

A Survey and Study on the Influence of Foreign Cultures on Chinese Students, Attitudes Toward Foreign Language Learning¹

Zishen Liu, Yushan Tu, Chengrui Xi, Chunyan Chu

Beijing Institute of Petrochemical Technology, Beijing Daxing

Article Detail:	Abstract
Received: 25 Aug 2026; Received in revised form: 20 Sep 2026; Accepted: 25 Sep 2026; Available online: 01 Oct 2026 Keywords— foreign cultures, foreign language learning, Chinese students' attitudes ©2026 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).	<i>In today's globalized world, Chinese students are generally keen on learning English. That said, their main windows onto foreign cultures tend to be films, music, short videos, and social media platforms. The culture exposure which can shape Chinese students' English learning motivation is attracting attention. However, the specific mechanisms remain insufficiently explored. This study investigates three questions: whether foreign cultural exposure enhances learners' motivation, which types of cultural input are most influential, and how such resources might be integrated into classroom activities. A questionnaire survey was conducted with 37 university students from 13 provinces across China. The results show that instrumental motives such as future careers and graduate school admission motivate 73% of the participants, while the percentage of cultural interest is 54%. Beyond motivation, 81% of the participants suggested that they improve their listening and speaking skills, and more than three-quarters suggested that they are able to speak English more confidently in public places. These observations suggest several directions for integrating cultural materials into English language teaching at the tertiary level.</i>

I. INTRODUCTION

Elaine K. says learning environment matters more than cultural background.^[4] However, this may not fully apply to Chinese students. They are extensively exposed to Western media, yet their education system works very differently from Western ones.

Existing research presents a somewhat inconsistent picture. Chinese students are okay at cross-cultural

stuff, but they do not really understand deeper cultural meanings but their knowledge of Chinese culture is much stronger. Wang Chen found that it is uncertain whether cultural exposure merely serves as entertainment or exerts a meaningful impact on learning outcomes.

Students know their own culture well, but they miss the hidden cultural rules behind English expressions.

¹ This article was funded by the URT project (No.2026J00134)

Wang Chen (2018) is right that attitudes matter – positive ones push you forward, negative ones pull you back.^[2] What is unclear is how foreign culture plays into this. Does it just entertain, or does it change how much students want to learn?

To address these questions, we conducted a survey with students from 13 provinces. We asked: (1) Does cultural exposure really motivate learners? (2) What kinds of cultural content work best? (3) How can teachers use cultural resources in class?

Language learning could be a complicated process. It can be influenced by multiple factors in the current era of deep globalization, Western culture has been integrated into the lives of China's younger generation through movies, music and social media, while the current requirements for foreign language learning are constantly rising. However Elaine K's researches were conducted mainly towards the people who were educated in different traditions and their believes .

In China there are also several research been conducted to consult .They have pointed that the role of foreign culture in English learning cannot be generalized according to The Impact of Foreign Song Appreciation on College Students' Cross-Cultural Competence.^[1] Among 710 college students 99.7% enjoy listening to foreign songs, with over half spending more than 30 minutes per session; pop and light music are the most commonly listened to genres, while disco has the smallest audience. Yet current status of intercultural competence revealed that students' overall intercultural competence is moderate, with the highest scores in knowledge and attitudes toward their own culture, while scores in foreign cultural knowledge and intercultural communication skills are relatively low.

We have made a conclusion of covert culture as a cultural elements that are difficult to be directly perceived through vision. It has three major characteristics

Complexity and depth: Embedded in the collective thinking and behavior, they cannot be simply explained through literal language;

Difference and diversity: Influenced by regions, history, and folk customs, the manifestations of hidden cultures in different countries are completely different;

Conventionality: Rooted in the development history of the nation, it contains a large number of default communication habits and expression rules of the group.

These patterns are not simply conveyed through voice communication. It has become a established rule through their life so we can hardly catch it by any songs or literature. Nowadays with the increasingly stress students are facing .The majority of students did not lost their patients to dig deeper covert culture from Tian Juan A Survey Report on the English Learning Attitudes of Non-English Major College Students.^[3]**Error! Reference source not found.** Students do not care about others' evaluations of their English proficiency, and their learning is mostly driven by academic requirements. They find it difficult to accept the thinking and lifestyle of Westerners, and generally feel that the classroom atmosphere is oppressive and the classroom experience needs improvement. Only a few students can do self-study by doing practice questions after class and study English outside of class every day. But we cannot ignore the significance of learning attitude .

The synergistic effect of multi-dimensional emotional factors in the erosion of a foreign language told us. A positive learning attitude will foster a strong and persistent learning motivation. On the other hand, a negative learning attitude will weaken the learning motivation.^[2] And it is pretty essential for learning attitude and positive motivation to reinforce each other. Today many students do not find their passion towards learning .So how are we suppose to motivate our students.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire served as the primary instrument for data collection. Rather than restricting the survey to our own institution, we distributed it to students

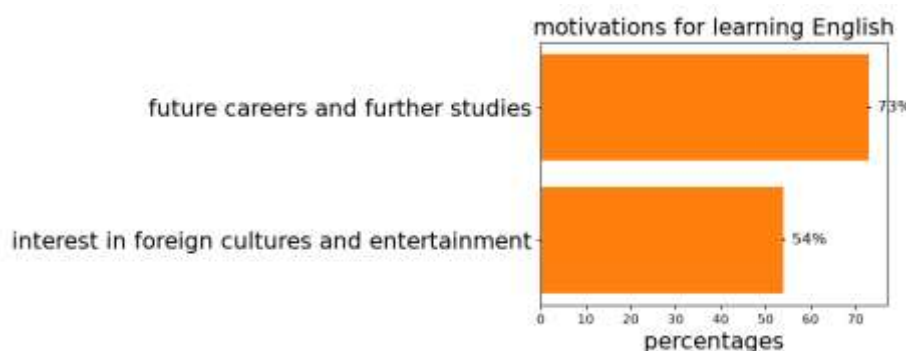
across 13 provinces in China, including Beijing, Henan, Jiangsu, and Gansu, in order to capture a broader range of perspectives. All participants had completed at least one year of study at a Chinese college or university prior to taking the survey.

The questionnaire items were informed by earlier work on language learning motivation and cultural exposure. Three main areas were covered: demographic background, the frequency and channels of foreign cultural content consumption, and participants' perceived effects of such exposure on their English learning motivation and skills. Most questions were close-ended, combining multiple-choice items with different responses. Before full distribution, we piloted the questionnaire with a small group of students to test for clarity and comprehensibility.

Distribution was carried out through an online platform. A total of 37 questionnaires were sent out, and all 37 were returned. Every completed questionnaire was included in the final analysis, as no invalid responses were identified. We processed the data using WJX.CN. The analysis was mainly descriptive—we calculated frequencies and percentages to summarize students' responses, and looked at how different groups answered across regions. We didn't run complex statistical models at this stage; the goal was simply to get a solid descriptive overview of what the students reported.

III. RESULTS

Firstly, what drives students to learn English? Our survey pointed to a mix of motives:

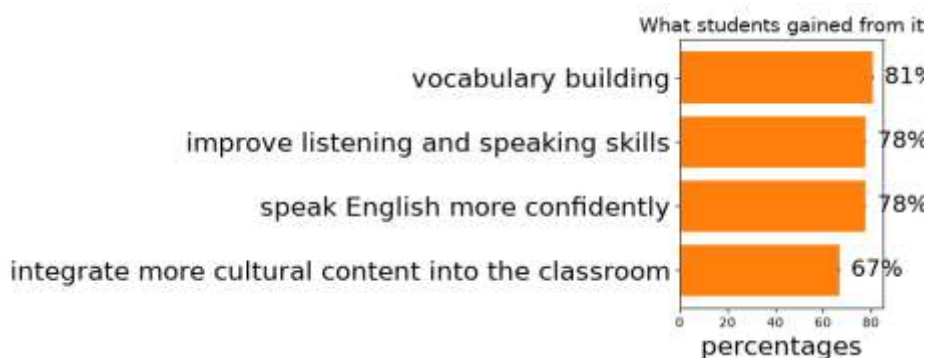


Nearly 73% students say they are learning English for future careers or graduate studies, while 54% students are drawn in by interest in foreign cultures and entertainment. These two are not mutually exclusive and they seem to work together.

When it comes to cultural exposure, the numbers are telling. Cultural exposure appears to play a significant role. About 59% of students spend 3-5

hours per week on foreign cultural content, mainly through films, music, and short videos (over 78% use these channels). Crucially, 86% report that their interest in language learning jumps after engaging with cultural materials.

The following chart show what students gain from engaging in foreign cultures:



81% students say cultural content helps them enrich their vocabulary, and 78% students point to be improved their listening and speaking skills. 78% students also feel that cultural exposure gives them the courage to speak English more confidently in public places. What is more, 67% students want their schools to bring more cultural content into the classroom and their English learning activities.

IV. DISCUSSION

These findings can be proved that cultural exposure plays a dual role: it is helpful to sustain students' motivation. At the same time, it can enhance students' English speaking confidence. The survey data also suggests that students show their interests in integrating cultural content into their regular classroom activities.

One practical consideration concerns the alignment of learners' short-term and long-term objectives. While many students are driven by immediate goals—passing CET-4 or CET-6, finding job, or being admitted by key universities to keep learning—these instrumental goals need not be treated as separate from more integrative forms of engagement.

At the same time, long-term development can be combined with culture-oriented activities, such as watching films without subtitles or singing foreign songs. When both types of goals are pursued together, learners may be confronted of less fatigue that often accompanies purely test-driven studying process.

Pedagogical Implications

The results point to several directions for English language teaching in Chinese colleges. One

implication concerns the relationship between instrumental and integrative motivation. Combining teaching with culture-oriented activities instead of making them separate. For an example, a student can be led to watch English movies during preparing for CET examinations, which can not only increase this student's vocabulary but also sustain the process of preparing for CET examinations.

Another consideration is how to use time. According to the survey, 59% of students already spend three to five hours per week engaging in foreign cultural content. This existing engagement can become a daily routine that can be managed instead of being a leisure activity that be neglected: listening a foreign song during a commute, watching a short video before your sleep, enjoying a full film on the weekend. The goal is instructing students to make full use of time and making time more pedagogically productive instead of increasing students' pressure.

At the classroom level, there is space for a more systematic cultural component such as watching film appreciation, engaging in music-based listening activities, or experiencing foreign customs and traditions. Besides, students can organize activities including watching foreign movies, music-sharing discussions regularly, offering a low pressure environment for foreign language speaking practice.

V. LIMITATIONS

The number of sample is not sufficient. The sample includes only 37 respondents, which limits the generalizability of the findings. While the participants offer the useful data, but if we need a larger and more randomly conclusion, we still need to select more

sample to support us.

In addition, the study relied on self-reported questionnaire data. Responses of self-reported questionnaire are easy to be influenced by recall inaccuracies and social desirability effects. Students may choose answers after thinking for a few time instead of choosing answers that can reflect their current behaviors. Our future survey might implement other methods such as talking with participants face to face, making our questionnaire more detail and conducting an experiment to test causal relationships more directly.

Finally, the analysis was confined to descriptive statistics. The study does not consider whether the current results will be different if we add other factors such as gender, major, or region into our survey and we do not investigate the relationship between specific cultural exposure and particular learning outcomes. We need to use regression or structural equation modeling to explore these questions.

REFERENCES

- [1] Huang, Q., Liu, M., & Ma, D. (2025). The impact of foreign song appreciation on college students' intercultural competence. *Journal of Jilin Radio and TV University*, (4), 103-105, 141.
- [2] Wang, C. (2018). The synergistic effect of multi-dimensional affective factors in foreign language attrition. *Science & Technology Information*, 16(34), 163-164. <https://doi.org/10.16661/j.cnki.1672-3791.2018.34.163>
- [3] Tian, J. (2009). A survey report on English learning attitudes of non-English major college students. *Journal of Yichun University*, 31(S1), 118-120.
- [4] Horwitz, E. K. (1999). Cultural and situational influences on foreign language learners' beliefs about language learning: A review of BALLI studies. *System*, 27(4), 557-576. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X\(99\)00050-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X(99)00050-0)