



Cultural Dissemination of Chinese Students in the Context of Localization in Kyrgyzstan

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INTRODUCTION

As an important node of the ancient Silk Road, China and Kyrgyzstan have formed a tradition of trade exchanges and cultural integration that has lasted for thousands of years [1]. With the official start of construction of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway in December 2024, practical cooperation between the two countries in infrastructure, energy, and agriculture continues to deepen, and bilateral trade is expected to exceed 40 billion US dollars in 2026, providing a solid material foundation for people-to-people exchange. Educational cooperation has shown vigorous development in recent years through platforms such as the Confucius Institute, Luban Workshop, and the Chinese Cultural Center, reflecting the strong interest of the people of Kyrgyzstan in the Chinese language.

As a multi-ethnic country, Kyrgyzstan is in a critical period of cultural and national identity construction, and its education system attaches great importance to creating a multicultural environment and cultivating cross-cultural communication skills. In this context, the number of Chinese students going to Kyrgyzstan has continued to rise since 2019. These students naturally assume the role of cultural intermediaries through their cross-cultural migration experiences, transforming Chinese culture into locally acceptable forms of expression while also interpreting Kyrgyz cultural characteristics. Compared with government-led cultural communication programs, the communication practice of international students is more flexible, can break through cultural barriers to achieve emotional resonance, and represents grassroots diplomacy for mutual understanding between the Chinese and Kyrgyz people.

Existing research mostly focuses on macro strategies or the effectiveness of official projects for the overseas dissemination of Chinese culture, with little attention paid to the cultural intermediary role of international students. This study investigates the cultural communication practice of Chinese students in Kyrgyzstan and explores the practical dilemmas and optimization paths of their functional roles, aiming to provide more targeted theoretical support and practical reference for cross-cultural exchanges between China and Kyrgyzstan in the new era.



THE VALUE OF CHINESE STUDENTS' CULTURAL DISSEMINATION IN KYRGYZSTAN

(1) People-to-People Ties Between China and Kyrgyzstan

In the complex geopolitical landscape of Central Asia, cultural communication carried out by Chinese students has irreplaceable strategic value, serving not only as the emotional bond of China-Kyrgyzstan relations, but also as the cornerstone of people-to-people ties [2]. This kind of normalized exchange allows the Kyrgyz people to understand Chinese culture and dispel stereotypes through personal experience, while building an important window for China to understand the cultural characteristics and social needs of Kyrgyzstan.

From the perspective of Kyrgyzstan's domestic development, the cultural communication of international students provides key support for building multicultural identity. As a multi-ethnic country, Kyrgyzstan faces internal challenges in consolidating its national cultural identity, and the values of tolerance and harmony in Chinese culture are highly consistent with the country's needs for multicultural symbiosis. The Chinese cultural elements brought by international students complement Kyrgyz nomadic culture, Islamic cultural heritage, and post-Soviet influence, enriching the local multicultural ecology and promoting the construction of national cultural identity.

From the perspective of bilateral relations, the cultural dissemination of international students has effectively eliminated psychological barriers to non-governmental cooperation. The promotion of large-scale infrastructure projects such as the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway requires both official policy support and emotional recognition at the grassroots level [2]. Through cultural sharing and interpersonal interaction in daily life, international students convey the friendship of the Chinese people, transforming cultural narrative into concrete emotional experience and laying a foundation for bilateral economic cooperation and political mutual trust.

From the perspective of regional cooperation, the cultural dissemination of international students has injected strong impetus into building a closer community with a shared future between China and Central Asia. As an important force in non-governmental diplomacy, international students convey the concepts of peaceful development, mutual benefit, and win-win outcomes to the Kyrgyz public through cross-cultural exchange practices.

(2) Cross-Cultural Communication and Role Theory

Cross-cultural communication theory emphasizes the two-way interaction of cultural



communication, with its core concept lying in respecting cultural differences and achieving cultural symbiosis through equal dialogue [3]. Effective cross-cultural communication is not a one-way cultural output, but a dynamic process of mutual understanding, adaptation, and learning between different cultures. This requires communicators to deeply understand the value system, cognitive models, and behavioral norms of the target culture, so as to achieve localized adaptation of content and form.

Cultural differences in language, values, educational concepts, and other dimensions are key determinants of cross-cultural communication effectiveness. China and Central Asian countries share many commonalities in core values such as family ethics, teacher-student relationships, and social structure, which lay an important foundation for cross-cultural exchanges [4]. Both China and Kyrgyzstan have family-centered cultural structures and both cultures emphasize respect for teachers, providing an important entry point for international students in cultural dissemination.

Role theory provides an important analytical tool for analyzing the cultural communication challenges faced by international students. Sociologist Linton defined role as a set of norms and behavioral expectations given to individuals by society. The cultural mediating role of international students is a compound role formed by triple expectations from the home country, host country, and self-identity. Role conflict arises when individuals face multiple conflicting role expectations, while blurred responsibility boundaries lead to role ambiguity. Empirical studies show that Central Asian students generally encounter role identity difficulties in the process of cross-cultural adaptation [4].

The formation of role identity is a dynamic construction process, requiring individuals to continuously adjust their self-perception through practice to achieve coordination among different roles. For international students, taking on the role of cultural intermediary requires balancing three dimensions: academic responsibility, the grassroots mission of cultural communication, and personal development needs. The four-stage model of cross-cultural adaptation proposed by Oberg—honeymoon period, crisis period, recovery period, and full adaptation period—provides insight into the role construction process of international students [4].

THE DILEMMA OF CHINESE STUDENTS IN CULTURAL DISSEMINATION IN KYRGYZSTAN

(1) Role Dilemma



The vague definition of international students' responsibilities as cultural intermediaries has led to role conflicts and ambiguity, which has become an important factor restricting their enthusiasm for cultural communication [4]. International students are primarily students who must devote their primary energy to their studies; however, the expectations of being cultural ambassadors require them to take on additional cultural communication responsibilities. Empirical research shows that Central Asian students generally face conflicts between academic pursuit and cultural exchange, with most prioritizing academic completion, resulting in insufficient time and energy for cultural dissemination.

Some students expressed that their primary identity was as learners, and cultural communication was secondary [5]. This perception often leads them to prioritize academics over cultural communication opportunities, particularly during examinations or thesis writing. This role conflict is not only reflected in time allocation but also manifests through accumulated psychological pressure, with some students concerned that cultural communication may affect their academic performance.

Regarding role ambiguity, most students are confused about their position as cultural mediators and unsure whether or how to participate in cultural communication effectively. Some students resist the label of cultural mediation as an additional psychological burden. In formal settings, they are concerned that their words and deeds represent the image of China, fearing that mistakes may have negative consequences [6]. The lack of Kyrgyz language proficiency further exacerbates this dilemma, hindering deep communication with the local community and leading many students to selectively remain silent or avoid cultural engagement altogether [1].

(2) Insufficient Cultural Adaptation and Contextual Integration

The cultural communication of some international students remains in the one-way transmission stage due to a lack of deep understanding and contextualization of Kyrgyz cultural characteristics [7]. As a high-context culture, Kyrgyz society pays more attention to emotional resonance and interactive experience. However, some students' communication content remains at the level of self-presentation, without fully considering local cognitive habits and acceptance preferences.

Some students focus too much on traditional symbols such as kung fu, the cheongsam, and Peking Opera [8], while ignoring contemporary Chinese culture and daily life practices, which solidifies a static traditional perception of Chinese culture among Kyrgyz audiences. There are also obvious shortcomings in localization, with insufficient integration of Chinese cultural elements with Kyrgyz cultural characteristics [9]. When disseminating traditional Chinese medicine, for example, students often focus only on professional terms such as acupuncture and herbal medicine without relating these



to traditional Kyrgyz medical practices, making content difficult for locals to connect with. Such non-localized communication methods exacerbate the sense of alienation among local people and may lead to cultural misunderstandings.

The insufficient cross-cultural curriculum in Kyrgyz colleges and universities and the lack of systematic Chinese cultural guidance further hinder the cultural dissemination of international students [10]. Kyrgyzstan's unique religious culture and social customs mean that some international students may inadvertently offend local sensibilities because they do not fully understand cultural taboos, thereby weakening the outreach effect.

(3) Low Media Integration and Insufficient Adaptation to Local Platforms

Although new media has become the main carrier for disseminating Chinese culture among international students, media integration and adaptability to local platforms remain insufficient, and the communication advantages of new media have not been fully utilized [11]. Some international students have limited awareness of Kyrgyzstan's local media ecology and have not fully utilized communication channels such as university official websites and local social platforms [12]. Although there are multicultural exchange columns on the campus websites of Kyrgyzstan universities, few Chinese students take the initiative to share Chinese cultural content. The operation of international student accounts on local platforms lacks targeted strategies, and content creation fails to meet the aesthetic preferences and reading habits of local audiences [13].

The lack of media literacy significantly restricts the effectiveness of media use. Most international students have not received systematic training in new media communication and lack professional knowledge of content planning, audience analysis, and communication skills, making it difficult to customize content according to the characteristics of different platforms [14]. Some students also have weak copyright awareness in the process of dissemination, which weakens the professionalism and credibility of communication content.

(4) Insufficient Resource Supply and Lack of Practical Guidance

The lack of a systematic support system restricts the sustainability and effectiveness of cultural communication. Universities in Kyrgyzstan and China have not provided special training on cross-cultural communication for international students, resulting in students' lack of understanding of Kyrgyzstan's cultural customs, taboos, and communication norms [15]. Due to the lack of exclusive communication platforms and financial support, most outreach activities carried out by students are



personal in nature and difficult to scale. Some student initiatives—such as organizing a China-Kyrgyzstan Folk Culture Exhibition or producing high-quality cultural videos—have been abandoned due to lack of venue support and equipment.

From the perspective of social organizations, the participation of civil society groups in China and Kyrgyzstan in student cultural communication activities is low, and they cannot provide effective resource coordination or practical guidance [16]. The resources of institutions such as the Chinese Cultural Center have not been fully decentralized, resulting in insufficient interaction with students and a failure to establish effective resource-sharing mechanisms.

OPTIMIZATION PATHS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS TO SPREAD CHINESE CULTURE IN KYRGYZSTAN

To address current practical challenges, it is necessary to establish a systematic optimization framework based on the local context of Kyrgyzstan and the actual situation of students. The framework should integrate four dimensions: role identity, local adaptation, media integration, and support system.

(1) Strengthen Role Identity

Alleviating the role dilemma is the core of improving communication intention [17]. The official label of cultural intermediaries should be diluted, and a phased, low-pressure role positioning—such as 'cultural experience sharers' or 'grassroots exchange enthusiasts'—should be established to reduce psychological burden. Students are encouraged to engage in communication from a personalized perspective, integrating cultural transmission into daily life rather than treating it as an additional task. Practice shows that cultural communication with a natural sharing mentality can reduce psychological pressure while improving the communication effect.

Strengthening language and cross-cultural communication skills training is the key to improving role competence [18]. Universities in China and Kyrgyzstan can jointly hold cross-cultural communication workshops, carrying out training covering local language expression, cultural conflict resolution, and communication skills. A handbook of bilingual cultural communication should be compiled, including core vocabulary, common phrases, and cultural expressions for student reference [1]. A language partnership system can be established in which Chinese and Kyrgyz students learn languages in pairs [19]. A reasonable incentive mechanism should also be established, including



incorporating cultural communication activities into the comprehensive ability assessment system and establishing special scholarships for cultural communication [21].

(2) Integrate into the Kyrgyz Context and Innovate Content Forms

Localization of communication content is the key to improving communication effectiveness. This requires international students to deeply understand Kyrgyz culture and integrate Chinese cultural elements with local traditions [22]. The cultural heritage of Li Ling and Li Bai, as the common historical memory of China and Kyrgyzstan, provides an important entry point for dissemination. Content selection needs to balance traditional and modern culture, not only disseminating China's excellent traditional cultural heritage but also showcasing contemporary achievements in scientific and technological innovation, ecological protection, and rural revitalization [24]. Innovative presentation forms—such as narrative storytelling and interactive case analysis—should be used to enhance interactivity and avoid stereotypical preaching [25].

Active integration of cultural communication into the Kyrgyzstan education system through cooperation with local teaching institutions is also essential [27]. Students can cooperate with local university teachers to integrate Chinese cultural content into relevant courses, participate in multicultural activities such as cultural festivals and international days, and provide Chinese language tutoring for local students. These measures ensure that cultural promotion is both precise and efficient.

(3) Build a Localized New Media Matrix

It is necessary to build a multi-dimensional communication matrix with local platforms as the core, supplemented by multiple channels, to improve media integration and expand communication coverage [28]. Dedicated accounts for cultural communication should be set up on platforms frequently used by Kyrgyz people, regularly publishing high-quality content that matches local aesthetic preferences [29]. The integration of online and offline communication is essential for establishing a closed-loop communication system [30]: short videos and live broadcasts can warm up publicity to attract attention, while offline cultural salons, folk experiences, and art exhibitions achieve in-depth contact with Chinese culture.

Improving media literacy and content creation capabilities is also necessary, including mastering video editing, copywriting, and account operation skills [31]. The promotion of synergy between grassroots and official communication channels—by connecting with Confucius Institutes and Chinese Cultural Centers—can expand influence through official platforms [32].



(4) Strengthen Resource Supply and Improve Practical Feasibility

It is necessary to establish a tripartite support network composed of universities, government agencies, and social organizations to provide all-round support for the cultural communication of international students [33]. Universities in China and Kyrgyzstan should jointly develop cross-cultural communication courses, incorporating them into the teaching system for international students and systematically teaching cross-cultural communication theory, communication skills, and cultural difference analysis [34]. A special small fund for cultural communication for international students should be established to support cultural projects, with grants set at \$500-1,000 for cultural activities, content production, and equipment procurement [35].

At the government level, China and Kyrgyzstan should deepen educational and cultural cooperation and improve policy support [36]. At the level of social organizations, non-governmental organizations such as the China-Kyrgyzstan Friendship Association can provide students with venues, resources, and network support, while Chinese-Kyrgyz enterprises can sponsor cultural communication activities [37]. The establishment of a think tank for cross-cultural exchanges between China and Kyrgyzstan—comprising university scholars, cultural experts, and media practitioners—would provide theoretical guidance and strategic support.

CONCLUSION

This paper examines the cultural dissemination undertaken by Chinese students studying in Kyrgyzstan, which serves both as a vital force in contemporary Sino-Kyrgyz grassroots exchanges and as a microcosm of China's overseas cultural outreach. Acting as grassroots cultural mediators, these students leverage their adaptability, authenticity, and proximity to daily life to play an irreplaceable role in the mutual learning between Chinese and Kyrgyz civilizations. Through bidirectional interaction and cultural adaptation, they facilitate the localized dissemination of Chinese culture, enabling the Kyrgyz public to gain genuine insights into China through authentic experiences.

Although current cultural dissemination by international students faces challenges such as insufficient role recognition, inadequate local adaptation, and weak support systems, enhancing identity affirmation, deepening local integration, innovating dissemination methods, and refining support mechanisms can effectively boost dissemination efficacy. With the advancement of cooperative projects such as the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway, people-to-people exchanges and cultural interactions between the two nations will grow increasingly close. In the future, with the



collaborative support of universities, governments, and social organizations, international students will propel Chinese culture in Kyrgyzstan from being merely 'known' to being genuinely 'recognized,' deepening people-to-people bonds and providing replicable grassroots models for China's international cultural outreach.

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