

# A Study on Improving the Ethnic Identity of Southeast Asian Chinese Children in the Post-Epidemic Era: A Case Study of the "Xunwei Jia Geng Love" Chinese Online Course

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## Abstract

Chinese language teaching is booming and the Chinese language is gradually going global, and more and more Chinese expatriates are paying more attention to the education of their children's "roots". This paper draws on the teaching theory of the "cultural triangle" to design an online Chinese cultural education resource that is both contemporary and historical, in order to strengthen Chinese children's sense of national identity and cultural pride.

**Keywords:** teaching Chinese as a second language and culture, overseas Chinese children, national identity, online teaching

## 1. Background Analysis

With the improvement of China's international status and the implementation of the "the Belt and Road" strategy, the undertaking of teaching Chinese as a second language is booming. More and more overseas Chinese are focusing on the motherland identification of their children. This phenomenon is particularly evident in Southeast Asia. Southeast Asia is a key area of the Silk Road Economic Belt, and the number of overseas Chinese accounts for 73.5% of the total number of overseas Chinese in the world. (Zhuang, G.-T., 2009) In Southeast Asia, although it has formed a relatively complete Chinese education system, there are still some deficiencies, such as unclear educational subjects and prominent problems of "three aspects of education". (Wu, Y.-H., 2016) At the same time, there are few cultural-teaching courses for overseas Chinese children in Southeast Asia. Moreover, online teaching gradually replaced face-to-face classes during the post-epidemic era, and the undertaking of TCSL is facing unprecedented pressure and challenges.

### 1.1 Current Situation of Culture Teaching in TCSL

After decades of the development of TCSL, academic circles changed the focus of the traditional model of language structure to the meaning and communicative function of language. (Liu, X.-N., 2013) In cultivating learners' communicative competence, the relationship between the mastery of cultural knowledge in language and the formation of learners' communicative competence has gradually been realized. Thus, culture teaching and language teaching are interdependent and inseparable in TCSL.

Nowadays, culture teaching in TCSL is mainly based on communicative culture, with the combination of classroom teaching and extracurricular activities. However, there are still some problems as follows:

#### 1.1.1 The Content of Cultural Teaching Is Not Clear

The cultural teaching in TCSL is mainly divided into decentralized and centralized teaching. (Wang, Y.-H., 2014) "Decentralized teaching" is integrating cultural knowledge into the explanation of vocabulary, grammar and other contents, so that learners can imperceptibly master the cultural knowledge under the scene. However, the cultural knowledge learned in this way is not systematic, which is not conducive to cultivating learners' overall perception of Chinese culture. "Centralized teaching" is embodying cultural knowledge in culture courses. In this teaching model, although learners can systematically understand cultural knowledge, the learning content is short of coherence due to the lack of thematic cultural resources.

### 1.1.2 Cultural Textbooks Lack Pertinence and Scientificity

First of all, China has not determined a hierarchical cultural syllabus at present, and the cultural teaching materials have not clearly defined the degree and range of learners, such as the region, Chinese level, and suited course type. For learners, they are from different countries, live in different "cultural circles", and face different cultural shocks when accepting Chinese culture. Therefore, the compilation of teaching materials in a "one size fits all" way lacks pertinence. Secondly, the core of teaching Chinese culture to foreigners is teaching communicative culture. However, most current Chinese culture teaching materials focus on introducing knowledge cultures, such as *ZHONGGUO GUOQING, Lectures of Chinese Language and Culture*, and *Panorama of Chinese Culture* (Zhao, Z., 2014), which is not conducive to cultivating learners' cross-cultural communication ability. At the same time, the materials of cultural teaching on the market are intermingled, knowledge in some teaching materials has been disconnected from the current era. For example, words such as "mess Big Pot Rice", and "Da ge da (the first cellular phone in China)" have long been out of date, which is easy to cause misunderstandings and conflicts among learners.

### 1.1.3 Teaching model and Course Type Are Single

At present, the main method of culture teaching in TCSL is the combination of classroom teaching and extracurricular activities. In classroom teaching, the method of cultural differences comparison and sectional teaching are widely used, with the traditional model of "teachers speaking and students listening" as the core, supplemented by relevant cultural videos. In extracurricular activities, it focuses on visiting places and doing handcraft, which is greatly limited by the cultural resources at the place. To sum up, the limitations of course type and the teaching model are not conducive to stimulating learners' enthusiasm for learning Chinese cultural knowledge, nor can they make students feel the charm of Chinese culture in person.

## 1.2 Mother Tongue Education for Overseas Chinese Children

Deng Xiaoping pointed out in 1993 that "Overseas Chinese is a 'unique opportunity' of China", and the general Secretary Xi Jinping also pointed out that "With a strong sense of patriotism, economic strength, rich intellectual resources, and extensive business connections, overseas Chinese constitute a major force for realizing the Chinese Dream." China has a large number of overseas Chinese and men of talent come out in succession. The new generation of overseas Chinese children is an important force for promoting China's vigorous development. However, as the new overseas Chinese are gradually "localized" overseas, the following problems need to be solved urgently:

### 1.2.1 The Localization Tendency of Overseas Chinese Children Is Serious

Sociolinguistics considers that language has multiple attributes. It is not only a tool of communication, but also a tool of self-identity. The self-identity of the country and nation needs to be constructed, and the construction of language identity is an important aspect. For overseas Chinese children, learning Chinese and gaining Chinese culture can strengthen their sense of national identity and maintain the blood ties with their motherland.

The children of overseas Chinese who settled overseas grow up in the host country. They naturally integrate into the culture of the host country and are relatively less influenced by Chinese culture. At the same time, the educational model of foreign countries is quite different from the motherland, and the content learned is limited due to the specific national conditions of the country, so the new overseas Chinese know less and less about the motherland. In addition, foreign Chinese teaching is mostly elective courses and interest classes, with few class hours, miscellaneous and scattered content. Last but not least, many overseas Chinese children do not realize the necessity of learning Chinese, and few students can insist on completing Chinese courses, so it is difficult to build a cultural identity in the motherland.

### 1.2.2 The Difference in TCSL Between Overseas Chinese and Ethnic Chinese Is Not Clear

Although there has been a distinction between Chinese teaching for overseas Chinese and ethnic Chinese, the studies are not enough. Most existing studies only take the identity of ethnic Chinese as the basis for distinguishing Chinese teaching, and do not subdivide the teaching object of TCSL to ethnic Chinese and overseas Chinese. But there are fundamental differences in Chinese teaching between overseas Chinese and ethnic Chinese. The former is the mother-tongue education of Chinese citizens, and the teaching purpose is to strengthen their sense of identity with the country and nation. The latter already belongs to the nationality of other countries, and their motherland is not China. Therefore, the Chinese teaching of the two should be specifically distinguished, and different requirements should be put forward in terms of teaching content, curriculum and textbook compilation. It is necessary to explore a new teaching model of cultural teaching and to find a suitable way based on their commonness and individuality.

### 1.2.3 The Teaching Content Lacks Pertinence and Innovation

First of all, there are few innovative, local, and well-targeted teaching materials in Southeast Asia. Secondly, most textbook writers do not know enough about the actual situation of overseas Chinese children, and there are significant differences between overseas Chinese children, resulting in the disconnection between the textbooks of overseas Chinese schools and the needs of overseas Chinese children. (Guo, X., 2015) The children of overseas Chinese have special national characteristics. For textbook writers, the content of the textbook should be combined with the deeds of famous patriotic overseas Chinese in history according to the unique status of overseas Chinese children. In this way, overseas Chinese children could be influenced by the example of patriotic stories, which will largely stimulate their patriotic enthusiasm and national identity.

### 1.3 Cultural Teaching of Shaping Roots and Souls

Southeast Asia is located in the core area of China's Silk Road Economic Belt. It is also a concentrated distribution of Chinese and overseas Chinese in China, and has bred many excellent and patriotic overseas Chinese. Based on the new era, the cultural education of overseas Chinese children is both an opportunity and a challenge. Only by attaching importance to cultural education and solidly cultivating a new generation of overseas Chinese with "Chinese roots" and "Chinese souls", can we meet the needs of China's development in the new era and gather the powerful forces to realize the Chinese dream.

## 2. "Xunwei Jia Geng Love" Chinese Online Culture Course

This paper is based on the research background above to design an online cultural teaching course for overseas Chinese children.

### 2.1 Course Description

Based on the theme of "Jimei District, Xiamen City", the online cultural course is designed to cover the Tan Kah-kee spirit, folk customs and food", whose target students are overseas Chinese children living in Southeast Asia. The Chinese online cultural course called "Xunwei Jia Geng Love" is designed to be a cultural course about Chinese civilization and Jimei characteristics. This course is dedicated to introducing Jimei, telling the story of Jimei, promoting the spirit of Tan Kah Kee, and stimulating the sense of national identity and cultural pride of overseas Chinese children living in Southeast Asia through online teaching course with local characteristics of Jimei.

### 2.2 Reference and Preparation for the Design of the Teaching Content Level

Before the curriculum design, we used the questionnaire "Survey on Chinese Culture Courses for overseas Chinese children in Southeast Asia" and successfully collected 92 survey samples, including 73 students who major in teaching Chinese as a second language, 15 foreign Chinese teaching staff, and four overseas Chinese children. Combining the survey results, we analyzed the basic situation of overseas Chinese children's mastery of Chinese culture, their motivation to learn Chinese, and the necessity of online Chinese culture courses. According to the survey results, it can be concluded that the available resources for personalized online Chinese culture classes for overseas Chinese children are insufficient, and there are few studies specifically in this area currently on the background of the increasing demand for Chinese traditional culture learning among overseas Chinese children.

In the field of teaching Chinese as a second language, language as a bridge and culture as an oar. Language education and cultural transmission complement each other. In the process of teaching, teachers not only need to teach the Chinese language, but also have the deeper purpose of using Chinese as a carrier and teaching as a medium to spread Chinese culture subtly. Teachers should help students understand the cultural meaning through the design of the teaching content, to achieve the purpose of spreading the excellent Chinese traditional culture in Chinese online culture classes.

Based on the results of the survey, this course is designed to use the "cultural triangle" as theoretical support. (Cui, X.-L., 2012) The "cultural triangle" is a method of teaching culture to second language learners and is widely used in elementary and middle schools in the United States. According to the American Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century, the "cultural triangle" is divided into three levels, namely, cultural concepts, cultural practices and cultural products. These three levels interrelate and influence each other, and both cultural practices and cultural products are related to cultural concepts. (Luo, Q.-S., 2006)

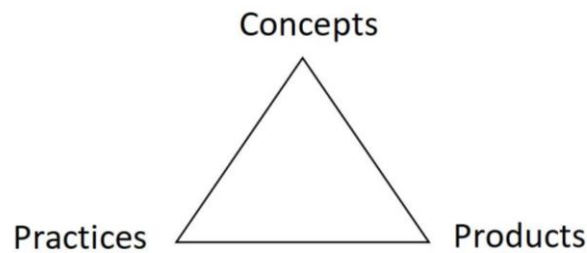


Figure 1. Cultural triangle

This paper intends to design a Chinese online cultural course. Based on the "cultural triangle" theory of "concepts", "activities" and "products", the Chinese online cultural course called "Xunwei Jia Geng Love" is also divided into three levels. The first layer is the physical layer, which includes visual objects such as southern Fujian cuisine and traditional skills in Jimei; the second layer is the custom layer, which includes the traditional customs in Southern Fujian; the third layer is the conceptual layer, which includes Tan Kah-kee spirit and the commonality of Chinese spirit that can be generalized from Mr. Tan Kah Kee. This course is dedicated to creating composite three-level teaching: First of all, to interpret the linguistic symbols in the local customs of Jimei; secondly, to explore the cultural customs behind the local customs of Jimei from the surface to the inside, from the shallower to the deeper; eventually, to understand the cultural and spiritual connotations of people, feelings and objects in Jimei. The students will be subconsciously able to understand the customs of Jimei, feel the Tan Kah-kee spirit, experience the spirit of overseas Chinese as "enterprising, hard-working, open, tolerant and dedicated", and enhance their sense of national responsibility and cultural identity through lively and interesting classroom lectures.

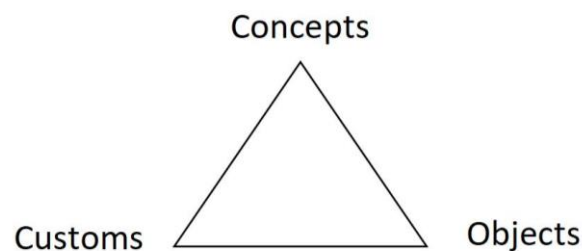


Figure 2. Three levels in "Xunwei Jia Geng Love"

### 2.3 Specific Design of Course Content

The macro purpose of teaching Chinese as a second language is to promote Chinese civilization, which fundamentally determines that teaching Chinese as a second language is to spread Chinese culture. The career of teaching Chinese as a second language spreads culture through teaching, and teaching itself is a kind of cross-cultural communication activity. Without the support of cultural background, learners will not be able to go deeper in learning and understanding Chinese. In terms of cultural communication, this course is dedicated to taking the unique Tan Kah-kee spirit and Jimei culture as the carrier, using the "Internet +" approach to promote Chinese culture "going out" in the background of the epidemic, to inherit and carry forward the Tan Kah-kee spirit, and to enhance the sense of national identity and cultural confidence of overseas Chinese children. The course will be divided into the following three topics: Patriotic Chinese Tan Kah Kee, folk customs in Jimei, and southern Fujian cuisine.

### 2.3.1 Patriotic Overseas Chinese Tan Kah Kee

Tan Kah Kee, the head of Jimei University, was hailed by Chairman Mao as "the banner of overseas Chinese and the glory of the nation." Although he was in the South China Sea, Tan Kah Kee always cared about China and actively supported the revolutionary activities in China, so he was regarded as a famous overseas Chinese leader. Mr. Tan Kah Kee's life story has educational significance for overseas Chinese children, and his close connection with overseas Chinese also easily evokes a strong sense of patriotism in their children. Therefore, Chinese cultural materials with the Tan Kah-kee spirit are ideal for overseas Chinese children to learn. This topic focuses on "storytelling", and through telling the story of Mr. Tan Kah Kee, overseas Chinese children can feel the Tan Kah-kee spirit, thus completing the output of cultural significance.

### 2.3.2 Folk Customs of Jimei

Jimei, located in the geometric center of Xiamen, is the hometown of Mr. Tan Kah Kee and a famous overseas Chinese town, which brings together the beauty of the world, highlights the beauty of the local city and gathers the beauty of humanity. Jimei has historical and cultural connotations, as well as diverse folk customs. Using folk customs as the entry point for cultural teaching, supplemented by videos of traditional folk activities, the students will be able to understand and experience the inheritance and development of Chinese culture through specific cultural activities, thus feeling the broad and profound national culture in China.

### 2.3.3 Southern Fujian Cuisine

Food is closely related to daily life. Through the precipitation of time, the cultural significance of food has far exceeded its practical significance and has a more engraved cultural and artistic connotation. In the process of teaching Chinese as a second language, many teachers will use "food" as an introduction whenever they teach about festivals. At the same time, when a traditional Chinese festival is mentioned, the first thing that comes to the foreign students' minds is the food of the festival, such as eating moon cakes at the Mid-Autumn Festival, Zongzi at the Dragon Boat Festival, and soup dumplings at Lantern Festival.....

Southern Fujian cuisine not only reflects the cultural and artistic implications of the Jimei area, but also is closely connected with the characteristic culture in the Jimei area. As one of the eight major cuisines in China, southern Fujian cuisine also has an important origin with the cuisine in Southeast Asia. Quanzhou is one of the starting points of the "Maritime Silk Road" and is also a famous overseas Chinese town, so the status of southern Fujian cuisine in the food culture of the "Maritime Silk Road" is evident. Southern Fujian cuisine integrates the heritage of Jimei with Southeast Asian culture, promoting empathy for the overseas Chinese children through cultural teaching

## 3. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is crucial to improve the national identity of the new generation of overseas Chinese children and to pool the patriotic power of the new overseas Chinese. The teaching of Chinese as a second language should aim at promoting traditional Chinese culture, and integrate elements of overseas Chinese hometowns and patriotic Chinese deeds into cultural teaching to reinforce the national identity of overseas Chinese children. Based on the "cultural triangle" theory, this paper designs a three-level cultural teaching content of "objects, customs, and concepts", which will provide new ideas for online cultural teaching in TCSL. The composite three-level teaching content, with Jimei District as the core, will also enable overseas Chinese children to experience the Tan Kah-kee spirit from shallow to deep, from outside to inside, and enhance their sense of national identity and belonging.

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