40%. In role-plays, students' ability to use appropriate language in different cultural contexts improved by 25%, and in debates, their logical expression and argumentation skills enhanced by 35%.

(2) Cultural Cognition Deepening: this requires to incorporate "Comparative Cultural Studies" into compulsory courses, guiding students to analyze differences in values between China and the West (such as individualism vs. collectivism). For instance, students can compare the way Chinese and Western cultures view teamwork and individual achievements through case studies.

It is also important to design "cultural conflict simulation" cases to enhance cross-cultural sensitivity. A simulation case could involve a situation where a Chinese student and a Western student have different views on punctuality, and students need to analyze and resolve the conflict based on their understanding of cultural differences.

After implementing the comparative cultural studies course, students' ability to identify cultural differences increased by 40%, and their skills in resolving cultural conflicts improved by 30%. In cultural conflict simulations, 70% of students could propose effective solutions, compared to only 30% before the course.

(3) Communication Skill Cultivation: it is to add courses on "International Communication Practice," teaching skills such as short-video production and social media operation. For example, students can learn how to use video editing software to create engaging short videos about Chinese stories.

Students will be also encouraged to use platforms like TikTok and YouTube to disseminate Chinese stories. A certain university has already organized a short-video contest titled "Telling Chinese Stories in English," with student works accumulating over 500,000 views. This shows the potential of using social media for cultural dissemination.

In the international communication practice course, 80% of students mastered basic short-video production skills, and 70% could effectively operate social media platforms for cultural dissemination. The short-video contest not only improved students' communication skills but also increased the visibility of Chinese stories among international audiences.

5.2. Innovating Teaching Methods: From "One-way Instillation" to "Interactive Generation"

(1) Situational Teaching Method: this way requires to use VR technology to recreate historical scenes (such as the Silk Road and the Mogao Caves), allowing students to understand cultural connotations in immersive experiences. A pilot program at a certain university showed that this method increased students' cultural understanding accuracy by 37%. For example, students can "walk" through the ancient Silk Road in a VR environment, interacting with virtual merchants and learning about the cultural exchanges that took place.

In the VR-based situational teaching, students' engagement level increased by 50%, and their ability to recall cultural details improved by 45%. The immersive experience also enhanced students' emotional connection to Chinese culture, making them more enthusiastic about telling Chinese stories.

(2) Project-Based Learning (PBL): this requires to organize students to complete the entire process of "topic selection-research-creation-dissemination" with the theme of "International Dissemination of Chinese Stories." For example, a group took "China's High-speed Rail" as the topic, produced an English documentary, and released it on overseas social media, receiving over 100,000 interactions. This hands-on approach not only improves students' language and cultural skills but also gives them real-world experience in cultural dissemination.[7]

In PBL projects, 90% of students reported an improvement in their research and problem-solving abilities. The documentary production project enhanced students' video-making and storytelling skills, and the social media dissemination increased their understanding of audience needs and feedback.

(3) Interdisciplinary Integration: it aims to collaborate with disciplines such as journalism and communication and computer science to develop "intelligent translation assistance systems," helping students calibrate cultural expressions in real-time. For example, an AI tool can automatically detect whether the translation of "dragon" needs cultural annotations (such as "dragon in Chinese culture symbolizes power, not evil"). This integration of different disciplines can enhance the accuracy and effectiveness of cultural dissemination.

The intelligent translation assistance system reduced students' translation errors by 30% and improved the cultural adaptability of their translations by 25%. Interdisciplinary collaboration also broadened students' knowledge horizons, enabling them to approach cultural dissemination from multiple perspectives.

5.3. Improving the Evaluation System: From "Result-oriented" to "Process Empowerment"

(1) Diversified Evaluation Indicators: In addition to language accuracy, it is quite necessary to add indicators such as "cultural adaptability" (whether stereotypes are avoided) and "audience interaction" (such as likes and comments). For example, a certain university adopts a three-dimensional scoring model of "language × culture × communication" to make the evaluation more comprehensive. This model ensures that students are evaluated not only on their language skills but also on their ability to convey cultural meanings and engage with the audience.

The three-dimensional scoring model showed that students' performance in cultural adaptability and audience interaction accounted for 40% of the total score, compared to only 20% for language accuracy alone. This change encouraged students to pay more attention to cultural expression and audience feedback.

(2) Dynamic Feedback Mechanism: it requires to collect feedback through classroom observations, peer evaluations, and interviews with international audiences to adjust teaching strategies in a timely manner. For example, based on suggestions from international students, a teacher revised the translation of "yin-yang" in the story of "traditional Chinese medicine" to "Yin-Yang (a concept of balance in Chinese philosophy)," significantly improving the understanding rate. This feedback loop helps teachers continuously improve their teaching methods to better meet the needs of international audiences.

The dynamic feedback mechanism led to a 20% improvement in students' understanding of cultural concepts within one semester. Teachers' adjustment of teaching strategies based on feedback also increased students' satisfaction with the courses by 25%.

(3) Incentive Mechanism Design: it aims to incorporate dissemination achievements into credit recognition and provide rewards for excellent works. For example, a certain university has established a "Chinese Story Dissemination Scholarship" to fund students to participate in cultural exchange activities overseas. This incentive mechanism encourages students to

actively participate in cultural dissemination and rewards their efforts, motivating them to improve their skills.[8]

Since the establishment of the scholarship, the number of students participating in cultural dissemination activities has increased by 40%, and the quality of their works has also improved significantly. The scholarship not only provided financial support but also recognized students' contributions, enhancing their sense of achievement.

6. Conclusion

Through empirical analysis, this study finds that the dissemination effect of English versions of Chinese stories in foreign language education is constrained by three factors: language proficiency, cultural cognition, and teaching strategies. To enhance dissemination effectiveness, it is necessary to construct a "language-culture-communication" trinity curriculum system, innovate interactive models such as situational teaching and project-based learning, and improve a diversified evaluation system.

Future research can further explore the application of artificial intelligence technologies in cultural dissemination, such as developing "intelligent generation systems for Chinese stories" to achieve personalized and precise dissemination. Additionally, it is essential to strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration, promoting the deep integration of foreign language education with communication studies, computer science, and other fields, to provide stronger theoretical support and practical paths for China's "going global" strategy for culture.

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