

Exploring the International Prospect of China-chic Culture: An Employment Potential for Chinese Foreign Language Majors

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Abstract: Teenagers' employment prospects are influenced by personal skills, experience, and social factors like local economics, culture, and national policies. Foreign language graduates in China face employment challenges due to numerous reasons. With intercultural communication becoming central to global development, China's emphasis on cultural confidence and soft power is creating new opportunities. China-chic culture, which arises in accordance with the demand of the era, may offer a potential outlook for foreign language majors' employment situation in the process of navigating the global market. This article mainly uses the method of case study of the Sino-Etiquette Communication with Excellent Gift project, combined with statistical analysis of research on the perspectives on employment prospects and their attitude towards the China-chic industry among foreign-language-majored undergraduates, and attempts to offer a kind of practical solution to deal with their present employment struggles. The primary conclusion the research has reached is that the thriving sunrise industry—the China-chic industry—can serve as a new employment idea for foreign language students in its navigation to the international market.

Keywords: Foreign language major students, China-Chic, Employment, Culture promotion

1. Introduction

Employment has been a significant concern worldwide, especially in populous countries like China. It is widely acknowledged that employment is a fundamental issue for people's livelihoods, and the implementation of strategies to promote high-quality and sufficient employment is essential [1]. People's Daily recently emphasized the significance of solving the employment problem amidst complex internal and external factors [2]. To cope with the challenge of cultural infiltration from external civilization and foster equal cultural communication, the Chinese government attaches importance to the construction of cultural confidence among Chinese people, and this offers fertile soil for a sunrise industry—the China-chic industry to thrive. Previous studies mostly concentrate on a single perspective, that is, either on the employment struggle of foreign language students in China or the Chinese response to cultural globalization, and few research studies have attempted to bridge these two topics and tried to offer a possible solution for both sides. This research utilizes a case study of the Sino-Etiquette Communication with Excellent Gift project and data analysis from foreign language major students from main cities in China. It aims to explore the potential of the China-chic

industry in providing employment opportunities and examine students' attitudes toward this emerging field. The results are expected to provide some references and insights for the improvement of the concerning social issues.

2. Status Quo of the Employment for Foreign Language Major Students in China

2.1. Employment Challenges and Market Trends

Previous research suggests that foreign-language-major students are at a disadvantage compared to science or engineering majors, as their language skills alone may not surpass those of other candidates. This is largely because students from other disciplines often possess strong foreign languages as well, diluting the professional advantage of language majors. Consequently, many foreign language graduates face employment pressure and may have to accept jobs unrelated to their field of study [3]. Traditionally, the education sector has been a popular career choice for foreign language majors. However, the current challenges in the education industry, especially the imbalance between the supply and demand, aggravated employment difficulties. From the supplying side, the pursuit of stable careers during the pandemic drove many students to enter education-related fields, including foreign language education. On the demand side, multiple factors have reduced the availability of teaching jobs. Firstly, China's declining birth rate since 2016 has led to a reduced demand for educational resources. Secondly, the introduction of the "Double Reduction Policy" in 2021 aimed at decreasing students' homework and extracurricular training burdens and promoted the non-profit transformation of extra-curricular academic training institutions. This policy resulted in the bankruptcy of major institutions and a significant reduction in the number of jobs available in this sector, with estimated job losses reaching 3 to 4 million, which even aggravated the foreign language students' employment anxiety [4]. The oversaturation of the employment market has intensified competition among foreign language graduates seeking teaching positions, which allowed schools to become more selective, prioritizing candidates with advanced qualifications. As a result, many university graduates feel underqualified and experience heightened anxiety regarding their professional prospects.

In addition to the challenges in the education industry, foreign language majors face uncertainties in other favored fields such as foreign trade and translation. Concerns about the replacement of artificial intelligence, coupled with international political tensions and trade conflicts, have further compounded these employment challenges. These factors collectively pose significant threats to the career prospects of foreign language graduates and warrant attention from both society and policymakers.

2.2. Questionnaire Analysis: Career Challenges and Opportunities

To gain deeper insights into the career prospects and challenges faced by foreign language majors, this research conducted an online questionnaire survey through the Wenjuanxing program. The survey gathered responses from foreign language students in 16 cities across 9 provinces and autonomous regions in China. A total of 127 valid responses were collected after excluding invalid submissions, with 4.72% being male and 95.28% female. The survey data, summarized in charts and tables (Table 1-2), provides valuable information on students' prospects and the factors contributing to the current employment crisis.

Table 1: Opinions on the prospects of the employment of related major

Options	Total	Percentage
A vast job market with relatively high average salaries	5	3.94%
A vast job market with discontented average salaries	25	19.69%
A highly competitive job market with relatively high average salaries	28	22.05%
A highly competitive job market with discontented average salaries	69	54.33%
Total	127	100%

According to table 1, the vast majority of the interviewees expressed their concern about the highly competitive job market, and nearly three-quarters had a pessimistic attitude toward their future salary.

Table 2: Whether there is an orientation or a plan for a future career

Options	Total	Percentage
A clear career plan	19	14.96%
A rough employment orientation	56	44.09%
No plan yet	52	40.94%
total	127	

As shown in Table 2, aside from those who had no plan for their future careers, which take up less than half of the total, among the 75 interviewees with career orientation, 46 indicated education-related occupations as their preferred future career, while 6 chose foreign trade. When asked about "What do you believe to be the largest obstacle in foreign language students' employment struggle," 68 interviewees mentioned issues such as "fierce competition among peers," "market saturation," and "involution," while 19 expressed their concerns about the potential threat posed by artificial intelligence.

Based on an analysis of survey data and previous research, the study arrived at three key conclusions: First, foreign language students commonly experience apprehension about their career prospects. Second, the education sector and foreign trade are the primary fields in which foreign language graduates compete for jobs. From the students' perspective, the lack of technical skills, the turbulence of the international situation, combined with intense competition in a saturated job market, and the potential for AI replacement are the main factors contributing to their employment anxiety. To see from the positive side, globalization has created opportunities for foreign language talents in China [5]. Cultural exchanges are becoming more significant, with an emphasis on disseminating cultural values and expanding cultural influence. In response to external cultural influences, the Chinese government has prioritized fostering cultural confidence and promoting cultural exports. This has created fertile ground for the growth of the China-chic industry to thrive.

3. China-chic Culture: Unlocking New Employment Opportunities for Foreign Languages Majors

3.1. The Rise and Potential of China-chic Culture Industry

China-chic culture, broadly defined, is a cultural phenomenon that includes the revival of intangible cultural heritage, the rise of domestic goods, the spread of traditional cultural symbols, etc. In the context of cultural and creative industries, it specifically denotes the in-depth integration of traditional Chinese culture and unique Chinese elements into brand identities and product designs, harmonized with current consumption trends [6].

In the age of globalization, cultural soft power is increasingly becoming the battlefield for major powers. China, with its rich history spanning over five millennia, is constantly seeking approaches to resist cultural invasion and hegemony while promoting equal cultural communication and exchange. As Generation Z, born between 1995 and 2009, emerged during a period of rapid economic and cultural growth in China and has since become a driving force in consumption trends. This generation has fueled the rise of the China-chic industry, which innovatively leverages traditional craftsmanship to promote Chinese culture, technology, brands, and fashion on the global stage [7]. Data from the IMedia Think Tank shows that investment and financing in China's cultural and creative industries have continuously increased since 2007, and the market scale also shows an upward trend. Moreover, the amount of public cultural places, such as museums and public libraries, and the scale of cultural products they produce have seen a marked increase [8]. These institutions play a pivotal role in preserving cultural heritage and fostering innovation, making them key contributors to the output of China-chic cultural and creative products.

Overall, the above data points to a promising future for the China-Chic industry. As a highly effective medium for the global spread of domestic cultural value, China-chic enterprises and intangible cultural heritage practitioners are striving to overcome barriers to international markets and fulfill their mission of cultural communication.

3.2. Chinese Youth's Attitudes toward China-chic Culture

The global dissemination of China-chic culture and the promotion of cultural and creative industries offer a promising solution to the employment challenges faced by Chinese foreign language students. Building on the research presented in Section 2, the research also conducted a study on foreign language students' understanding, interest, access opportunities, and employment intention in the same group of interviewees towards the China-chic cultural and creative industry.

Among the 127 university students surveyed, 84 participants (66%) reported having some degree of exposure to this field, and 110 showed interest in China-chic culture, although some noted limited opportunities for deeper engagement. When asked about their main channels for learning about this industry, 91% mentioned social media, while nearly 60% gave answers like offline exhibitions and retail stores featuring China-chic fashion brands. These results demonstrate the growing enthusiasm among Chinese young people towards the China-chic culture, aligning with the broader societal emphasis on cultural soft power and fostering cultural confidence amidst increasing per capita consumption. Given that a global vision is a crucial competency for foreign language students, the research also explored the interviewees' innovative ideas for leveraging their professional skills to promote the global dissemination of China-chic culture. Frequently mentioned strategies included expanding presence across "multiple new media platforms," utilizing "live broadcast," engaging in "policy-supported cross-border e-commerce," and developing "intellectual property (IP) licensing." The last answer stood out among the responses, reflecting the students' keen insight into this industry's potential.

In the following section, a case study will illustrate how foreign language students can integrate their professional competence into their innovative assumption of developing careers in the China-chic cultural and creative industry.

4. A Case Study of Sino-Etiquette Communication with Excellent Gift Project

4.1. Overview: Leveraging National IP Licensing System to Revitalize Traditional Etiquette Culture

China, known as a country of etiquette, has deeply embedded traditional ceremonies and manners in its cultural identity. Among these traditions, the practice of gift culture holds significant importance,

serving as a carrier of auspicious wishes, genuine celebration, and friendly relationships. This tradition has evolved into a bridge for international cultural exchange and communication. Rooted in this cultural heritage, the national-level intellectual property initiative, "Sino-Etiquette Communication with Excellent Gift" (Sino-ECEG), was established to address the need for cultural communication in the age of globalization.

The "Sino-ECEG Industry Promotion Plan," approved in 2021 by the Office of the State Council's Working Mechanism for Foreign Cultural Trade, aims to develop Sino-ECEG into a national cultural brand and expand its presence in overseas markets. This initiative forms a core part of the "Thousand Sails Going Global" Action Plan for Foreign Cultural Trade, jointly issued by six national ministries and commissions, including the Ministry of Commerce, the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Under the guidance of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) Commercial Sub-Committee and executed by the Sino-Etiquette Communication with Excellent Gift Industrial Promotion Center, the project operates primarily through four major authorization systems: National Goods Series, National Style Series, National Gift Series, and Cultural and Creative Spaces. Through IP authorization, it provides national-level brand endorsement for products that embody Chinese cultural connotations, communication value, and market potential. By fostering brand recognition overseas, Sino-ECEG not only elevates the global profile of Chinese products but also creates opportunities for cultural and commercial exchange. This initiative aligns seamlessly with the professional expertise of English majors, offering them a platform to leverage their language skills and cultural knowledge. In return, it also offers a new avenue for employment for graduates majoring in foreign languages [9].

4.2. Annual selection of Sino-ECEG Enterprises and Products: a Translation Perspective

To reach the purpose of the Sino-ECEG Industry Promotion Plan and maximize its role as a platform for culture exchange, the Sino-ECEG Industrial Promotion Center organizes the annual selection of recommended enterprises and products. This initiative culminates in the publication of a Recommended Enchiridion, which includes brief introductions of the selected products and their cultural connotations. Each year, 200 to 300 enterprises are rigorously chosen from thousands of excellent cultural and creative companies and intangible cultural heritage workshops. The enchiridion is made available in both electronic and print formats and is published in multiple languages, including Chinese and foreign versions. Its distribution channels include the official website of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), its WeChat account, overseas representative offices, and important platforms for economic and trade activities.

The production of foreign language versions of the enchiridion presents unique challenges, especially in accurately translating cultural expressions. For foreign language students, this translation work offers a practical opportunity to apply their professional expertise. While basic translation applications and AI tools are increasingly used, they often struggle with nuanced cultural texts. For instance, texts featuring Chinese homophonic puns, the artistic imagery of Chinese classic poetry, or regional folk expressions are difficult for AI to interpret accurately.

One specific example, according to the research group's interview, is the translation of the name of a product of a Chinese traditional pastry called "Tao Su" in Mandarin. "Tao" in Mandarin means peach, and "Su" represents a type of classic pastry containing cow or goat cheese. However, peach is actually not included in the ingredients of this kind of pastry, and this name only takes the auspicious meaning that peach carries. The translation given by the artificial intelligence is "Peach Shortbread," which could possibly cause misunderstanding among non-native Chinese speakers. At the same time, the product's name also adapted the Chinese idiom "Shu Xiang Men Di," which means "a family steeped in literature and learning," into "Su Xiang Men Di." This even brings more challenges to the translation work. "We discussed it with our professors," a member recalled in the interview, "and

finally we used the version of 'Fragrance brimming the workshop—Auspicious Shortcake giftbox.'" To achieve a translation that maintains both accuracy and the cultural essence of the original text, human translation is still irreplaceable in complicated cultural text translating situations, and that's where future foreign language students can put their hands on and build up their careers [10].

4.3. Sino-ECEG Overseas Journey and the "Approaching" Series: Cooperation between Foreign and Domestic Systems

The Sino-ECEG, as a national-level brand and intellectual property, carries the mission of both discovering and recording the stories and cultural connotations of rarely-known domestic intangible cultural heritage and cultural and creative products and promoting the global emission and the development of these treasures of human civilizations, responding to the "Attract Inward and Venture Outward" strategy, which plays a significant role in deepening China's opening up, strengthening international cooperation, and promoting industrial upgrading.

Domestically, the "Approaching" series activity was launched to introduce international audiences to the essence of Chinese intangible cultural heritage from an authentic perspective. This initiative involves producing bilingual media content like documentaries or video logs that explore the craftsmanship, aesthetic traditions, historical origins, and innovative potential of these cultural treasures. By doing so, the activity aims to highlight the cultural and creative brands rooted in China's rich heritage. In parallel, the Sino-ECEG Overseas Journey seeks to connect domestic resources with international markets and audiences. Organized by the CCPIT Commercial Industry Committee Sino-ECEG Industrial Promotion Center, this initiative integrates resources from the domestic trade promotion system to foster cross-border collaboration and innovation. The Overseas Journey consists of a series of international cultural and commercial events, such as business visits, matchmaking meetings, and other forms in various collaborating countries.

According to the *Invitation to Co-Organize Enterprise Participation in the "Sino-ECEG Overseas Journey" for Expanding Overseas Markets*, in 2025, the overseas series journey is planned to be carried on in countries and regions such as Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Mexico, and Malaysia. Activities including trade and commerce promotional seminars, industry forums, targeted corporate visits, and business negotiations, as well as comprehensive urban commerce exhibitions, are scheduled throughout the year to help enterprises expand local sales channels, connect with local chambers of commerce, high-quality e-commerce platforms, and purchasers, promote distinctive trade and commerce, and facilitate economic and trade cooperation [11]. A standout feature of these activities is the involvement of a young translation team, composed of interpreters with professional academic backgrounds, enthusiasm for cultural inheritances, and ambitions to promote China's civilizational achievements internationally. These translators serve as vital bridges for intercultural communication and business cooperation. The Sino-ECEG Overseas Journey and the "Approaching" series activity had been not only the platform for China-chic promotion but also a stage provided to foreign language majors to demonstrate their language skills, incisive global insight, and unique intercultural perspective and realize value pursuits and career aspirations.

In the future, more large-scale international conventions like the China Import and Export Fair are expected to join this career, bringing more opportunities for both the employment of foreign language students in China and the promising development of the China-chic industry.

5. Conclusion

This research has systematically analyzed the employment challenges faced by foreign language majors in China and identified the underlying causes. It innovatively combines the emerging sunrise industry of "China-chic" with the employment of foreign language students, exploring solutions to

youth employment issues and alleviating societal employment pressures. Through case studies, this research has provided new insights into the overseas dissemination and exchange of traditional Chinese culture and the enhancement of cultural soft power. The study's findings conclude that the integration of the "China-chic" industry with the employment prospects of foreign language majors offers a promising approach to address the current employment predicament. By examining the Sino-Etiquette Communication with Excellent Gift project, the research has demonstrated how cultural exchange can be leveraged to create new employment avenues, thereby contributing to the cultural promotion and the strengthening of China's cultural soft power. Reflectively viewing, the research acknowledges its limitations, notably the gender imbalance in the survey respondents and the concentration of surveyed institutions in first-tier cities. This geographical bias may have limited the depth of understanding of employment issues in less developed regions, which is a critical area for future investigation. Looking ahead, the study will continue to monitor the implementation of the case of the Sino-Etiquette Communication with Excellent Gift project and gather employment feedback from foreign language students involved. This ongoing process will involve continuous reflection and optimization, with the aim of exploring the feasibility and sociological significance of using cultural exchange as a new employment channel. The research aspires to contribute to the development of sustainable solutions that not only address employment challenges but also enrich global cultural diversity through the lens of China's rich heritage.

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