

# Optimizing International Chinese Language Education in the Context of “Telling China’s Story Well”

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**Abstract:** With the deepening of “Belt and Road” cooperation, China has actively participated in the construction and adjustment of various international systems. In recent years, China’s international influence and status have attracted widespread attention and great importance worldwide. As a form of “soft power”, alongside hard power indicators like international standing, military strength, and economic growth, culture is a crucial factor reflecting a nation’s comprehensive international strength. The quality of international Chinese language education, which serves as a vehicle for both language dissemination and cultural transmission, is directly linked to the effectiveness of communicating Chinese stories and building China’s international discourse power. However, although international Chinese language education has achieved leapfrog development, it still faces development challenges. Based on this, this paper deeply explores the optimization strategies of international Chinese language education under the background of “telling China’s story well” for reference.

**Keywords:** Telling China’s story well; International Chinese language education; Cultural communication; Optimization; Cross-cultural communication

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## 1. Introduction

Chinese stories contain profound Chinese historical culture, values, and development wisdom. They are a bridge across cultural barriers and enhance the international community’s cognitive identity of China. As a linguistic link connecting China and the world, international Chinese language education has taken promoting the Chinese language and spreading Chinese culture as its mission since its establishment, building a platform for cultural exchange worldwide. Guided by telling China’s story well, exploring the optimization path of international Chinese language education is an inherent demand for improving the quality of international Chinese language education and an important measure for enhancing national cultural soft power.

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## **2. The concept of “telling China’s story well”**

The concept of “telling China’s story well” was first proposed at the National Conference on Propaganda, Ideological and Cultural Work in 2018, aiming to promote traditional Chinese culture and enhance national soft power by telling Chinese stories well. In subsequent conferences, this concept was elaborated in more detail and depth. With the continuous improvement of China’s international discourse power and status, it can be found that hard power is a rigid indicator to measure a country’s strength, while cultural soft power is a criterion to measure a country’s cultural heritage <sup>[1]</sup>. Countries with low cultural soft power cannot communicate and collide with cultures of different countries, and their cultural discourse power will also be lost. To better enhance China’s international influence, conduct more cultural exchanges on the international stage, and lead national strength through culture, it is necessary to deeply explore the values accumulated in Chinese culture and guide national development through the externalized form of stories <sup>[2]</sup>.

## **3. The inherent connection between “telling China’s story well” and international Chinese language education**

### **3.1. Goal alignment, jointly serving language learning**

The core goal of telling China’s story well is to show a more real and three-dimensional China to the international community through vivid and lively narratives, eliminate cognitive biases, and enhance the international community’s emotional identity with China. The goal of international Chinese language education is not simply the cultivation of language skills, but to promote understanding and support among people from different countries and regions through the medium of Chinese. Both take cross-cultural understanding and identity as the core, providing a direction for cultural communication in Chinese language education <sup>[3]</sup>.

### **3.2. Content complementation, providing rich learning materials**

The content system of international Chinese language education includes three levels: linguistic knowledge, language skills, and cultural knowledge. Chinese stories involve historical allusions, folk legends, contemporary development, social life, and other content, which can also provide more sufficient materials for teaching. From the perspective of linguistic knowledge, idioms and allusions, as well as modern narratives in Chinese stories, help students understand the connotation of Chinese semantics. From the perspective of language skills, students’ listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities can be improved through activities such as retelling Chinese stories and conducting story-themed debates. From the perspective of cultural knowledge, Chinese stories are carriers of Chinese culture, and integrating them into teaching helps learners perceive Chinese values and form correct ways of thinking <sup>[4]</sup>.

### **3.3. Efficiency improvement, forming a closed loop of language communication**

The development of international Chinese language education can provide a broader mass base for telling China’s story well. With the increase in the number of Chinese learners, the communication scope of Chinese stories continues to expand, and the accuracy of communication continues to improve. Telling China’s story well can enhance the attractiveness of international Chinese language education, solve the confusion of some overseas learners about “why learn Chinese”, and enhance their learning motivation. Carrying out international Chinese language education can provide language support for understanding Chinese stories, inject cultural connotation into Chinese learning, and achieve value resonance through culture.

## **4. The composition of story content for “telling China’s story well”**

### **4.1. Historical inheritance dimension**

Chinese culture contains a profound spiritual core, mainly with idioms and allusions, traditional festivals, cultural heritage, and other core carriers. Including the trade stories of the Silk Road, the artistic connotation of Dunhuang murals, and the perseverance embodied in allusions such as “Yugong Moving Mountains.” Such content is an important material for Chinese teaching and a cultural symbol to explain traditional Chinese values <sup>[5]</sup>.

### **4.2. Contemporary development dimension**

In the context of the new era, Chinese stories should closely follow China’s modernization process, covering major themes such as technological innovation, poverty alleviation, and ecological civilization. For example, the R&D story of China’s high-speed rail shows independent innovation capabilities; the poverty alleviation practice in Shibadong Village fully embodies the people-centered development thought; cases such as Saihanba afforestation and the Yangtze River protection show responsibility; the “Belt and Road” cooperation stories convey a global governance concept. Such content can meet the international community’s cognitive needs regarding China’s development, thus realizing the synchronization of language learning and era cognition.

### **4.3. Life practice dimension**

Select the daily scenes and spiritual outlook of ordinary Chinese people, including folk customs, food culture, and individual struggle. Including the reunion story of Chinese New Year’s Eve dinner, conveying family ethics; the persistence of traditional craftsmen, showing craftsmanship spirit; the struggle process of overseas Chinese builds a bridge of emotional connection between China and foreign countries. Such narratives can avoid the sense of distance in grand narratives, allowing overseas learners to deepen their understanding and perception of social culture from specific life <sup>[6]</sup>.

## **5. Existing problems of international Chinese language education in the background of “telling China’s story well”**

### **5.1. Content system: Lack of systematic integration of Chinese stories**

Firstly, the current selection of Chinese stories tends toward grand narratives, with an insufficient supply of stories grounded in everyday life. At present, in some international Chinese textbooks, the selection of Chinese stories mainly focuses on themes such as the change of historical dynasties and the release of major policies, but there are not many individual story designs about the life changes of ordinary Chinese people and folk cultural customs. This grand narrative model makes it difficult for overseas learners to find emotional resonance points in the stories and form a concrete cognition of China. Secondly, the content presentation is rigid, and the interpretation of cultural connotation is not in-depth. Most textbooks present Chinese stories at the level of story text + vocabulary notes, without in-depth analysis of the cultural background behind the stories. For example, when explaining the story of “Yugong Moving Mountains”, if only analyzing from the literal meaning without interpreting the perseverance and collectivism contained in it, it leads to learners only mastering the basic form of the language and being unable to understand its essential core <sup>[7]</sup>.

### **5.2. Teaching model: Dominated by one-way communication**

Firstly, the teaching method is rigid, lacking a story-based teaching design. Most overseas Chinese classrooms

still mainly adopt the mode of teacher explanation + student memorization. Teachers lead the explanation of linguistic knowledge and learning content, and students are in a passive learning state. This model directly ignores the narrative characteristics of story communication and is difficult to fully mobilize students' learning enthusiasm. When explaining the story of the "Belt and Road", teachers only list the names and data of cooperative projects, without guiding learners to actively engage with the story's deeper meaning through case analysis and situational simulation. Secondly, the teaching scene is limited to the classroom, lacking daily extension. There is a disconnect between the classroom scene of international Chinese language education and the life of overseas learners, and the communication of Chinese stories has not been integrated into the daily communication and practice of learners<sup>[8]</sup>. Thirdly, the application of digital teaching is insufficient, and the form of communication is still relatively single. At present, although some cultural teaching institutions have introduced online teaching platforms, they mainly focus on teaching videos, and have not effectively used technologies such as virtual reality to build story scenes, resulting in the lack of attractiveness in the digital communication form of Chinese teaching.

### **5.3. Communication channels: Separation of internal and external communication forms**

Communication channels are mainly concentrated in on-campus classrooms, and there are relatively few off-campus communication opportunities. The cultural communication of international Chinese language education mainly focuses on classroom teaching, and fails to fully use channels such as Confucius Institute cultural activities overseas, local community services, and media platforms for story communication. Moreover, the construction of media communication channels is lagging behind, lacking international expression. At present, Chinese education resources for overseas are mainly in Chinese, lacking multilingual transformation and localized adaptation.

## **6. Optimization strategies of international Chinese language education in the background of "telling China's story well"**

### **6.1. Build a sound story content system to promote students' development**

The key to telling China's story well is to break the framework of traditional content and build a systematic, adaptive, and interesting Chinese story content system. Firstly, establish a three-dimensional story database to enrich content supply. Systematically sort out Chinese story resources according to three aspects: historical tradition, contemporary development, and life practice. Secondly, implement a hierarchical distribution mechanism, and set differentiated teaching content according to learners' age characteristics, mother tongue background, and learning goals. For young learners, select vivid folk stories, including "Ne Zha Conquers the Dragon King" and the spirit of unity in "Calabash Brothers"; for adult learners, integrate relevant stories according to professional needs, including entrepreneurs telling the innovation stories of Chinese enterprises. For European and American learners, explain the similarities and differences between Chinese culture and Western civilization to reduce cultural cognitive barriers. Thirdly, deepen the interpretation of cultural connotation. In story-based teaching, use story texts to help learners master linguistic knowledge such as vocabulary and grammar, explain the historical origin and practical significance of stories combined with cultural background, guide learners to explore the Chinese values contained in the stories, and provide support for teachers and learners<sup>[9-11]</sup>.

### **6.2. Construct an interactive and experiential teaching model to enhance story appeal**

To move beyond the traditional one-way transmission model, it is essential to construct a story-based teaching

approach with interactivity and experience “at its core”, thereby enhancing the appeal of Chinese stories. Firstly, promote the “immersive story teaching method.” Use virtual reality and augmented reality technologies to build virtual story scenes, allowing learners to experience and feel Chinese stories personally. For example, use VR technology to restore the trade scenes of the Silk Road, letting students play the role of merchants to participate in commodity transactions, thereby mastering the corresponding vocabulary and cultural knowledge. Secondly, construct a model of integrating classroom, life, and practice scenes, extending the communication of Chinese stories beyond the classroom<sup>[12]</sup>. In life scenes, guide learners to record Chinese elements around them in Chinese, including stories of overseas Chinese restaurants and the connotation of Chinese songs. In practice scenes, organize Chinese story practice activities, take learners to visit local Chinese cultural exhibitions, interview the struggle stories of overseas Chinese, and realize the effective integration of story communication and life practice. Thirdly, build a digital interactive platform, develop an integrated platform for story learning, interactive communication, and achievement display, set up a story micro-course section, present Chinese stories in the form of animations and short videos, let learners share the Chinese stories they understand, and stimulate students’ learning enthusiasm<sup>[13]</sup>.

### **6.3. Build an internal and external school linkage mechanism to improve education quality**

Breaking the limitations of classroom teaching, integrating different types of educational resources, and constructing a multi-dimensional and three-dimensional communication channel are particularly crucial. To this end, it is necessary to build an internal and external school linkage mechanism to form a joint force for story communication.

Firstly, deepen school-local collaboration and expand off-campus communication scenes. Chinese teaching institutions establish cooperative relationships with local educational departments, cultural associations, and enterprises overseas, carry out activities of Chinese stories entering campuses with local schools, organize Chinese teachers to give story lectures locally, co-host “Chinese Story Cultural Festivals” with cultural associations, and interpret Chinese stories through dramas and song and dance performances<sup>[14]</sup>. Cooperate with enterprises to carry out a “culture + occupation” training mechanism, infiltrate the development stories of Chinese enterprises into vocational skill teaching, and explain stories about China’s manufacturing industry to local employees; secondly, build an international media matrix. Make full use of mainstream overseas media and social platforms to build a communication mechanism. Present Chinese stories in the form of short videos and situational dramas, produce videos about understanding Chinese traditional festivals in one minute, cooperate with well-known bloggers at home and abroad, and invite them to tell Chinese stories in local languages; thirdly, construct an online-offline integrated communication mechanism. Use digital teaching platforms to spread stories through social media, hold global Chinese story speech contests, attract the participation of global learners, and better realize the effective integration of the breadth of online communication and the depth of offline communication<sup>[15]</sup>.

## **7. Conclusion**

In summary, in the context of the new era, “telling China’s story well” provides new development opportunities for the development of international Chinese language education. As a channel for the communication of Chinese stories, international Chinese education has important value. In the context of globalization, the optimization and upgrading of international Chinese language education is not only the improvement of language teaching

quality but also the improvement of cultural communication capabilities. This requires collaborative efforts from universities, governments, and other national bodies to shoulder the responsibility of telling China's stories and spreading its culture. It is believed that in the process of continuous reform and exploration, Chinese stories can become a business card of Chinese culture, allowing the world to hear Chinese stories.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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