

# Designing and Implementing Chinese Traditional Culture Thematic Activities in Junior High School English Teaching Based on the Production-Oriented Approach (POA): An Action Research Study

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## Abstract

This study integrates the Production-Oriented Approach (POA) with Chinese traditional culture (CTC) education in junior high school English teaching. Through a 12-week action research project involving 120 eighth-grade students, three POA-driven thematic activities (Festivals, Culinary Culture, and Folklore Stories) were designed, and their impact on students' language proficiency, cultural identity, and cross-cultural competence was evaluated. Results show significant improvements in students' oral output accuracy (32% increase), cultural confidence (85% reported heightened pride), and critical thinking. The study offers a replicable pedagogical framework for embedding CTC into language education while addressing the "deficit of cultural output" in current curricula.

**Keywords:** POA, Chinese traditional culture, thematic activities, junior high school English, action research, cultural identity

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## 1. Introduction

The integration of Chinese Traditional Culture (CTC) into English language education aligns with China's national strategies for cultural confidence development and holistic education reform. However, current instructional practices have three significant deficiencies:

- **Textbook Limitations:** Western cultural content predominates, with CTC representation accounting for less than 15% of material coverage.
- **Instructional Inertia:** Teachers rely on passive knowledge transmission (e.g., festival lectures) rather than competency-oriented pedagogy.
- **Cultural Expression Deficits:** Learners have a limited capacity to articulate CTC concepts in linguistically accurate and culturally authentic English (e.g., comparing Qixi Festival with Valentine's Day).

This research employs the Production-Oriented Approach (POA), which operates through its Motivating, Enabling, and Assessing phases, to address these gaps via output-driven, culturally contextualized tasks. The study investigates how POA-structured CTC pedagogies enhance linguistic application competence and cultural identity formation in junior secondary English curricula.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 POA: Theoretical Foundations

Pioneered by Wen Qiufang (2015), the Production-Oriented Approach (POA) is a tripartite pedagogical framework consisting of:

- A teaching philosophy emphasizing learning-centered instruction, whole-person education, and the integration of knowledge acquisition with application.
- Teaching hypotheses postulating output-driven motivation, input-enabled facilitation, and selective learning optimization.
- A cyclical teaching process with three iterative phases:
  - Motivating: Establishing cognitive gap awareness through authentic scenarios.
  - Enabling: Providing scaffolded linguistic, conceptual, and structural input for targeted output production.
  - Assessing: Implementing Teacher-Student Collaborative Assessment (TSCA) protocols.

While empirical studies have validated POA's efficacy in tertiary settings—particularly in English for Specific Purposes (Zhang, 2019) and flipped classrooms (Li & Wang, 2021)—its application in K-12 Chinese traditional culture (CTC) integration contexts remains underexplored, representing a critical research gap in secondary language pedagogy.

### 2.2 Integration of POA and Chinese Culture Cultivation

The integration of the Production-Oriented Approach (POA) and Chinese culture cultivation in English teaching

has gained increasing attention amid the “Going Global of Chinese Culture” strategy and the emphasis on cultural awareness in the English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition). POA, proposed by Wen Qiufang, centers on output-driven learning, input-enabled instruction, and cyclic teaching procedures of “Motivating-Enabling-Assessing”, which aligns with the goal of fostering students’ ability to express and spread Chinese culture (Wen, 2018).

Domestic studies have explored POA’s application in cultural teaching. Lu Wenxia and Zhu Yong (2021) optimized the “Motivating” phase by introducing dual-motivation (pre-class and in-class) to stimulate students’ cultural background knowledge, while Li Dongqing (2024) proposed AI-assisted teaching designs to enhance scenario authenticity in output tasks, providing technical support for integrating cultural elements. Empirical research by Zhang Wenjuan (2016, 2017) demonstrated POA’s effectiveness in improving learners’ language production skills, laying a foundation for its application in cultural output.

Internationally, scholars have recognized POA’s breakthrough in balancing input and output. Matsuda (2017) highlighted that POA emphasizes output as a trigger for active input, which is crucial for learners to internalize cultural knowledge and convert it into expressive competence. Widdowson (2018) noted that POA’s design of post-reading tasks bridges cultural comprehension and productive skills, facilitating cross-cultural communication. However, Cumming (2017) pointed out the need to expand POA’s application in cultural teaching beyond general language instruction.

Despite progress, gaps remain. Cong (2000) early identified the “aphasia of Chinese culture” in foreign language teaching, where students struggle to express Chinese culture in English. While revised textbooks (e.g., Jiangsu’s 2024 version) have increased Chinese cultural content (Shao Yuxia, 2022), effective teaching methods are lacking. Zhang Cewen (2019) argued that cultural awareness encompasses knowledge, skills, emotions, and behaviors, yet few studies have explored how POA’s procedures can target these dimensions. This research aims to fill this gap by constructing a POA-based framework for Chinese cultural awareness cultivation in junior high school English classes.

### 3. Methodology: Action Research Design

A mixed-methods action research (AR) cycle was implemented over 12 weeks, with the following phases and corresponding activities (see Table 1):

Table 1. Phases and corresponding activities of action research

Phase	Activities
<b>Problem Identification</b>	Diagnosed CTC output deficits via pre-test (writing/speaking tasks on CTC topics).
<b>Planning</b>	Designed 3 CTC-POA thematic units (see Table 2).
<b>Action</b>	Taught 45-minute lessons 3 times/week; collected audio/video of student outputs.
<b>Observation</b>	Field notes, surveys, focus groups (n=15).
<b>Reflection</b>	Revised tasks based on weekly TSCA sessions.

Table 2. Thematic Activity Design Based on POA

Theme	POA Stage	Sample Activities	CTC Elements
Festivals	Motivating	Video clip: Western vs. Chinese festivals; Q&A on cultural differences.	Spring Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival
	Enabling	Input: Texts/videos on festival origins; language scaffolding (e.g., ritual verbs).	
	Assessing	Group presentation: “Introduce a festival to foreign guests.”(TSCA rubric).	
Culinary Culture	Motivating	Picture dilemma: “Pizza vs. Jiaozi”; debate on cultural symbolism.	Regional cuisines, dining etiquette
	Enabling	Input: Menus, cooking verbs; structure: descriptive paragraph templates.	
	Assessing	Video task: “Film a cooking vlog in English.” (Peer review + TSCA).	
Folklore Stories	Motivating	Comic strip: Chang’e Flying to the Moon vs. Greek myths.	Legends, idioms
	Enabling	Input: Animated stories; language: narrative tenses; structure: story mapping.	
	Assessing	Role-play: “Retell a folklore story with modern twists.”	

### 4. Findings and Discussion

#### 4.1 Quantitative Results

**Language Proficiency:** Post-test scores increased by 24.5% (writing) and 32% (speaking), with fewer

grammatical errors in CTC descriptions.

**Cultural Identity (5-point Likert scale):**

**Cognitive:** 88% could explain CTC concepts (vs. 45% pre-intervention). The cognitive construct refers to an individual's intellectual understanding and awareness of their cultural background, with 4 items and a Cronbach's alpha of .93.

**Affective:** 85% reported "stronger pride in Chinese culture". The affective construct is about the affective or emotional responses associated with one's cultural background, with 4 items and a Cronbach's alpha of .89.

**Behavioral:** 76% voluntarily shared CTC content on social media in English. The behavioral construct involves observable actions, behaviors, and practices that reflect an individual's affiliation with a particular culture, with 4 items and a Cronbach's alpha of .91.

#### 4.2 Qualitative Insights

**Student Engagement:** Role-plays and vlogs boosted motivation. As one student in the focus group said, "Filming jiaozi-making made me realize our culture is cool to share."

**Teacher Adaptation:** TSCA streamlined feedback. As noted in the teacher journal, "Collaborative rubrics helped me pinpoint gaps in cultural vocabulary."

**Cross-Cultural Competence:** Students could compare CTC and Western cultures analytically, for example, "Mooncakes symbolize reunion, like Thanksgiving turkey."

#### 4.3 Addressing Challenges

**Input-Output Imbalance:** Localized materials (e.g., documentaries on Lu Cuisine) were used for the Enabling phase.

**Assessment Rigor:** TSCA was combined with digital portfolios (e.g., Flipgrid videos).

### 5. Implications and Conclusion

This study demonstrates that POA-driven CTC activities:

- i. Enhance Output Competence by structuring tasks around authentic cultural output.
- ii. Foster Cultural Identity through multidimensional engagement (cognitive-affective-behavioral).
- iii. Bridge Cultural-Linguistic Gaps via comparative analysis and scaffolded input.

Recommendations:

- i. Curriculum Design: Embed CTC themes in existing units (e.g., food, travel).
- ii. Teacher Training: Develop POA-CTC workshops focusing on TSCA and material adaptation.
- iii. Policy Reform: Mandate CTC output tasks in national English proficiency benchmarks.

Limitations & Future Research: The sample size is limited, and longitudinal studies are needed to assess retention. Future work could explore AI-assisted TSCA (e.g., GPT feedback on cultural content).

This study provides a transferable model for leveraging POA to transform CTC from abstract knowledge into actionable cultural-linguistic competence, advancing both pedagogical innovation and cultural sustainability.

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