

Anhui Regional Culture and the Perspective of Cultural Confidence among International Students

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Abstract—This research aims to accomplish a number of goals, including preserving cultural confidence, broadening one's global perspective, making the most of the function that cultural exchange partnerships play for international students studying in China, and aggressively advancing the influence of Anhui regional culture. The purpose of this study is to determine how international students studying in the province of Anhui perceive the culture of the Anhui region from the perspective of cultural confidence in socialism with Chinese features. According to the research, the three factors of cultural identity, external impact, and intrinsic curiosity all play a role in determining how international students perceive the culture of the Anhui region. We investigate the ramifications of the study for academics, teachers in secondary schools, and government officials who are responsible for formulating policies.

Keywords— Cultural confidence, international students, Anhui province, regional culture, cognition.

I. INTRODUCTION

China's foreign relations have become based on three pillars: people-to-people exchange, political mutual, economic and trade cooperation, and economic and trade cooperation (Li, 2023; Niu & Wang, 2023). One of the three pillars is exchanges between individuals. According to the report given to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (2022), "we must develop a socialist culture with Chinese characteristics and be more confident in our culture in order to build a modern socialist country in all respects". Additionally, the report emphasized the importance of "extending the reach and appeal of Chinese civilization" (Xi, 2022). The report outlined the objective of collecting and refining the defining symbols and best elements of Chinese culture and highlighting them to the world. It also emphasized the acceleration of the development of China's discourse and narrative systems, with the goal of "better telling China's stories, making China's voice heard, and presenting a China that is credible, appealing, and respectable." Additionally, the report emphasized the need to strengthen China's capabilities in international communications, with the goal of making China's communications more effective and working toward strengthening China's voice in international affairs (Xi, 2022). To "deepen exchanges and mutual learning with other civilizations and better present Chinese culture to the world"

(Xi, 2022) that is the necessity for improving the international influence of Chinese culture under the perspective of cultural confidence. This is the requirement for enhancing the international influence of Chinese culture.

According to a proverb from China, the key to healthy relations between nations is the amity that exists between states and their citizens. According to Yousaf et al.'s research from 2020, international students studying in China serve as a bridge for cultural interaction as China continues its process of becoming into a global power. International students in China are not only carriers but also essential envoys for people-to-people relations between China and other nations. They play a major role in non-governmental diplomacy and are a significant force in foreign policy. They have a greater awareness of China and Chinese culture, which can assist reduce misunderstandings and estrangements between people and foster a closer understanding between them (C. L. Xu, 2022). After gaining an understanding of the true China, overseas students studying in China frequently obtain a profound understanding of the country because they are witnesses to China's development. According to Gauttam et al. (2021), they are also a significant potentially influential force in the telling of positive stories about China.

It was reported by the Ministry of Education that 54.6% of overseas students attended China for the purpose of obtaining degrees in 2019, which is a 7% increase when compared to the previous year, 2016. By the end of the year 2020, there were 2,332 educational institutions and initiatives that were the result of Sino-foreign cooperation. Of them, 1,230 had earned bachelor's degrees or higher for their students. As of right now, there are over 300,000 students from China and other countries who are enrolled in schools that offer undergraduate degrees. According to Zhong et al. (2022), China has emerged as a significant partner for the world's most prestigious educational institutions as a result of the rapid expansion of its educational opportunities to students from other countries and its commitment to the concept of "studying in China" in the modern era. According to Gong et al. (2021), the significant rise in the number of overseas students studying in China has created opportunities that have never been seen before for the

fine traditional Chinese culture to be exported to other countries.

This investigation focuses on the province of Anhui as its research area. China's province of Anhui can be found in the country's center and eastern regions. According to Wan and Li (2022) and Yang et al. (2019), the Huai River and the Yangtze River, both of which flow through the territory, naturally split the province into three parts with varied topography. The plain is located in the northern part of the province, the hilly area is located in the middle, and the mountainous area is located in the southern portion of the province. Anhui province is considered to be one of the places in China where early humans first appeared. Over the course of the long history of evolution, the province of Anhui has developed three distinct regional cultures. These cultures are the Huaihe Culture, the Wanjiang Culture, and the Huizhou Culture. These cultures are congruent with the distribution features of geographical conditions (J. Xu & Wang, 2022).

(Su et al., 2019) Tourism, academic exchanges, and media promotion are the three primary factors that contribute to Anhui's external cultural communication capabilities. In the first place, tourism is the means by which international tourists can be brought to Anhui in order to experience the culture of the province. The second benefit of intellectual exchange is that it can facilitate cultural conversations. The third point is that the development of Anhui regional culture can be advanced through the use of the news media and various cultural events. All of these things have made positive contributions to the external cultural communication of the province of Anhui, and they have accomplished certain achievements in terms of attracting visitors and bringing economic value (Zhao & Liu, 2021).

Students from other countries who find themselves studying and living in the province of Anhui have the opportunity to interact with and experience the culture of the Anhui region. Through their own personal experiences, overseas students are able to interpret the culture of the Anhui region from their own point of view and communicate the meaning of the Anhui region to the people of their home country in a manner that is more authentic and vivid. The international students who are studying and staying in the province of Anhui will have the opportunity to interact with and learn about the culture of the Anhui region, and they will also be able to bring the culture that they have acquired back to their own country. At the same time as this is an efficient method for promoting the export of Chinese culture, it is also a method for educational institutions like colleges and universities to combine nationalization and globalization simultaneously. Therefore, in light of the fact that globalization is taking place, it is imperative that we maintain our cultural confidence, broaden our international perspective, fully realize the potential of the cultural exchange bond for overseas students studying in China, and aggressively promote the influence of the culture of the Anhui region.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

As the process of internationalization and global integration for higher education continues to advance at a

rapid pace, a rising number of students from other nations are expressing an interest in pursuing higher education in international institutions. Previous research has demonstrated that international students play a significant role in the exchange of cultural elements between their home culture and the culture of the host country, including cultural exchanges, economic exchanges, academic exchanges, and so on (Aksenov et al., 2023). Also, the favorable influence that overseas students have on promoting local economic growth and cultural interchange has been supported by a large number of researchers. Through the contribution of economic advantages and human capital, Zhong et al. (2022) shown that international students have the potential to significantly contribute to the expansion of China's total factor productivity.

For the purpose of this study, social cognitive theory was utilized to analyze the elements that influence the cognition of international students with regard to the culture of the Anhui region. The social cognition theory is one of the most significant theories in the field of social psychology. It was proposed by Bandura, an American psychologist, in the late 1970s. The theory aims to explain the process of social learning by concentrating on people's beliefs, memories, expectations, motivation, and self-efficacy, as well as other cognitive factors (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020; Wood & Bandura, 1989). This theory places an emphasis on the observational learning method as the fundamental education approach for the acquisition of behavior. The complex actions that people exhibit are produced through the processes of observation, imitation, and cognitive processing. It is emphasized that reinforcement plays a significant role in the learning process, and the interplay of external direct reinforcement, alternative reinforcement, and self-intrinsic reinforcement is utilized in order to enhance the learning effect of learners (Veissière et al., 2019). In addition to this, it places an emphasis on the construction of a moral environment and psychological adjustment mechanism that is beneficial to learning (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Learners should be guided to establish good self-confidence, moral character, and sound emotion in order to enhance the growth of self-expectation while they are in the process of learning (Lovdén et al., 2020).

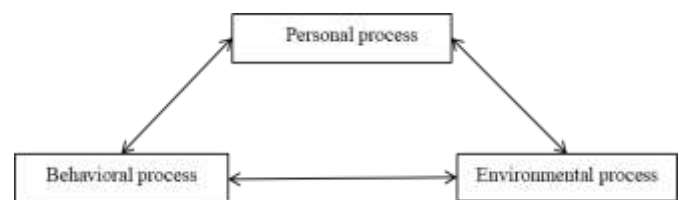


Figure 1. Model of Reciprocal Interactions (Source: Bandura, 1989)

As stated by Bandura (1989), the personal, behavioral, and environmental elements all worked as mutually determined factors, and they all influenced each other, which resulted in the formation of the model of reciprocal interactions (which is seen in Figure 1). The way in which people think can have an effect on the actions they perform and the environment they live in. In the meanwhile, acts have the potential to alter their environments and ideas. Moreover, settings have the potential

to influence both the way people think and the behaviors that they perform.

In spite of the fact that there is a substantial body of research on the beneficial influence that international students in China have on cultural exchange, there are not many studies that investigate the impact that international students have on the culture of the different regions. In this study, the focus is on the factors that influence the cognition of foreign students in Anhui province on the local regional culture, as well as the ways in which the propagation force of international students can be utilized to its maximum potential in order to disseminate the culture of Anhui province and convey a more accurate story about China. The fact that there is a causal relationship that works in both directions between overseas students and the culture of the Anhui region is one of the reasons. In particular, international students have the ability to cultivate and disseminate the culture of the Anhui region, and the specific regional culture of the province of Anhui may also contribute to the recruitment of further international students. One other reason is that the effect mechanism that is responsible for the regional culture of Anhui being understood by overseas students is not entirely clear. The purpose of this study is to, on the one hand, conduct an in-depth analysis of the mechanism by which international students acquire knowledge about the culture of the Anhui region. On the other hand, the purpose of this research is to offer some references for those who are responsible for formulating policies and teaching on the higher education of international students.

Intrinsic Interest

Based on the interviews, it was determined that overseas students came to China with the intention of gaining an understanding of Chinese culture. As far as the province of Anhui is concerned, they are enthusiastic about the native cuisine, tea art, architecture, calligraphy, painting, and drama. According to the findings of interviews, international students who have the interest or motivation to pursue their education in the province of Anhui are able to learn about the culture of the region in a more active manner. Because of this, they have a profound comprehension and awareness of the culture of the Anhui metropolitan area.

It is clear that each and every one of the overseas students who are participating in the event has an interest in studying and residing in the province of Anhui in China. The acknowledgment of the culture of the Anhui region is significantly influenced by the intrinsic interest of the people. The foreign students who have the intrinsic students are able to enjoy their life in Anhui province. They would want to spend time and money traveling around Anhui province so that they can obtain a personal contact with the people who live there and the culture that is prevalent there. In addition to that, they would want to suggest that their families visit the province of Anhui, and that they also encourage their friends to study in China.

External Influence

First and foremost, they recognize the Anhui regional culture as a result of the influence of other people. This is

because they are a unique group of international students studying in the province of Anhui in China. Examples include movies and photographs of promotional content taken by members of public social circles, as well as recommendations from families, teachers, or friends. The students were not aware of how to select the most appropriate location for their academic pursuits, and as a result, they would take the recommendations of their teachers, parents, and friends. According to the aforementioned points of view, the external environments have the potential to influence the actions of individuals. This finding is in line with the research done by Wang et al. (2019), which found that the nature of personal and environmental elements that influence individuals' motivation is consistent.

Cultural Identity

The cultural identification of overseas students is another factor that influences their understanding of the cultural traditions of the Anhui region and encourages them to remain in the province of Anhui for a longer period of time. In addition, with regard to the matter of cultural identity in relation to the culture of Anhui, the nine students who participated in the survey differed only in the manner in which they expressed their cultural identity. For example, they discussed the possibility of spreading Anhui regional culture to their friends or expressing their desire to participate in more cultural activities. However, the findings were consistent, with all of the students admitting that they would like to be integrated into the culture of the region by learning the Anhui dialect, interacting with locals, tasting local cuisine, drinking Anhui tea, and so on.

As civilization has progressed, there has been an increase in the number of methods in which Chinese culture has moved abroad. Additionally, the awareness of Chinese culture among individuals from other countries has also been growing. According to the interviews, a number of international students studying in the province of Anhui believe that cultural exchanges between China and their home countries should be strengthened, and they wish to make a contribution to the propagation of Chinese culture. In addition, interviews demonstrate that familiarity with Chinese culture is no longer merely a superficial comprehension at the cognitive level, but rather a profound affiliation with Chinese culture. It is possible for international students to more effectively transmit the culture of China since they serve as ambassadors of cultural communication. The promotion of the recognition of Chinese culture among international students is helpful to the improvement of China's "soft power" and is consistent with the concept of cultural confidence.

III. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the study of the data presented above, the researchers came to the conclusion that there are three factors that would impact the international students to recognize the regional culture in the province of Anhui. These factors are cultural identification, intrapersonal interest, and external influence. The following is a list of the conclusions:

The first thing to note is that the inherent interest of overseas students has a favorable impact on their understanding of the culture of the region. People who have an innate interest in Anhui Province are more likely to be motivated to learn more about the culture of the province by reading books, publications, and using social networking sites like Baidu. This is because intrinsic interest in Anhui Province acts as a powerful motivator. If you are familiar with the culture of Anhui, you will have a better understanding of the province and the people that live there. Intrinsic interest, therefore, has the potential to foster the internal motivation necessary for learning and enjoying life.

Furthermore, the perceptions that overseas students have of the culture of the region might be significantly impacted by external influences. There is a proverb that states that satisfied customers are the best advertisement. There is a correlation between following the advice of friends, instructors, and parents and making it more interesting and engaging. People, particularly students, are more likely to receive advice from those who are close to them because they have faith in those individuals and believe that they are able to give them with helpful guidance at any time.

As a result of the analysis presented above, this study comes to the conclusion that cultural identity has a significant and beneficial role in promoting Anhui regional culture to international students who are studying and living in the province of Anhui. In the past several years, the province of Anhui has made significant progress in the fields of technology and science. Additionally, it has done a commendable job of safeguarding cultural heritages, and visitors can take advantage of the traditional tourism resources that are available here. On the other hand, the provincial government of Anhui offers a number of incentives, such as scholarships, in order to entice students from other countries to enroll in the province. The most significant thing is that the locals here are incredibly friendly and welcoming to students from other countries.

All of these three aspects add to the understanding that international students have of the culture of the Anhui region, which in turn serves to increase the number of international students who choose to pursue their degrees in the province of Anhui.

For the purpose of assisting academics, high school educators for international students, and policy makers in the following areas, this study proposes the following implications, which are based on the findings of the qualitative analysis. To begin, this research offers references for academics to use in order to analyze the ways in which international students have an understanding of regional culture by employing a method known as deep interviews. This method is based on the social cognitive theory. Additionally, the findings will provide some helpful references for administrative staff in universities to apply related measures in the cultivation of international talents with the understanding and spreading of the fine traditions of Chinese culture. This will be done from the perspective of cultural confidence in socialism with Chinese characteristics. Furthermore, the findings may serve as a source of motivation

for policymakers in the cultural and tourism department of Anhui province to implement certain measures. These measures may include the promotion of regional cultural resources that are characterized by cultural confidence and socialism. The goal of these measures is to encourage a greater number of international students to pursue their education in Anhui province. While this is going on, the policies may make it easier for overseas students to study in the province of Anhui and gain a deeper understanding of the culture of the region, all while maintaining their academic achievement and seeking a degree through the Chinese educational system.

This study has a restriction in that the data gathered by the Ministry of Education of China on overseas students in China are only collected up until the year 2019. This is because to the prevent and control rules that were implemented in 2020 to avoid the spread of COVID-19. Furthermore, there are no most recent data for the years 2021 to 2022 within this study. The cognition of international students to the culture of the region may also be influenced by other elements, such as digital technology and big data. Additionally, when studying for a similar academic topic, it is possible to take into consideration a fresh perspective, such as digitalization and big data.

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