

A Study on the Practice of International Chinese Communication among British Secondary School Students in the Context of International Chinese Education

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Abstract: With the continuous enhancement of China's international influence and the deepening of the "Belt and Road" initiative, international Chinese education has become a core vehicle for cross-cultural communication. As a leading force in the development of Chinese education in Europe, the UK has made significant progress in promoting Chinese communication practices among secondary school students in recent years through diverse approaches such as government-led initiatives, institutional collaboration, and campus practices. Based on academic frameworks such as cross-cultural communication theory, this study employs literature review, case analysis, and comparative research methods to systematically examine the policy environment, practical models, and communication outcomes of Chinese dissemination among UK secondary school students. It also delves into core challenges such as teacher shortages, language barriers, and cultural adaptability, proposing targeted optimization strategies. The research reveals that the Chinese communication practices among UK secondary school students exhibit a three-dimensional characteristic of "policy-driven, technology-enabled, and culturally immersive." The successful experiences can provide important references for the localization of global Chinese education and also build a communication bridge for youth-level cultural exchange between China and the UK.

Keywords: International Chinese Education; British Secondary School Students; Chinese Language Dissemination; Teaching Practice

1. Introduction

In recent years, scholars and experts at home have conducted extensive research in the field of China communication, exploring the

significance, forms, and mechanisms of China communication from various perspectives. Regarding the cultivation paths of international communication capabilities, scholars have proposed their views and insights on how to nurture talents for contemporary China communication in the new era, based on international situations, national ideologies, and media communication. In her article "International Communication Capability, National Discourse Capability, and National Language Capability—A Discussion on the 'Dual-Drive' Strategy for Cultivating International Communication Talents," published in *Hebei University Journal (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)* in May 2022, Wen Qiufang stated: "The cultivation of international communication talents should follow the 'Dual-Drive' strategy, with domestic and foreign communication teams and overseas China-friendly teams advancing simultaneously and in parallel, jointly promoting China's propositions, wisdom, and solutions." Research by Chinese scholars on the cultivation of students' international communication skills has evolved from the initial construction of a general framework to the analysis and exploration of specific pathways, demonstrating characteristics such as interdisciplinary integration, emphasis on resource collaboration, diversification. However, these studies often remain limited to a macro perspective, providing insufficient guidance on individual communication practices, thereby resulting in limitations in practical application. Therefore, this paper aims to conduct a questionnaire survey among 25 British secondary school students to examine the changes in their Chinese language proficiency and their current understanding of contemporary China, thereby indirectly evaluating the effectiveness of British secondary school students' international Chinese communication practices and providing new insights and references for their efforts in disseminating

contemporary China.

2. Theoretical Basis

Cross-cultural communication theory examines information exchange and meaning construction across cultural contexts, emphasizing cultural adaptability and empathetic competence in communication. The Chinese language teaching practice for British secondary students fundamentally constitutes a cross-cultural communication process, with its core objective being the effective transmission of Chinese linguistic symbols and cultural connotations. This theory requires Chinese education to not only impart language skills but also cultivate students' cross-cultural awareness, guiding them to understand cultural differences between Chinese and English and master cross-cultural communication techniques. For instance, the "Step-by-Step High School Chinese" textbook incorporates comparative content between Chinese and English cultures in its cultural project design, helping students comprehend cultural disparities during language learning and enhancing the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication.

3. Research Design

3.1 Research Subjects

The subjects of this research were 25 secondary school students in the UK. Three tests were conducted to assess their Chinese proficiency and recognition of contemporary China, as well as changes over a 12-month period around March 24, September 12, 2025 and March 23, 2026.

3.2 Research Tools

The first two test questionnaires utilized the International Chinese Language Proficiency Standards for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (CET-4). This internationally recognized framework evaluates Chinese proficiency through four core competencies: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Each competency is further divided into two to three specific assessment items, providing a comprehensive evaluation of students' language skills across all four dimensions.

3.3 Testing Methods

This research designed two scales, namely the "Chinese Proficiency Test Scale" and the second

one, the "Chinese Proficiency Test Scale (Modified Version)". The same scale was used for the first and second tests, while the third test added content on understanding China culture, recognizing China values, and identifying China achievements based on the scale data obtained in the previous tests and issues identified during the evaluation process, forming the modified version of the scale. Among them, the first and second tests focused on assessing the Chinese language proficiency of British secondary school students, aiming to evaluate their mastery of Chinese language skills. The first two tests emphasized collecting quantitative data on students' Chinese proficiency. The third test is based on the data from the first two tests and has been improved upon, aiming to more comprehensively assess foreign students' Chinese language proficiency and their understanding of contemporary China. Through this scale, the goal is to understand students' level of awareness of Chinese culture, their comprehension of traditional Chinese values, their knowledge of Chinese social life, and their recognition of China's current achievements. The two scales can provide a relatively intuitive reflection of the Chinese language proficiency and cognitive status of British secondary school students regarding contemporary China. At the same time, this also indirectly reflects the effectiveness of 25 British secondary school students in disseminating contemporary China over the past 12 months. Data collection employs both quantitative and qualitative methods. Scores from different language skill tests are statistically analyzed, summarized, and comprehensively evaluated.

4. Research Findings

4.1 Results of the First test (March 24, 2025)

The initial assessment evaluated British secondary students' Chinese proficiency across four dimensions: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Each dimension was scored out of 20 points, with two to three specific measurement items per category. Analysis of 50 students revealed the following results: The listening dimension scored an average of 8.49, demonstrating strong performance in auditory comprehension and pronunciation. The speaking dimension averaged 7.11, indicating room for improvement in verbal communication. The reading dimension achieved 7.89, reflecting foundational competence in textual analysis and

content interpretation. The writing dimension scored 6.51, suggesting significant potential for

enhancement in character formation and textual expression.

Table 1. Data Related to the First Test Results

Measurement Dimension	Measure Content	Score Settings	Measurement Results (mean)
Listening	Listening to spoken Chinese	7	8.49
	Listening to Chinese News	7	
	Listen to the Chinese short film	6	
	Chinese Spoken Expression	7	
speaking	Chinese situational speaking	7	7.11
	Chinese Topic Speech	6	
Reading	Reading Chinese Newspapers and Periodicals	10	7.89
	Reading Chinese Short Passages	10	
Writing	Basic Chinese Character Writing	10	6.51
	Chinese Contextual Writing	10	

4.2 Results of the Second Test (September 12, 2025)

The second test employed the same scale design and scoring criteria as the first. According to the results, British secondary school students achieved average scores of 9.38 in listening, 8.59 in speaking, 8.24 in reading, and 6.83 in writing. Compared to the first test, improvements were observed across all four dimensions, with the most significant progress in speaking and a relatively smaller increase in writing. The significant improvement in oral proficiency demonstrates the positive impact of teaching methods and learning environments on developing speaking skills. Through extensive oral practice and interactions with native Chinese speakers, British secondary school

students have the opportunity to apply their acquired knowledge, enhancing their pronunciation, fluency, and communicative competence in spoken language. The relatively modest improvement in writing proficiency may reflect the complexity of writing as a comprehensive language skill, which requires students to master multiple aspects including vocabulary, grammatical structures, text organization, and logical reasoning. British secondary school students frequently encounter challenges such as vocabulary selection difficulties, accuracy issues in grammatical structures, and difficulties in text organization and logical expression. A single month of instruction may not be sufficient to comprehensively enhance students' writing abilities.

Table 2. Data Related to the Second Test Results

Measurement Dimension	Measure Content	Score Settings	Measurement Results (mean)
Listening	Listening to spoken Chinese	7	9.38
	Listening to Chinese News	7	
	Listen to the Chinese short film	6	
	Chinese Spoken Expression	7	
speaking	Chinese situational speaking	7	8.59
	Chinese Topic Speech	6	
Reading	Reading Chinese Newspapers and Periodicals	10	8.24
	Reading Chinese Short Passages	10	
Writing	Basic Chinese Character Writing	10	6.83
	Chinese Contextual Writing	10	

4.3 Results of the Third Test (March 23, 2026)

Given the shortcomings presented in the first and second tests, the study found that focusing solely on the assessment of Chinese language proficiency may not fully understand the comprehension and cognitive levels of British

secondary school students regarding China's culture and values. To address the aforementioned shortcomings, the research team implemented a series of questionnaires and teaching materials. In terms of listening proficiency, the improvement rate reached 17%, while reading proficiency showed a 12%

increase. These results significantly surpassed the initial test levels, demonstrating marked progress across all dimensions of Chinese language proficiency. The effectiveness of the teaching process was particularly evident in oral communication, where practical teaching methods yielded notable results. The substantial improvement in speaking skills may be attributed to native Chinese instructors' classroom instruction and targeted guidance focused on oral communication. In contrast, the limited progress in written expression could be attributed to the complexity of writing tasks, which require advanced language organization and expression skills. Writing demands proficiency in vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, and text composition. Additionally, the complexity of writing tasks, diverse requirements, and contextual challenges often lead to judgment errors among British secondary school students, hindering systematic experience accumulation. In comparison, dimensions such as speaking, listening, and reading may be more easily enhanced through practical application and accumulated experience.

China's cultural understanding encompasses three important dimensions: cognition of China's literature, art, and philosophy; cognition of China's society and economy; and cognition of

China's history, geography, and humanities. The average scores for these three dimensions are 8.96, 8.21, and 10.17, respectively. The differences in average scores across these dimensions reflect variations in students' ability to understand China's culture in different fields. The high scores in China's historical, geographical, and humanistic cognition indicate that students have a relatively deep grasp of knowledge in these areas. However, the lower scores in China's social and economic cognition may suggest that students still have room for improvement in understanding China's society and economy. The recognition of China's values includes three important dimensions: recognition of China's value concepts, recognition of China's moral concepts, and understanding of socialist core values. The average scores for these three dimensions are 11.25, 10.08, and 9.71, respectively. According to the test results, British secondary school students have shown relatively high average scores in the recognition of China's values. The high average scores reflect students' recognition of China's value concepts and moral concepts, as well as their understanding of socialist core values. This indicates that students have a certain level of understanding and awareness of these value concepts and express an attitude of recognition.

Table 3. Data Related to the Third Test Results

Measurement Dimension	Measure Content	Score Settings	Measurement Results (mean)
Chinese language proficiency	Listening comprehension ability	20	10.17
	Oral communication skills	20	9.58
	reading comprehension	20	8.96
	written expression ability	20	7.21
China cultural understanding	China literature, art, philosophy cognition	15	8.96
	China social, economic cognition	15	8.21
	China history, geography, and cultural cognition	15	10.17
China value recognition	China values recognition	15	11.25
	China moral concept identification	15	10.08
	Understanding of Socialist Core Values	15	9.71
China achievement recognition	China's current achievements recognition	15	12.46
	China policy guidelines recognition	15	8.25

China's achievement recognition includes two important dimensions: recognition of China's existing achievements and recognition of China's policy guidelines. According to the data, the average scores for these two dimensions are 12.46 and 8.25, respectively. First, the high average scores indicate that students demonstrate a relatively high level of recognition for China's existing achievements. Students' recognition of

China's existing achievements and their recognition of China's policy guidelines reflect their certain degree of agreement and support for the achievements made by China in various fields and the policy guidelines adopted. Second, the difference in the average scores of these two dimensions illustrates the varying degrees of recognition students have for China's existing achievements and policy guidelines. The

relatively high average score for recognition of China's existing achievements suggests that students hold a more positive attitude toward the achievements made by China in various fields. In contrast, the relatively low average score for recognition of China's policy guidelines may indicate that students have a lower degree of agreement with China's policy guidelines, showing some disagreement or reservations.

Overall, the average scores in the three dimensions of China cultural understanding, China value recognition, and China achievement recognition all exceeded the average scores of British secondary school students' Chinese language proficiency in the initial test, indicating that in these areas, students have gained a deeper understanding and recognition of China's culture, values, and achievements. This may be due to adjustments in teaching content, which have increased the coverage of China's culture, values, and achievements, prompting students to pay more attention to and learn related knowledge. Consequently, their cognitive levels in these aspects have improved, enabling British secondary school students to not only learn Chinese language but also gain a deeper understanding and exposure to China's culture, values, and achievements. This further cultivates their sense of identity and interest in these aspects, thereby enhancing their evaluation and recognition of the relevant dimensions. Such differences may also suggest that while receiving Chinese language education, students have been positively influenced by other channels or learning methods regarding China's culture. Students may actively learn about China's culture through reading, research, social interactions, and other means, accumulating certain knowledge and understanding.

5. Discussion and Reflection

5.1 Some Thoughts on the Survey Conclusions

In light of the above findings, we raise two questions to stimulate further reflection.

Reflection 1: How to interpret the phenomenon that students' listening and speaking skills outperform their reading and writing skills in the three tests, with faster improvement?

The research team developed a standardized assessment tool based on the International Chinese Language Education Level Standards, covering listening, speaking, reading, and writing components, and conducted three rounds

of surveys. This pattern is easily explained: Chinese language instructors provide foreign students with informal learning environments—such as casual conversations after class—which significantly enhance their listening and speaking skills. In contrast, formal reading and writing instruction is more structured, offering fewer opportunities for practice. Moreover, reading and writing are more comprehensive skills than listening and speaking, requiring deeper comprehension and strategic planning of text structures. While listening and speaking form the foundational training for beginners, writing represents a more advanced level. This distinction in training priorities explains why listening and speaking skills consistently outperform reading and writing in both performance and improvement rates across the three assessments.

In Chinese language instruction, educators often rely on oral dialogues to reduce teaching difficulty and create smoother classroom interactions, due to their limited experience in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. The disparity in time allocation and willingness to implement listening-speaking and reading-writing exercises further contributes to weaker reading-writing skills and slower progress in these areas.

Reflection 2: How to understand the phenomenon of foreign students having a low level of recognition for China's policy guidelines and socialist core values?

The third questionnaire results showed that after three months of Chinese language learning and immersion, foreign students had lower recognition of China's existing policies and core socialist values compared to China's values, moral concepts, and culture, and even held certain misunderstandings. Objectively speaking, through long-term international public opinion, it can be observed that this may be related to the fact that some Western public media do not report China's policies, programs, and concepts objectively, with biases, and tend to focus on negative news about China. Subjectively speaking, foreign students exhibit a certain degree of wariness toward China's policies, concepts, and values during their Chinese language courses, adopting a passive attitude or even resistance when teachers teach related objective content, which is also a factor contributing to the low recognition.

5.2 Reflection on Experimental Design

In response to the results of the three tests and various issues in the teaching process, the research team reflected on the experimental design. First, the first and second tests only assessed the Chinese language proficiency of British secondary school students, which had some shortcomings. This single-dimensional test design limits the assessment of students' comprehensive abilities, fails to fully understand their development in cross-cultural communication and understanding, and cannot indirectly reflect the effectiveness of promoting contemporary China.

By adding content on China cultural understanding, China value recognition, and China achievement recognition to the third test, the shortcomings of the previous two tests can be compensated. First, the addition of the China cultural understanding dimension helps students gain a deeper understanding of China's history, literature, art, and philosophy, thereby enhancing their comprehension and awareness of Chinese culture. Second, the inclusion of the China value recognition dimension encourages students to reflect on and evaluate China's values, fostering value consciousness in cross-cultural communication and cooperation. Finally, the introduction of the China's achievement recognition dimension enables students to understand China's accomplishments in economy, science and technology, and social fields, thereby increasing their recognition and respect for China. By incorporating these elements, the third test provides a more comprehensive and multidimensional assessment, aiming to understand students' growth and development beyond their Chinese language proficiency. This integrated test design more accurately reflects students' performance in China's culture, values, and achievement recognition, offering more targeted guidance and improvement for teaching, while also directly enhancing the effectiveness of contemporary China communication.

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