Based on the Characteristics of Chinese Language Learning among ASEAN International Students: A Study on the Teaching Model for Elementary Chinese

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Abstract: *With the continuous expansion of the influence of the Chinese language in ASEAN countries, an increasing number of ASEAN international students are beginning to learn Chinese at the elementary level. However, the complex and diverse language and cultural backgrounds of these students present unique cognitive challenges in Chinese language acquisition. Based on the language cognitive characteristics and cultural differences of ASEAN international students, and combining theories of second language acquisition, intercultural communication, and cognitive load, this paper constructs an adaptive and dynamically adjustable teaching model for elementary Chinese. The study starts with optimizing phonetic teaching strategies and multimodal dynamic adjustments, systematically designing hierarchical plans for vocabulary and grammar, and exploring the collaborative mechanism of integrating form, sound, meaning, and cultural penetration in Chinese character teaching. This model aims to enhance the language cognitive efficiency and cultural adaptation ability of ASEAN international students, providing theoretical guidance and practical paths for elementary Chinese language teaching.*

Keywords: *ASEAN countries, elementary Chinese, language cognition, teaching model, intercultural communication, cognitive load*

Introduction

With the continuous deepening of the China-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, the demand for Chinese language education in ASEAN countries has been steadily growing, making it one of the regions with the highest concentration and largest scale of global overseas Chinese language learners. ASEAN international students exhibit high heterogeneity in terms of language systems, cognitive styles, and cultural backgrounds, and their language acquisition process involves complex cognitive adjustments and cultural adaptation. In response to this situation, constructing a scientific and rational teaching model will not only help improve teaching effectiveness and promote the organic integration of language knowledge and cultural cognition, but also serve as a necessary path for deepening research in intercultural language education. Currently, elementary Chinese language teaching still faces shortcomings in integrating the individual differences and cultural backgrounds of ASEAN international students. The teaching content and strategies have not yet fully reflected dynamic adaptation and personalized needs. This paper, taking the characteristics of Chinese language learning among ASEAN international students as the entry point, explores the design of teaching models based on cognitive load theory and intercultural communication perspectives, aiming to provide theoretical support and practical reference for improving the targeting and effectiveness of teaching, and promoting the systematization and synergy of language acquisition.

1. Analysis of the Characteristics of ASEAN International Students' Elementary Chinese Learning

1.1 Linguistic and Cultural Backgrounds of ASEAN Countries and Their Cognitive Foundations for Chinese Learning

The language systems of ASEAN countries exhibit significant diversity and complexity, which lay the foundation for the cognitive structure of Chinese learners but also present challenges. The differences in phonetic systems, grammatical rules, and pragmatic habits among these languages are

vast, creating a pluralistic and unique language cognition model. This heterogeneity directly affects learners' perception and processing of Chinese language input. Particularly at the phonetic level, the presence or absence of tone systems and the degree of their complexity significantly impact learners' ability to recognize Chinese tones and pronounce them accurately. Learners whose native languages lack tones or have simpler tone systems often struggle to effectively construct the perception and production mechanisms for tones, making tone acquisition a bottleneck in Chinese learning.

The deep communicative norms and contextual understanding patterns embedded in the linguistic and cultural background form the cognitive framework for learners' expectations of language functions. Cultural differences are not only reflected in the understanding of literal meanings of words but also profoundly influence communicative strategies and discourse structures. Learners need to undergo a cognitive restructuring process, integrating their existing language knowledge with the implicit cultural logic and speech act rules in Chinese, in order to achieve effective language transfer and adaptation. This cognitive transformation not only shapes the unique Chinese learning trajectory of ASEAN international students but also reflects the complex interactive relationship between language and culture [1].

1.2 Cognitive and Emotional Characteristics of ASEAN International Students' Chinese Learning

From a cognitive perspective, ASEAN international students display diverse language processing strategies, reflecting differences in individual cognitive styles. Learners with a holistic cognitive tendency tend to start from the overall context, quickly grasping macro-level information from language materials, thereby strengthening context integration and discourse comprehension abilities. In contrast, learners with an analytical cognitive style focus on the details of language structure, emphasizing systematic learning of vocabulary and grammar rules. These two cognitive styles coexist and intertwine, influencing the complexity of language acquisition paths, leading to significant differences in learners' performance and challenges in areas such as phonetics, vocabulary, and grammar.

Emotional factors also play a crucial role in language acquisition. Learners' motivation structure, emotional state, and self-efficacy directly regulate their cognitive resource allocation and the selection of learning strategies. A positive learning attitude and strong self-efficacy help deepen the processing of language input and expand the use of cognitive resources. Conversely, language anxiety and emotional disorders can consume limited attention resources, reducing information processing efficiency and affecting language output performance. In a cross-cultural environment, emotional adjustment becomes a key variable influencing the operation of language cognition, affecting the continuity and stability of language acquisition.

1.3 Main Language Difficulties Faced by ASEAN International Students in Elementary Chinese Learning

The multidimensional tone system of Chinese and its complex combination rules exceed the phonological range of most ASEAN native languages, constituting the core barrier in phonetic acquisition. Accurate tone recognition and pronunciation require a high level of auditory sensitivity and motor coordination. Learners face a high cognitive load in this aspect. Differences in the final and initial consonant systems, especially with Chinese-specific phonemes such as retroflex sounds and apical consonants, further increase pronunciation difficulty, limiting improvements in pronunciation accuracy and fluency [2].

At the vocabulary level, the differences in polysemy and collocational habits create complexities in semantic discrimination, resulting in a higher cognitive burden during vocabulary integration. The flexibility of grammatical rules and the phenomenon of structural ellipsis increase the difficulty of syntactic processing. The heterogeneity between native language syntax and Chinese syntax affects the level of automaticity in language production, causing learners to encounter obstacles when constructing stable syntactic representations.

The complex morphological structure and multiple meanings of Chinese characters place high demands on visual cognition and memory systems. During Chinese character recognition and writing training, the high consumption of cognitive resources becomes a limiting factor, affecting learners' writing accuracy and speed. The difficulty of integrating form, sound, and meaning requires teaching strategies to be systematic and targeted.

The above language difficulties highlight the cognitive load issues faced by ASEAN international students during the elementary Chinese learning phase, pointing to the direction for innovation in teaching models. Guided by cognitive load theory, emphasizing layered support and dynamic adjustment mechanisms for each aspect of phonetics, vocabulary, grammar, and Chinese character writing will help alleviate learning bottlenecks and improve the targeting and effectiveness of teaching.

2. Theoretical Foundations for Constructing the Elementary Chinese Teaching Model

2.1 Teaching Model Construction from the Perspective of Second Language Acquisition Theory

The theory of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) provides a scientific and systematic cognitive framework for constructing the elementary Chinese teaching model. The Input Hypothesis suggests that appropriate and comprehensible language input can promote language internalization. Based on the language cognitive level and cultural background of ASEAN international students, the teaching design should create a systematic and comprehensible Chinese input system, ensuring that language materials are both challenging and suitable for learners' understanding abilities. A rich and diverse range of input forms, including spoken language, written language, and different registers, provides multidimensional support for language acquisition.

The Interaction Hypothesis emphasizes the importance of language interaction in the acquisition process. The teaching design should establish a multi-level interaction mechanism between teachers and students, as well as among peers, strengthening language output and feedback processes. This allows learners to actively generate language and correct errors through dynamic communication. Interaction not only improves language skills but also boosts learners' confidence in expression and interest in communication.

Attention Resource Theory and Cognitive Load Theory offer guidance for the scientific distribution of teaching load. The teaching content should find a balance between the complexity of language knowledge and cognitive capacity, reducing information processing pressure through chunked design and gradual difficulty, thereby improving cognitive efficiency. Metacognitive strategy training, as an auxiliary tool, enhances learners' self-monitoring and regulation abilities, enabling them to plan their learning process, assess their understanding level, and adjust learning methods, promoting autonomous and sustainable language acquisition [3].

Sociocultural Theory focuses on social interaction and cultural mediation in the learning process, promoting the deep integration of collaborative learning and contextualized teaching. By building communication platforms in real-life contexts, it fosters the dual construction of language knowledge and cultural cognition. Teacher-student collaboration and peer support, combined with sociocultural resources, help form language communication abilities that are culturally adaptive.

2.2 The Guiding Significance of Intercultural Communication Theory for Teaching Content Design

Intercultural communication theory reveals the nature of language as a cultural symbol system and the communicative behavioral norms behind it, laying the foundation for the selection and organization of Chinese teaching content. Language is not only a tool for information transmission but also a carrier of cultural values and social behaviors. Teaching content needs to deeply integrate cultural information, helping learners understand the cultural context and implicit rules of the language, thereby reducing language misuse and intercultural communication conflicts, and improving intercultural adaptability and communicative effectiveness.

Incorporating the cultural cognitive characteristics of ASEAN countries, the design of teaching content should target the communicative habits and value orientations of learners' native cultures, integrating practical discourses and communication contexts. This approach helps learners reconstruct their cognitive models of Chinese communication rules, enhances their functional understanding of language behaviors, and promotes the fusion of cultural identity and the enhancement of intercultural awareness. The cultivation of intercultural communication competence is not limited to language knowledge but also focuses on the ability to perceive, interpret, and adapt to cultural differences, becoming a key element in the construction of a personalized teaching content system [4].

By introducing authentic cultural contexts and intercultural case studies, and employing strategies such as contrastive analysis and cultural reflection, learners are encouraged to actively explore cultural similarities and differences, enhancing their critical thinking about culture. Culturally-oriented content

design enriches the connotation of language teaching, laying a solid foundation for learners' effective communication in a multicultural environment.

2.3 Learner-Centered Teaching Philosophy and Personalized Teaching Pathways

The learner-centered teaching philosophy focuses on cognitive needs and individual differences, emphasizing that teaching activities should revolve around learners' active participation, autonomous construction, and personal development. The design of the elementary Chinese teaching model needs to deeply reflect this philosophy, combining the language abilities, learning styles, and cultural backgrounds of ASEAN international students, to construct flexible, diverse, and progressively tiered teaching pathways that meet differentiated needs.

Personalized teaching pathways are based on cognitive load and learning strategy differences, emphasizing differentiated configurations of content, methods, pace, and assessment to enhance learning efficiency and effectiveness. Diagnostic assessments and formative feedback, combined with dynamic learning data, can precisely identify learners' strengths and bottlenecks, adjust teaching plans, and promote individual development. Self-reflection and metacognitive ability cultivation become key focuses in teaching design, stimulating intrinsic learning motivation and autonomous learning capabilities.

The application of information technology provides technical support for personalized teaching. Intelligent teaching platforms can collect and analyze learning data in real time, realizing resource-based intelligent recommendations and dynamic optimization of learning paths, adapting to the pace and needs of different learners. Digital tools enrich teaching interaction formats, enhancing the immersive experience and participation in learning.

The learner-centered philosophy drives the optimization of teaching resources and encourages the transformation of the elementary Chinese teaching model from the traditional, single teacher-centered approach to multidimensional interaction and collaborative development, laying the foundation for a scientific, efficient, and human-centered teaching system.

3. Design of the Elementary Chinese Teaching Model Based on Learning Characteristics

3.1 Optimization of Phonetic Teaching Strategies and Their Dynamic Adjustment Mechanism

Phonetic teaching is a fundamental component in elementary Chinese learning. For ASEAN international students, the difficulties in phonetic acquisition mainly focus on tone recognition, pronunciation accuracy, and interference from native language transfer. Considering the uniqueness of the Chinese phonological system, the teaching strategy should be based on a comparative analysis of the language systems of ASEAN countries, constructing a phonetic teaching system that is differentiated and targeted. Taking tone teaching as an example, teachers should combine the results of phonological system comparison, focusing on the functional differences of tones in semantic differentiation. They should employ multimodal input methods, integrating illustrations, audio, video, and practical exercises to deepen learners' sensitivity to tone patterns and functions, as well as their accuracy in expression [5].

The core of the teaching strategy lies in its phased organization and progressive arrangement. In the early stages, the focus should be on recognition, using high-frequency vocabulary for phonetic discrimination training to open the input pathway. In the middle stages, the focus should shift to imitation and correction, using methods such as audio comparison and imitation exercises to solidify phonetic templates. In the later stages, the focus should be on expression and communication, enhancing the naturalness and communicative function of phonetic output. Each stage should be accompanied by quantifiable assessment metrics, allowing for dynamic evaluation and optimization of teaching effectiveness.

The dynamic adjustment mechanism, as the technical innovation support of this strategy system, integrates real-time speech recognition technology and learning data analysis methods. Through intelligent teaching platforms, it continuously tracks and evaluates learners' pronunciation, tone recognition ability, and feedback response times. Based on this data, personalized correction paths are provided for different pronunciation errors, such as using visual feedback on lip movements, speech flow control training, or tone guidance. Furthermore, sensory training and kinesthetic feedback technologies are introduced in teaching interactions, such as speech resonators and tongue position

vibration devices, to stimulate sensory collaborative processing mechanisms and facilitate learners' accurate understanding of the movement paths of pronunciation organs.

This mechanism embodies a dynamic phonetic teaching system that integrates "technology—cognition—feedback," emphasizing the coordination between teaching content and cognitive load, truly achieving differentiated teaching, strong adaptability, and feedback-driven teaching objectives. It effectively supports the continuous improvement and periodic breakthroughs in phonetic levels for ASEAN international students.

3.2 Systematic Arrangement Plan for Vocabulary and Grammar Teaching

As the core of the language structure system, vocabulary and grammar teaching design should not only focus on the presentation form of language knowledge but also align with learners' cognitive patterns and processing characteristics. It should build a systematic teaching plan with a high degree of coupling between structure, function, and context. Vocabulary teaching needs to go beyond the single layer of word meaning and construct a "semantic network model" based on the theory of semantic fields. This model integrates high-frequency core words, function words, and collocations into the same semantic framework, strengthening learners' integrated cognition of word meaning relationships, pragmatic combinations, and discourse functions. The teaching sequence should prioritize vocabulary functionality and contextual adaptability, achieving a dual filtering logic of "communication-oriented + semantic clustering" to enhance the target-oriented and transferable use of vocabulary [6].

The grammar teaching section should construct a spiral progression system that moves "from form to function— from rules to application." Starting with basic sentence structures, such as subject-verb-object structures and serial verb constructions, the design of pragmatic scenarios should allow grammar rules to be embodied in real-life contexts. In the later stages, more complex grammatical phenomena, such as compound sentence structures, word order variations, and implicit subjects, should be gradually introduced to help learners construct a bidirectional mapping between syntactic rules and real language use. Through methods such as schema transformation, sentence pattern restructuring, and language task practice, learners can be guided to convert grammatical knowledge from "receptive understanding" into "productive expression."

To address cognitive load issues during the information processing of beginners, this plan introduces a "chunked teaching design," where vocabulary and grammar content are modularized based on semantic units, supported by structural diagrams and grammar scenario exercises to reduce the complexity of information input. At the same time, the teaching system collects individual learning trajectories and task completion data through the learning platform, dynamically evaluating learners' cognitive bottlenecks in vocabulary accumulation, syntactic output, and other areas. It then optimizes the sequence and difficulty level of content delivery in real time, ensuring dynamic balance between the knowledge input path and the learners' cognitive capacity.

Through this system integration and dynamic adjustment mechanism, the teaching process transitions from being "content-driven" to "learner-driven," not only improving the efficiency of internalizing language rules but also facilitating the transformation of language knowledge into transferable communicative competence. This helps learners establish a complete and efficient language cognitive system at the elementary stage.

3.3 The Collaborative Mechanism of Chinese Character Teaching and Cultural Integration

As one of the most cognitively challenging aspects of elementary Chinese teaching, Chinese character teaching must move beyond the traditional memory-based approach and shift towards a teaching system that integrates form, sound, and meaning. At the level of character form, the focus should be on guiding learners to master the principles of character construction and component structure. By using a "semanticization of components" approach, the logical structure of radicals and their semantic functions should be linked, reducing the overall cognitive load of character recognition. Meanwhile, multimodal teaching methods such as visual presentations, structural decomposition, and character-building exercises should be combined to enhance learners' character recognition efficiency and writing accuracy. The phonetic-meaning interaction strategy reinforces the bidirectional cognitive channels between pronunciation, character form, and meaning. Through synchronized teaching arrangements that incorporate phonetic input and semantic activation, a stable language symbol network is constructed, promoting the multi-channel integration of language information and the establishment of long-term memory in learners.

The cultural integration mechanism, as an organic extension of Chinese character teaching, activates learners' cultural cognition and emotional resonance through the introduction of character origin stories, cultural contexts, and symbolic meanings. The teaching content should focus on cultural carriers such as the evolution of Chinese characters, traditional festivals, customs, and symbolic imagery, constructing a "character form—meaning—culture" integrated cognitive path. For example, when learning characters such as "Xiao" (filial piety) and "Fu" (blessing), related ethical concepts and social customs should be introduced to transition the learning process from symbol recognition to cultural understanding. This type of collaborative design not only enhances learners' depth of understanding of the connotations of Chinese characters but also helps them build the cultural identity and language confidence necessary for intercultural communication, thus achieving the teaching goal of promoting the joint development of language and culture.

Conclusion

This paper, through an in-depth analysis of the language cognitive characteristics and cultural backgrounds of ASEAN international students, designs an elementary Chinese teaching model encompassing three major dimensions: phonetics, vocabulary and grammar, and Chinese characters and culture. The model is based on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory and intercultural communication theory, emphasizing dynamic adjustments in teaching strategies and the construction of personalized learning pathways. This model effectively addresses learners' cognitive load and cultural adaptation needs, enhancing the systematization and practicality of language acquisition. Future research could further integrate artificial intelligence and big data technologies to achieve intelligent monitoring and feedback of the teaching process, thereby promoting the precise implementation of personalized learning. Additionally, further exploration of the differences among ASEAN language groups can deepen research on intercultural communication competence and drive the teaching model toward more diversified integration and innovative development.

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