

Research on the Application of Spring Festival Culture in International Chinese Language Education and Teaching: A Case Study of Korean International Students

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Abstract: *Language is the tool for people to communicate, and culture is the carrier of language. Festival culture is the essence of traditional Chinese culture. The Spring Festival, as the most representative traditional festival in China, carries profound cultural connotations and national spirit and is widely loved by people at home and abroad. International Chinese language education and teaching, as an important platform for disseminating Chinese culture, plays a significant role in the inheritance and dissemination of Chinese culture. As a Southeast Asian country that is geographically close and culturally shared with China, South Korea accounts for a relatively large proportion among Chinese students studying abroad. This article focuses on the group of Korean international students and delves deeply into the application strategies of the cultural connotations of the Spring Festival in international Chinese language education and teaching, with the expectation of contributing to the dissemination of Spring Festival culture and the development of international Chinese language education.*

Keywords: Spring Festival culture, International Chinese Language education, Korean international students, Cultural teaching, Cross-cultural comparison.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

The inheritance of traditional Chinese festival culture plays an important role in the development of the Chinese language today. Traditional Chinese festival culture is an important representative of China's excellent culture. Against the backdrop of the rapid development of international Chinese language education, cultural teaching, as an important component of language teaching, serves as a major platform for disseminating China's outstanding culture. The Spring Festival is the most representative traditional festival in China, which is rich in connotations. Traditional festival culture, as a representative of traditional culture, how to systematically integrate festival culture into the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language is a problem that every teacher of Chinese as a foreign language should pay attention to. As a country geographically close to China, South Korea has a large number of students studying in China. Meanwhile, South Korea itself has the tradition of celebrating the Spring Festival, but its customs are significantly different from those of the Chinese Spring Festival. Many international students believe that the Spring Festival is just a time for family reunion and dining together, and they fail to truly understand the significance of the festival. Moreover, teachers of Chinese as a foreign language may overlook the unique cultural background of Korean international students. Therefore, how to integrate the connotations of our festival culture into the classroom of teaching Chinese as a foreign language and enable international students to deeply experience the "roots" of Chinese culture is something worth our efforts to study.

1.2 Research Significance

In the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language, cultural teaching is an indispensable part of language teaching. While imparting Chinese language knowledge, teachers of Chinese as a foreign language need to take culture as the carrier to help students better understand the Chinese culture reflected behind the Chinese language. From the perspective of cultural exchange, South Korea and China are geographically close, and South Korea also has the tradition of celebrating the Spring Festival. By allowing South Korean international students to understand the Spring Festival culture of China, students can not only experience the similarities between the Spring Festival cultures of China and South Korea, but also help them understand the differences between the Spring Festival cultures of the two countries, enhance their cross-cultural communication skills, and deepen the friendship between the two countries. In terms of Chinese language teaching, merely imparting language knowledge cannot achieve the teaching goals of teaching Chinese as a foreign language. To truly master a language, one needs to grasp the culture behind it. Compared with other cultures, festival culture can be designed with many teaching activities in teaching, which can help students better experience the customs of festival culture. Thus, Students can not only improve their Chinese proficiency in interesting activities, but also apply Chinese in real life, reducing conflicts caused by cultural differences.

2. Overview of Spring Festival Culture

2.1 Historical Origin and Cultural Foundation

The origin of the Spring Festival can be traced back to the ancient agricultural sacrificial activities. At first, it was a seasonal ceremony held by the ancestors to celebrate the harvest and pay homage to their forefathers. The custom of

the Spring Festival has developed from the traditional agricultural society and has lasted for more than two thousand years. Among the legends about the Spring Festival, the story of the “Nian Beast” is the most widely spread. It is said that in ancient times, there was a monster called “Nian”, which would attack the village at the end of each year. Later, people found that this monster was afraid of red and the sound of firecrackers, so they used firecrackers to drive it away. Thus, the custom of pasting red ribbons and setting off firecrackers was formed.

During the Shang and Zhou dynasties, the character “sui” already existed in oracle bone inscriptions, symbolizing the harvest of crops. At this time, “Guo Nian” had already taken on the temporal significance of bidding farewell to the old and welcoming the new. One of the major functions of the ancient Chinese calendar was to accurately sequence the seasons to conform to the changes in climate, the growth and decline of living things, and the ritual systems such as clothing color. After Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty ordered the creation of the Taichu calendar, the Xia system was resumed, with the first day of the first lunar month designated as the first day of the New Year.

This system was used until the end of the Qing Dynasty. The Taichu Calendar of the Han Dynasty designated the first month as the beginning of the year, and from then on, the time system of the Spring Festival was officially established. During the Tang and Song dynasties, the Spring Festival gradually incorporated some entertainment elements. For instance, the “Nuo expulsion” ceremony of the Tang Dynasty evolved into folk performances, and customs such as “staying up late on New Year’s Eve” and “paying New Year’s visits” emerged in the Song Dynasty. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the etiquette and folk customs of the Spring Festival were further integrated, gradually forming fixed traditions such as pasting Spring Festival couplets and having the New Year’s Eve dinner. Essentially, the historical evolution of the Spring Festival has always been closely linked to agricultural civilization, reflecting the Chinese people’s survival wisdom of “conforming to nature and The Times”. Its core has gradually developed from the initial nature worship and ancestor worship to a cultural grand event that combines family reunion and social interaction.

2.2 Traditional Customs of the Spring Festival

The customs of the Spring Festival are a concrete expression of Chinese culture, covering multiple aspects such as diet, etiquette and clothing. People usually start preparing for the Spring Festival from the Little New Year (the 23rd day of the 12th lunar month). During this period, people need to clean up, buy New Year goods and so on. There is a saying that goes, “On the 24th day of the twelfth lunar month, dust off and sweep the house.” People do a thorough cleaning of their rooms to welcome the New Year, which implies “dust removal and welcoming the new.”

The New Year’s Eve dinner on the eve of the Spring Festival is the core representative of the Spring Festival cuisine. Each dish is endowed with a new meaning, and every plate of food conveys a good wish. For instance, fish symbolizes an abundance every year, dumplings are shaped like ingots,

symbolizing wealth, and chicken symbolizes good luck and happiness. Since the word “Nian gao” sounds the same as “Nian gao” in Chinese, it implies that the next year will always be better than the previous one. A family sitting around to have the New Year’s Eve dinner means reunion and completeness.

In addition, there is a custom of staying up late on New Year’s Eve. This custom is recorded in “Jingchu Shishi Ji”: “On New Year’s Eve, if one does not sleep until dawn, it is called staying up late.” People stay up until the early hours of the morning on this night. This is not only a way to bid farewell to the old and welcome the new, but also has the meaning of cherishing time and praying for longevity.

Spring Festival clothing is also very particular. Red is the favorite color of the Chinese people. Red represents good luck and happiness in China. During the Spring Festival, red is the main color, and people wear new red clothes to welcome the New Year.

On the first day of the lunar New Year, there is a custom of paying New Year’s visits. Younger generations pay New Year’s greetings to their elders, who in return give them lucky money wrapped in red, symbolizing the elders’ blessings and protection for the younger generation.

Overall, there are many customs during the Spring Festival. Before the New Year, there is a thorough cleaning and purchasing New Year goods. On New Year’s Eve, couplets are pasted. On New Year’s Eve, the whole family gets together for the New Year’s Eve dinner to be reunited. Paying New Year’s visits and giving lucky money, as well as offering sacrifices and praying for blessings to express respect for ancestors and deities, are all customs of the Spring Festival. Three days after New Year’s Eve, it is not allowed to take out the garbage to avoid taking away good fortune. Visiting relatives and friends on the first day of the lunar New Year, going back to one’s parents’ home on the second day, worshipping the Kitchen God on the third day, and welcoming the God of Wealth on the fifth day are all customs during the Spring Festival. With the development of society, electronic red envelopes have replaced lucky money, and traveling for the New Year has enriched the activities of the Spring Festival. However, the core spirit of people’s reunion and praying for blessings to welcome the New Year has not changed.

2.3 The Emotional Connotations of the Spring Festival

Spring Festival culture is a combination of traditional customs and rituals as well as spiritual culture. The theme of “reunion” during the Spring Festival reflects the ethical concepts contained in traditional Chinese culture. The Spring Festival reflects to a certain extent the traditional Chinese philosophy and ethical system.

In terms of the concept of time, the Spring Festival is based on the lunar calendar, embodying the philosophy of time that is repetitive and harmonious between man and nature, in contrast to the Western linear view of time. The “zodiac calendar” connects individual lives with the rhythm of the universe, while the 24 solar terms represent the precise grasp of the natural sequence of time by agricultural civilization. As

the starting point of the cycle of solar terms, the Spring Festival carries the wisdom of survival that follows the natural order.

At the level of family ethics, the Spring Festival reinforces the values of filial piety and family harmony through rituals such as reunion dinners and ancestral worship. The seating arrangement for the New Year's Eve dinner follows the principle of seniority and hierarchy, reflecting the order of Confucian etiquette. The ancestral worship ceremony highlights the culture of loyalty and filial piety.

In addition, the Spring Festival also embodies the cultural spirit of harmonious coexistence. People hold nature in awe, Revere heaven and earth, express their gratitude and pray for favorable weather and a bountiful harvest in the coming year. Relatives and friends exchange good words and celebrate the Spring Festival. From the social etiquette during New Year greetings to the collective collaboration in dragon and lion dances, all these demonstrate the Chinese people's pursuit of valuing harmony. Overall, the Spring Festival is not only a folk festival but also a concentrated display of the cultural psychology and value system of the Chinese people.

3. Comparison of Commonalities and Differences between Chinese and Korean Spring Festival Cultures

3.1 Similarities between the Spring Festival in China and South Korea

Both the Spring Festival in China and South Korea originated from agricultural civilizations, which means that the festival culture of the Spring Festival is highly related to agriculture. The character "Nian" in Chinese New Year originally means "grain". The Korean New Year also has a similar meaning. People celebrate the Spring Festival to express their beautiful expectations for a bountiful harvest in the coming year.

Both the Spring Festival in China and South Korea are centered around the family, and they share strong similarities in terms of ancestral worship and family reunion. Both countries have the tradition of having a family reunion dinner on New Year's Eve. In China, it is called the New Year's Eve dinner, while in South Korea, it is called the "Sui Jin" meal. The dishes on the table all carry auspicious meanings. For example, fish in China symbolizes an abundance every year, and the most representative New Year food in South Korea is "Nian gao Tang", made of long rice cakes, symbolizing longevity and growth.

In addition, the ancestral worship ceremony is an important part of the Spring Festival in both countries. The Chinese Spring Festival mainly celebrates reunion, but also expresses remembrance for the deceased through corresponding worship activities. The core of the Korean New Year is to pay homage to ancestors, with a greater emphasis on the sense of ceremony. The whole family wears Hanbok and performs the kowtow ceremony. The eldest son needs to light candles and drink wine for the ancestors, reflecting the respect for the order of seniority in Confucian culture.

3.2 Differences in Spring Festival Cultures between China

and South Korea

3.2.1 The differences in traditional customs of the Spring Festival between China and South Korea

Due to the differences in geographical location and cultural environment, there are also differences in Spring Festival customs between China and South Korea. In China, people usually start cleaning and preparing for the Spring Festival from the 23rd day of the twelfth lunar month. People also attach great importance to New Year's Eve, when they set off firecrackers, paste couplets and have the New Year's Eve dinner, etc. In South Korea, the preparation time for the Spring Festival is New Year's Eve, and South Koreans attach more importance to the first day of the first lunar month. The theme of the Chinese Spring Festival is family reunion, while in South Korea, the Spring Festival places more emphasis on sacrificial activities. The whole family wears Hanbok and performs the kowtow ceremony. In terms of diet, during the Spring Festival in China, people eat dumplings and pay attention to the variety of dishes. In South Korea, the core food is rice cake soup, which involves slicing rice cakes and boiling them in bone broth, served with kimchi. From this perspective, the celebration time, activity methods and dietary habits of the Spring Festival in China and South Korea are all different.

3.2.2 The Differences between Chinese and Korean Spring Festival costumes

The Korean people are also known as the "white-robed people". The Korean people have a greater love for white. The sun symbolizes light, and they hold the sun in awe. So in the New Year, we should eat sun-shaped and white rice cakes to express our beautiful expectations for the New Year. In South Korea, couplets and red envelopes are all white, symbolizing purity and nature. Koreans attach great importance to Spring Festival sacrifices, so people all wear Hanbok. In China, white is regarded as an inauspicious color. People prefer red, which represents life, good fortune and beauty. Therefore, Spring Festival couplets, red envelopes and all kinds of things are red. There are no strict requirements for clothing either. Everyone will wear new clothes on the first day of the New Year to welcome the New Year.

3.2.3 The differences in Spring Festival customs and activities between China and South Korea

In addition to the traditional customs during the Spring Festival in China, there are many folk activities such as setting off fireworks, lion dancing, and visiting temple fairs. In some southern places, there are also activities like visiting flower markets. These activities are mainly group activities, creating a lively atmosphere. The New Year greeting activities last from the first day of the lunar New Year to the fifteenth day of the first lunar month. During this period, relatives and friends visit each other and give red envelopes to express their best wishes. All these activities emphasize liveliness and the inheritance of culture.

In South Korea, there is no activity of setting off firecrackers during the Spring Festival. The main form of entertainment is playing a card game called "Drawing". People also fly kites.

The higher they fly the kites, the better. When they reach a certain height, they will cut the string of the kite short, symbolizing the intention to let go of all the bad things.

4. Teaching Application of Spring Festival Culture Mainly for Korean International Students

China is vast and rich in resources, and its Chinese civilization has a long history. Teachers of teaching Chinese as a foreign language should keep pace with The Times, expand their language reserves, improve classroom efficiency, and better integrate language and culture. Integrating the representative festival culture of traditional Chinese culture into the classroom of teaching Chinese as a foreign language, for the Spring Festival culture teaching of Korean international students, teachers can seek common ground while reserving differences and be inclusive in the cultural differences of the Spring Festival between the two countries.

4.1 Start from the Common Points of the Spring Festival Cultures of China and South Korea

In teaching Chinese as a foreign language, teachers should be aware that students may experience problems when they are away from their native language

Under appropriate circumstances, teachers can highlight the similarities between the cultures of China and South Korea in teaching, which can help students relieve the tension of learning and thus achieve better teaching results.

When teaching about Spring Festival culture, teachers can prepare video clips of Korean families eating rice cake soup on New Year's Eve in advance, allowing students to enter today's learning in a relaxed atmosphere. Meanwhile, the teacher plays a video of a northern Chinese family making dumplings and having the New Year's Eve dinner together. After the video is played, the teacher guides the students to discuss the similarities between China and South Korea in having the New Year's Eve dinner, both emphasizing family reunion and the ethical order of seniority. These are the same in both China and South Korea. Then, the teacher can use pictures of words like "Spring Festival" and "reunion" to have the students read along and learn.

When the teacher introduces the dietary aspects of the Spring Festival in China and South Korea, the teacher can prepare relevant food vocabulary pictures such as "rice cakes" and "dumplings" in advance. The teacher can also prepare the actual food, allowing students to closely observe the differences between dumplings and rice cakes and taste their different flavors. After the students have mastered the relevant vocabulary, tell them that both China and South Korea use food as a medium to convey blessings to the family. Bring the whole family together to celebrate the festival through the connection of food.

4.2 Experience Chinese Spring Festival Culture During the Event

To enable Korean international students to directly experience the unique cultural atmosphere of the Chinese Spring Festival,

teachers can design simple experience activities in the classroom. For instance, teachers can prepare couplets and writing brushes in advance, as pasting Spring Festival couplets is one of the indispensable parts of the Spring Festival in China. On New Year's Eve, every household pastes Spring Festival couplets, and the words on the couplets are all filled with good wishes.

Before conducting the activity of writing Spring Festival couplets, the teacher writes the correct stroke order of related characters such as "spring" and "Fu" on the blackboard, explains the proper pen-holding posture when using the brush, and first enables students to recognize, read and write these Chinese characters. Then, the prepared Spring Festival couplets and brushes are distributed to the students, allowing them to experience the cultural atmosphere of Chinese Spring Festival couplet pasting during the process of copying.

Teachers can also offer immersive experiences of the New Year's Eve dinner, allowing students to make dumplings by themselves and feel the excitement of a family gathering together to make dumplings during the Chinese Spring Festival. Teachers need to tell students how to make dumplings, play videos of making dumplings, and let students personally experience the unique dietary custom of eating dumplings in China. Students can also be divided into two groups to see which group can wrap the package faster and better. This can give students more motivation.

Through these unique cultural activity experiences, students' interest in learning can be stimulated, allowing them to study happily and feel the unique charm of Chinese Spring Festival culture.

4.3 Understand Differences Through Cultural Comparisons

Cultural comparative teaching refers to the comparative analysis of one culture based on one language, thereby identifying the similarities and differences between the cultures. For Korean students studying in China, they cannot shake off the influence of their native language culture in a short period of time. Therefore, before teaching, teachers should understand the differences between the Spring Festival cultures of China and South Korea to help learners build cross-cultural awareness.

To help Korean international students deepen their understanding of the differences, teachers can design some comparative activities. For instance, before class, teachers prepare a comparison chart of the dietary customs of the Spring Festival in China and South Korea, showing the representative dishes of the New Year's Eve dinner of the eight major Chinese cuisines, such as fish and chicken, and marking the differences in cooking techniques in Korean. In South Korea, the Spring Festival diet tends to be steamed or boiled, while in China, stir-frying and stewing are more common. This allows students to feel the differences in the dietary cultures of China and South Korea.

In the classroom, teachers can first play the Korean "New Year's Greeting" with a video of etiquette, pause the screen and have students describe the actions of the younger

generation in Korean and demonstrate them. Then, they can play a documentary about New Year's greetings in northern China to guide students to compare. In Korea, when saluting, both hands need to touch the ground, while in China, it is mostly a bowing gesture. Students can also engage in role-playing to experience the differences in etiquette and movements between China and South Korea.

In conclusion, these teaching activities mainly based on the situational method can stimulate students' interest in learning, enabling them to learn the relevant vocabulary and knowledge points of the Spring Festival culture in an immersive environment. They can achieve certain teaching effects and also allow students to participate in the classroom process, experiencing the unique charm of the Chinese Spring Festival.

5. Conclusion

Chinese traditional festivals to a large extent reflect certain cultural connotations. As an important part of Chinese culture, the Spring Festival culture conveys a national cultural symbol and plays an important role in national culture, which can be used as a resource for teaching Chinese as a foreign language. Under the geographical proximity advantage of China and South Korea, students studying in South Korea can seize the commonalities of the cultures of the two countries. Through cultural comparison, they can help students establish cross-cultural awareness and learn Chinese in situational activities, thereby improving their learning efficiency.

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