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A Study on Promoting Fengxian Rolling Lantern Sachet Culture Among Zero-Beginner International Chinese Language Students

Xiaozhou Xu

Shanghai Urban Construction Vocational College, Shanghai, 201415, China
Correspondence: 41487248@qq.com

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Abstract: ***Background:*** Regionally specific and relatively small-scale intangible cultural heritage (ICH) often faces limited cross-cultural adaptability, and the field lacks a tailored communication system for zero-beginner international Chinese language students studying in China. Specifically, while *Fengxian* rolling lantern performances involve complex techniques and a high threshold of participation, the international promotion value of the rolling lantern sachet culture derived from these performances has not yet been systematically investigated. ***Purpose:*** To address these practical tensions of high international promotion thresholds, weak audience adaptability, and fragmented communication chains in small-scale ICH, we focused on rolling lantern sachet culture to construct a suitable, lightweight promotion system. ***Methods:*** To evaluate this system, we conducted a literature review, fieldwork, inheritor interviews, and a standardized questionnaire survey. Utilizing a quasi-experimental control design, we selected 128 zero-beginner international language students from four universities in Shanghai for quantitative empirical analysis. ***Results:*** Ultimately, the lightweight adapted rolling lantern sachet met the experiential needs of zero-beginner audiences, while the layered communication strategy and three-dimensional (3D) collaborative promotion mechanism demonstrated stable implementation effects. ***Conclusion:*** The rolling lantern sachet serves as a high-quality medium for the international communication of small-scale ICH. The promotion system constructed in this study fits the characteristics of zero-beginner audiences and provides a reference for the international communication of similar Jiangnan ICH cultural and creative products.

Keywords: Fengxian rolling lantern sachet; intangible cultural heritage (ICH); lightweight promotion; zero-beginner international students; cross-cultural communication

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

ICH carries local folk traditions and indigenous artistic features, serving as an important medium for Sino-foreign artistic exchange and for presenting the characteristics of regional traditional craftsmanship (Wang, 2013). At present, the international communication of ICH in China reveals a clear polarization. Mainstream ICH categories—*Peking* opera, *Kunqu* opera, paper cutting, Chinese-style dress, and calligraphy—have relatively mature communication systems, high international visibility, and broad audience bases. In contrast, regionally specific and small-scale ICH projects, such as the Fengxian rolling lantern, struggle to adapt to the cognitive levels and experiential needs of ordinary international audiences. This mismatch occurs because their traditional processes are complex, stage performances are highly specialized, and public participation thresholds are high. Consequently, such projects face practical problems

including limited overseas exposure, narrow communication coverage, and a weakened connection with young audiences (Shanghai Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center, 2023). Ultimately, the lightweight adaptation and targeted international presentation of local small-scale ICH can enrich the range of Chinese handicraft experiences available to overseas audiences and improve the content structure of multi-level international arts exchange.

To reach these audiences effectively, universities can leverage specific demographics. As a major hub for international Chinese language education in China, Shanghai brings together a stable and nationally diverse group of short-term international language students with no prior Chinese-learning background (Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, 2024). Their learning goals focus mainly on short-term Chinese language perception and hands-on cultural experience. They have not received systematic instruction in Chinese grammar or Chinese cultural theory; these students show relatively low acceptance of theoretical and professionalized cultural lectures, preferring handicraft activities that are easy to follow, strongly practical, and that produce visible outcomes. Therefore, they are a valuable audience for experiential international communication of small-scale ICH and represent a prominent area of research and practical significance.

To match these preferences, it is useful to examine regionally distinct practices. Rooted in the water-town area of western Fengxian, Shanghai, the Fengxian rolling lantern is a comprehensive folk art integrating dance, acrobatics, and physical performance with a history of more than 700 years. In 2008, the project was included in the expanded list of the second batch of national-level ICH items and was officially recognized as an ICH item (The Paper Government Affairs, 2024). Traditional rolling lanterns are large in size, involve a complex double-layer bamboo-slat frame, and require a long period of learning; consequently, they are suitable mainly for certified inheritors to perform in staged programs and cannot meet the needs of short-term experiential settings for zero-beginner international learners. Nevertheless, to reduce transmission pressure and expand communication scenarios, local ICH inheritors have carried out a lightweight cultural-creative adaptation of the original craft by removing redundant weaving steps and lowering the operational threshold while fully retaining the symmetrical frame logic of the rolling lantern and its folk meaning of blessing and peace. However, at present, rolling lantern sachets are used only in community popularization and primary and secondary school aesthetic education within China. A dedicated communication plan for zero-beginner international Chinese language students has not yet been developed, and their international promotion potential remains underexplored.

1.2 Research Significance

1) Theoretical Significance

A comprehensive review of existing scholarship indicates that studies at the intersection of international Chinese language education and ICH communication focus mainly on macro-level communication strategies and the international promotion of leading ICH intellectual properties. In contrast, empirical studies targeting zero-beginner international Chinese language students and small-scale ICH remain relatively limited; common problems include insufficiently refined audience segmentation and weak analysis of micro-level operating mechanisms (Li & Chen, 2025). Furthermore, many existing studies have not integrated the cognitive limitations and Chinese language proficiency of zero-beginner international Chinese language students into an adaptive pedagogical communication framework, which weakens their practical applicability (Duan, 2023). Accordingly, by focusing on Fengxian rolling lantern sachet culture as an entry point, this study aligns the research with the cognitive patterns of zero-beginner international Chinese language students and constructs a lightweight cross-cultural promotion system suitable for small-scale ICH, thereby filling an empirical gap in this specific direction and expanding the interdisciplinary research system.

2) Practical Significance

Digital new media have broken the geographical boundaries of traditional ICH communication and opened new paths for local small-scale ICH to move beyond their place of origin and develop normalized Sino-foreign cultural exchange (Xu, 2025). Building on this development, the Chinese language level, cultural reception habits, and handicraft experience preferences of zero-beginner international Chinese language students studying in China, this study analyzes the cross-cultural communication advantages and existing promotion limitations of the rolling lantern sachet and designs a layered, targeted, and implementable international promotion strategy. In doing so, the findings can be used to optimize cultural experience courses for international students in Shanghai universities and to develop international cultural exchange activities. Moreover, they may also provide operational references for lightweight overseas-oriented experiential activities for similar Jiangnan handicraft ICH, thereby promoting stable international artistic interaction around Shanghai's local traditional crafts.

1.3 Research Questions

On the basis of the research background, review of existing studies, and identified research gaps, this study addresses four core research questions. The first question asks whether, after the dual lightweight adaptation of the frame and materials, the Fengxian rolling lantern sachet matches the handicraft experience capacity of zero-beginner international Chinese language students in terms of operational difficulty and cultural carrying capacity. The second question examines how a collaborative operational framework linking handicraft techniques, elementary Chinese language practice, and cross-cultural identification can be constructed to address the high promotion threshold, insufficient segmentation, and disconnected communication chain of the rolling lantern sachet. The third question investigates the extent to which differentiated explanation plans for different cultural circles and a three-dimensional collaborative operating model can improve foreign learners' cultural recognition, Chinese language output, and willingness to share independently. The fourth question considers whether the complete lightweight promotion system constructed in this study is replicable and whether it can provide a reference for the international communication of similar Jiangnan ICH cultural and creative products.

In terms of research scope, the spatial scope is limited to four universities in Shanghai that offer short-term international Chinese language programs, the practical carrier is limited to the six-frame miniature rolling lantern sachet adapted by local Fengxian inheritors, the audience is limited to short-term non-degree international students who have no systematic Chinese-learning experience and have not reached HSK Level 1, and the time frame covers the fieldwork, questionnaire survey, and interviews conducted from September 2025 to January 2026. With respect to boundaries, this study does not examine the overseas staged performance promotion of traditional large rolling lanterns; rather, it focuses only on the promotion and communication of rolling lantern sachet culture. Its contribution lies in taking the Fengxian rolling lantern sachet, a regionally specific and small-scale ICH cultural and creative product, as the entry point, using empirical data to test its adaptability for cross-cultural experience, and proposing a replicable lightweight, layered, and collaborative promotion path.

1.4 Research Methods and Innovations

This study adopts five research methods. First, the literature review method is used to systematically integrate Chinese and international monographs, journal articles, and official archives, and to clarify existing studies on overseas ICH communication, ICH teaching for international students, and lightweight ICH revitalization, thereby anchoring the research problem. Second, fieldwork is conducted at the Fengxian rolling lantern inheritance base and international education centers in several Shanghai universities to

record the current state of ICH craft transmission and the cultural experience preferences of zero-beginner international Chinese language students. Third, a questionnaire survey is used to distribute a standardized instrument and collect 128 valid samples, with quantitative statistics applied to measure the international communication adaptability of the rolling lantern sachet. Fourth, semi-structured interviews are conducted with two ICH inheritors, four activity promoters, and 14 international students to supplement qualitative data. Fifth, a quasi-experimental control analysis is used by dividing participants into experimental and control groups and quantitatively comparing the effects of the layered promotion plan against those of the uniform teaching plan.

The innovations of this study are reflected mainly in its research perspective, research content, mechanism construction, and practical transformation. In terms of research perspective, the study moves beyond the existing focus on leading ICH items or degree-seeking international students and instead examines the specific communication scenario of small-scale ICH and zero-beginner non-degree international language students, thereby supplementing empirical research in this field. With regards to research content, it relies on the distinctive craft features of the rolling lantern sachet and first-hand research data to conduct a micro-level adaptability analysis, rather than remaining at the level of broad experiential discussion. Concerning mechanism construction, it proposes a 3D collaborative promotion mechanism of "technical experience–language acquisition–cultural identity" and explains the linkage among technique, language, and culture. Finally, with respect to practical transformation, it designs layered experiential guidelines according to audience cultural circles and provides standardized bilingual communication materials and a long-term operation system to improve the precision and sustainability of international communication for small-scale ICH.

2. Theoretical Foundation and Analytical Framework

2.1 International Communication of ICH Cultural and Creative Products

The lightweight transformation of ICH cultural and creative products serves as a core pathway for overcoming cross-cultural communication barriers in ICH and for enabling local culture to circulate effectively in international contexts; it is also a key research direction in current studies of ICH international communication. From the perspective of cross-cultural communication theory, the lightweight adaptation of cultural symbols can reduce cognitive differences between Chinese and international audiences, diminish cross-cultural communication barriers, and enhance the overseas adaptability of local craftsmanship (Hall, 1966). Regarding audience research, young people are the core audience for cross-border ICH communication. Compared with conventional stage performances, lightweight handicraft cultural and creative products have a lower barrier to entry and are more likely to stimulate participants' willingness to engage hands-on and share on social media (Hu & Zhu, 2025). From the perspective of media empowerment, digital media have broken the temporal and spatial constraints of traditional ICH communication. Lightweight online images, written content, and short videos align with the rhythm of contemporary cross-cultural communication and can improve the limited exposure, fragmented dissemination, and weak influence of small-scale ICH (Xu, 2025). In an empirical study of comparable craft-based cultural and creative products, Yan et al. (2026) examined sachet-type ICH and confirmed that such lightweight cultural and creative products have intuitive forms, globally intelligible folk meanings, and moderate operational difficulty. In a foundational theoretical work on ICH, Wang (2013) emphasized that the revitalized communication of small-scale ICH should adhere to the principles of accessibility, everyday relevance, and public orientation in transformation, thereby providing theoretical support for cultural and creative adaptation and international promotion. Although studies generally recognize the international communication value of lightweight ICH cultural and creative products, specialized

research on the international communication of the Shanghai Fengxian rolling lantern sachet remains absent.

2.2 ICH Cultural Communication for International Students Studying Chinese in China

Experiential ICH teaching is an important extension and supplement to international Chinese language education, as well as an effective carrier for improving the cross-cultural cognitive competence of international students studying Chinese in China and deepening mutual learning between Chinese and international cultures (Shi & Fang, 2025). Regarding teaching practice optimization, the integration of ICH content into courses for international students cannot rely on a single theoretical lecture model; instead, the principle of layered hands-on experience must be implemented to improve teaching effectiveness (Jia & Tang, 2026). Specialized research on zero-beginner Chinese language learners confirms that this group is suited only to low-difficulty, short-cycle ICH experiences that can quickly produce finished works, whereas complex historical explanations and professional technique demonstrations do not match their cognitive rhythm (Wen, 2024). Furthermore, immersive handicraft experience can ease cultural unfamiliarity, deepen learners' cultural memory and emotional connection, and therefore constitutes a high-quality teaching form for international students (Mao, 2025; Gong, 2025). ICH courses for international students must be designed in layers according to Chinese proficiency level to reduce cultural misunderstanding caused by language barriers (Duan, 2023). Nevertheless, existing literature often covers international students as a broad group and has not developed a complete and systematic international communication plan for zero-beginner non-degree language students.

2.3 Studies on the Fengxian Rolling Lantern and Rolling Lantern Sachet Communication

Existing studies on the Fengxian rolling lantern concentrate on three directions: the historical tracing of traditional techniques, local campus teaching, and community-based public popularization. The Shanghai Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center (2023) summarized the technical origins and local inheritance status of the Fengxian rolling lantern, but its scope remains limited to communication within China and does not address international cross-cultural promotion. The official archive of the China Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center (2025) defines the project attributes, craft structure, and inheritance lineage of the Fengxian rolling lantern, but does not discuss lightweight cultural and creative adaptation or international implementation paths. To date, the rolling lantern sachet is used only in small-scale activities in schools and communities. Its craft adaptation logic, its ICH characteristics that distinguish it from ordinary sachets, and its adaptability for zero-beginner international Chinese language students have not yet been systematically examined in academic research.

Taken together, Chinese and international studies suggest that lightweight handicraft cultural and creative products are suitable for cross-border communication scenarios; international Chinese language students studying in China represent a feasible audience; and audience segmentation, hands-on experience, and digital media are three core paths for improving communication effectiveness. Classical cross-cultural and ICH revitalization theories also provide theoretical support (Hall, 1966). However, existing research has three limitations. First, its analytical perspective is relatively macro-level and lacks craft-level analysis of small-scale cultural and creative products supported by first-hand empirical data. Second, audience classification remains rough and tends to overlook the distinctive linguistic and cognitive limitations of zero-beginner non-degree language students. Third, empirical quantitative analysis remains limited, and most conclusions rely on theoretical inference.

2.4 Theoretical Foundation and Analytical Framework

To support the construction of the 3D collaborative promotion system discussed in subsequent sections, this study introduces Kolb's experiential learning theory, Swain's output hypothesis, Schumann's acculturation model, and Hall's cross-cultural symbolism as its analytical foundation. Kolb (1984, pp. 20–40) describes learning as a four-stage process of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. The entire cycle relies on hands-on operation and corresponds to the "learning by doing" logic of handicraft ICH. Specifically, it can be used to deconstruct the learning behavior chain in the weaving process of the rolling lantern sachet: frame weaving corresponds to concrete experience; comparing one's own finished product with the model sample constitutes reflective observation; understanding the stable force-bearing principle of the six-frame structure is abstract conceptualization; and demonstrating the production steps to peers represents active experimentation. Swain (1985, pp. 235–253) argues that language output has three functions: noticing problems, testing hypotheses, and promoting metacognitive reflection. In the context of this study, when making rolling lantern sachets, zero-beginner international Chinese language students use their limited Chinese to describe problems and ask about steps, thereby shifting from passive listening to active language use and aligning with short-term Chinese language learning objectives.

Building on this, Schumann (1978, pp. 27–50) divides the cross-cultural adaptation of foreign learners into four stages: sightseeing, frustration, adjustment, and adaptation. Zero-beginner international Chinese language students are mostly in the early orientation stage, and low-difficulty handicrafts with high completion rates can delay the onset of frustration. When they complete a physical object carrying Chinese cultural symbols by hand, what they gain is not abstract cultural knowledge but a concrete sense of cultural identification expressed as "I can make a Chinese object," which is more effective than purely textual theoretical explanation. Hall (1966, pp. 60–75) proposes that the lightweight adaptation of cultural symbols can reduce cognitive distance, providing the underlying cross-cultural logic for layered interpretation and accessible explanation of symbols in this study. The overall analytical framework of this study is therefore as follows: with these four classical theories as the foundation, it matches the craft characteristics of the rolling lantern sachet with the cognitive, linguistic, and psychological adaptation features of zero-beginner international Chinese language students, and then derives the construction logic of the three-dimensional collaborative system and the layered promotion strategy.

3. Carrier Advantages of the Fengxian Rolling Lantern Sachet in Cross-Cultural Communication

3.1 Technical Origins and Adaptation Logic of the Fengxian Rolling Lantern Sachet

The Fengxian rolling lantern originated in the folk ritual context of the Hangzhou Bay coastal area during the Southern Song dynasty. Integrating traditional dance, folk acrobatics, and ritual practice, it is a highly recognizable local ICH item of the Jiangnan coastal region (Shanghai Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center, 2023). The Fengxian rolling lantern sachet examined in this study is a cultural and creative handicraft adapted from the symmetrical spherical frame and the core warp-and-weft weaving techniques of the national-level ICH item, the Fengxian rolling lantern. It uses environmentally friendly weaving strips and traditional homespun cloth as primary materials, decorated externally with colored silk, Chinese knots, and tassels, and is filled internally with natural mugwort. It combines the practical function of soothing and calming with the folk meaning of blessing and peace. Traditional rolling lanterns use 12 thick bamboo strips to build a double-layer spherical frame; the weaving process is complex, the overall size is large, and the full learning cycle is long. As a result, they are suitable only for stage performances by professional inheritors and cannot meet the

experiential needs of the general public or short-term international learners. To fit public-oriented, lightweight, and international communication scenarios, ICH inheritors preserved the traditional crossing and symmetrical forming techniques of the rolling lantern, simplified the 12 heavy frame strips into six miniature flexible strips, replaced the materials with lighter alternatives, reduced the overall size, and retained Jiangnan folk techniques such as mugwort filling and tassel knot decoration. On the premise of preserving the core ICH technique and blessing meaning, the adaptation greatly simplifies the operational process, lowers the learning threshold, and meets the handicraft experience needs of zero-beginner learners. As shown in Figure 1, the standard large Fengxian rolling lantern used for stage performance presents the original double-layer twelve-bamboo-strip spherical frame; this October 2024 image provides a visual contrast with the adapted six-frame miniature sachet technique discussed below.



Figure 1. Fengxian Rolling Lantern
Note. Reproduced from "Impressive! The National-Level ICH Project 'Rolling Lantern' Appears in CCTV Prime Time," by The Paper Government Affairs, 2024. Retrieved June 5 , 2026, from https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_29024316.

3.2 Core Specialized Techniques and Differentiated Value of the Rolling Lantern Sachet

Compared with mass-produced cloth sachets on the market, the Fengxian rolling lantern sachet has a specialized ICH craft system and clear advantages in cultural recognizability and communication distinctiveness. First, the three-dimensional bamboo-slat frame forming technique uses rigid strips to support a stable, three-dimensional structure, distinguishing it from ordinary sachets that rely only on cloth filling for shaping. Second, the spiral wrapping and covering technique inherits the traditional rolling lantern mounting and wrapping method, with even wrapping intervals and standardized node reinforcement, serving both functions of structural fixation and visual decoration. Third, the double-layer composite structure combines a rigid frame with a flexible inner pouch, creating a crisp form that resists deformation and has greater durability and visual appeal than single-layer cloth sachets. Fourth, the folk filling and decoration technique uses natural mugwort filling together with Chinese knots and tassels to carry the folk significance of peace, smoothness, and family reunion. Collectively, this specialized craft system gives the rolling lantern sachet a distinctive cross-cultural communication identity and fits the overseas-oriented experiential standards of lightweight ICH cultural and creative products.



Figure 2. Standardized Production Process of the Lightweight Adapted Rolling Lantern Sachet
Note. Reproduced from "Craft Display of the Fengxian Rolling Lantern Sachet," by Shanghai Fengxian District People's Government, 2024. Retrieved June 5 , 2026, from https://www.fengxian.gov.cn/gzms/20240604/71024.html.

As shown in Figure 2, the standardized lightweight sachet process consists of frame pre-making, cloth-strip wrapping and shaping, mugwort filling, and Chinese-style accessory assembly; the June 2024 material serves as the operating paradigm used in the practical experience component of this study.

3.3 Audience Characteristics of Zero-Beginner Language Students and Communication Adaptability Analysis

Zero-beginner international Chinese language students studying in China have weak Chinese foundations and limited accumulation of Chinese cultural knowledge. They find it difficult to understand complex ICH theoretical explanations and high-level professional technique demonstrations and are suited only to low-difficulty, visualized, short-cycle lightweight handicraft experience courses (Wen, 2024). Moreover, this young audience is accustomed to sharing daily learning and life experiences through social platforms and therefore has a natural advantage in secondary communication and circle-based diffusion, matching the characteristics of youth participation in cross-border ICH communication (Hu & Zhu, 2025).

This study measures the adaptability of the rolling lantern sachet as a communication carrier across five dimensions (see Table 1). The empirical data show that 93.6% of students regarded the activity as simple or very easy to learn, and the 94.5% pass rate of completed products indicates that it is an experiential carrier with high completion rates and low frustration levels. These data suggest that the rolling lantern sachet strikes a balance between "low threshold" and "cultural density." A displayable and portable finished product can be completed in a single session, while cultural exclamation points such as frame structure, the function of mugwort, and the meaning of the Chinese knot can be naturally embedded in the weaving process. This is the core communication advantage that distinguishes it from purely observation-based ICH projects. As shown in Table 1, the table is based on the author's field questionnaire statistics collected from September 2025 to January 2026, with 128 valid samples from zero-beginner international Chinese language students studying in China, and it quantitatively measures the sachet's overall adaptability in terms of operational safety, difficulty, and cultural carrying capacity.

Table 1. Adaptability Evaluation of the Rolling Lantern Sachet as a Communication Carrier (N = 128)

Evaluation dimension	Indicator	Measured value	Adaptability judgment
Operability	Standard production time per session	72 min (first attempt)	Suitable (can be completed in one session)
Safety	Types of sharp tools required	0	Suitable
Error tolerance	Number of key corrective steps	3	Controllable
Outcome visualization	Completion pass rate	94.5%	High
Cultural interpretability	Number of embeddable cultural knowledge points	6-8	Rich

Note. Data source: field questionnaire statistics collected by the author(s).

3.4 Core Problems in Current Promotion

Based on the literature review and fieldwork data, the international promotion of the rolling lantern sachet for zero-beginner international Chinese language students faces three practical limitations. As noted in the preceding review, common problems in the field, such as insufficient audience segmentation and weak empirical support; this study further refined through first-hand research. First, communication content directly copies versions used for public popularization within China and does not adjust interpretive discourse according to the cultural backgrounds of audiences from different countries,

which can cause cognitive misunderstanding and violate the principle of layered experiential teaching (Jia & Tang, 2026). Second, experience activities emphasize only handicraft operation and lack Chinese-language materials and layered cultural interpretation suited to the zero-beginner level. Consequently, participants remain at a superficial level of manual engagement and cannot simultaneously achieve the three outcomes of technical learning, Chinese language practice, and cultural perception (Li & Chen, 2025). Third, most activities are one-off isolated sessions and lack standardized image-text and video materials, stable scheduling, and long-term operating mechanisms, making it difficult to generate sustained communication momentum through digital media (Xu, 2025).

4. Three-Dimensional Collaborative Promotion System and Differentiated Strategies for Rolling Lantern Sachet Culture

4.1 Construction of the Three-Dimensional Collaborative Promotion System

The 3D collaborative promotion system constructed in this study is a linked communication operational mechanism adapted to the cognitive rhythm of zero-beginner international Chinese language students studying in China. It takes ICH handicraft operation as the foundational support, elementary Chinese as the communicative medium, and positive cross-cultural identification as the ultimate communication goal. Critically, the 3D operates synchronously and empowers one another, addressing the common problem in traditional ICH experiences where technical operation, language communication, and cultural interpretation are disconnected.

Based on the four theoretical frameworks discussed in Section 2.4, the triad of technical experience, language acquisition, and cultural identity forms a stable communication loop of mutual promotion and iterative circulation (see Figure 3).

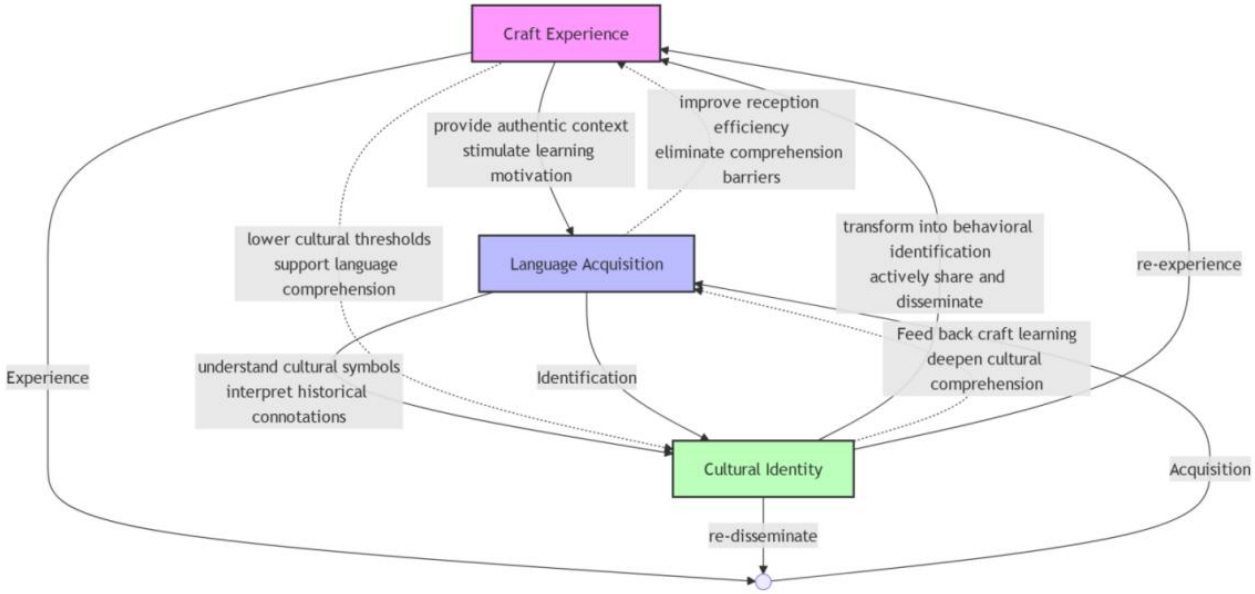


Figure 3. Three-Dimensional Collaborative and Bidirectional Cyclical Communication Logic Model
Note. Created by the author(s).

ICH handicraft operation serves as the foundational support: through standardized and simplified practical procedures, it helps international learners intuitively understand the craft features and production logic of the rolling lantern sachet. Basic language acquisition functions as the communication medium: it precisely matches the Chinese vocabulary, object names, and simple sentence patterns suitable for zero-beginner international Chinese language students and reduces communicative barriers. Cultural identity represents the final endpoint: through hands-on operation and oral

communication, learners perceive the Jiangnan folk meaning of blessing and peace. Together, the synchronous operation of these three dimensions enables multiple gains from a single experience and can improve the superficiality of cognition in single handicraft activities (Mao, 2025; Gong, 2025). As shown in Figure 3, the model was independently constructed by the author based on Kolb, Swain, Schumann, and Hall, and it presents the bidirectional empowerment and iterative circulation among technical experience, language acquisition, and cultural identity as the original analytical framework of this study.

4.2 Cross-Cultural Differentiated Promotion Strategies

Following the concept of layered ICH teaching and incorporating Hall's theory of cross-cultural cognitive difference, differentiated and precise experience plans should be designed for international language learners from different cultural circles.

For learners from the East Asian cultural circle, communication can begin with an emphasis on "cultural commonality." Shared circular aesthetic cognition can be used to establish cultural connections. During the operational stage, emphasis should be placed on fine standards such as uniform size and consistent tassel length, which aligns with this group's behavioral preference for order and standardization. In language guidance, grammatical errors in complete sentences should be corrected, and the use of polite expressions may be appropriately encouraged.

In contrast, for learners from European and North American cultural circles, communication can begin with a focus on "globally shared values" by establishing correspondences between unfamiliar Chinese symbols and locally intelligible concepts, such as associating mugwort with health. In the operational stage, learners should be encouraged to choose colors independently and make small pattern modifications, allowing room for individual creativity. In language communication, mixed expression through a combination of "keywords and body gestures" should be accepted to reduce the pressure of oral expression.

4.3 Specialized Promotion Resources and a Multi-Party Collaborative Promotion Model

To address the lack of specialized materials and insufficient adaptability in the international communication of small-scale ICH, a standardized bilingual resource library suited to zero-beginner international Chinese language students should be established. This library would include a Chinese-English craft illustration manual that breaks down standardized weaving steps with images and text, accompanied by *Pinyin* and simple English notes; concise bilingual cultural cards that summarize key information such as ICH origins, craft features, and folk meanings; and lightweight bilingual introductory videos that compare old and new frame techniques, demonstrate core weaving procedures, and explain cultural meanings in accessible language, thereby serving both online preview and offline classroom scenarios. In addition, a multi-party collaborative promotion model should be built: ICH inheritors are responsible for standardized technique demonstrations and professional explanations; university international Chinese language teachers are responsible for simplifying vocabulary and sentence patterns and adjusting language content to the zero-beginner level; and cultural communication specialists are responsible for cross-cultural interpretation and experience atmosphere guidance. Collectively, this model comprehensively ensures the professionalism, standardization, and adaptability of international communication content.

4.4 Three-Dimensional Communication Channels and Long-Term Safeguard Mechanisms

In line with the core logic of digital ICH international communication, an integrated online–offline three-dimensional communication channel should be established. Offline, universities' second classrooms, general cultural courses, international student exchange festivals, and dedicated ICH experience sessions can be used to normalize rolling lantern sachet weaving experiences and cultural sharing, thereby strengthening offline communication scenarios. Complementing this, online use of mainstream social and short-video platforms in China and abroad can produce and disseminate lightweight bilingual ICH outreach content and production tutorials. Furthermore, inter-university international cooperation channels can support transnational online cultural-sharing livestreams, create lightweight communication topics, and stimulate audiences' voluntary reposting and diffusion (Xu, 2025). Confucius Institutes and overseas partner universities can also be connected through remote online courses, cross-border delivery of material kits, and online one-to-one guidance, enabling normalized cross-time-zone communication of rolling lantern sachet culture. Building on these channels, long-term safeguard mechanisms should be established: implementation teams should regularly receive training in ICH techniques and cross-cultural communication to unify explanation standards; bilingual materials should be continuously updated to match different learning stages; and an audience feedback and effect-evaluation mechanism should be created so that activity forms and content can be optimized according to experience evaluations and communication data, forming an iterative and sustainable normalized communication system.

5. Empirical Study and Effect Analysis

5.1 Research Design and Sample Profile

The research period of this study was from September 2025 to January 2026, and the research sites included the Fengxian rolling lantern inheritance base in Shanghai's Fengxian District and the international education centers of four universities. As defined in this study, zero-beginner international Chinese language students studying in China refers specifically to short-term non-degree international students who have no systematic Chinese-learning experience, lack basic vocabulary and grammar reserves, and have not reached HSK Level 1. Three types of data were collected: a total of 140 questionnaires were distributed; 128 valid samples were obtained (valid response rate: 91.4%); five handicraft experience courses were observed throughout; and semi-structured interviews were conducted with two ICH inheritors, four activity promoters, and 14 participating students, totaling approximately 10 hours. Among the valid samples, 52 students (40.6%) were from East Asian cultural circles, including 30 Korean and 22 Japanese students; 47 students (36.7%) were from European and North American cultural circles; and 29 students (22.7%) were from Southeast Asia and other regions. There were 61 male students (47.7%) and 67 female students (52.3%). To examine the effect of differentiated strategies, the four universities were divided into experimental groups A and B (n = 67) and control groups C and D (n = 61). The former implemented differentiated promotion strategies based on cultural background, whereas the latter adopted uniform, non-layered promotion content and methods. The two groups showed no significant difference in average scores on the HSK Level 1 baseline test (experimental group: 78.3; control group: 76.9; $p > .05$), and no statistically significant differences were found in variables such as length of stay in China and age distribution. The grouping baseline was therefore balanced and comparable.

5.2 Overall Acceptance of the Rolling Lantern Sachet

The questionnaire data (see Table 2) measured audiences' subjective experience, willingness to share, and degree of cultural understanding. The results show that 93.6% of participants regarded the rolling lantern sachet as simple or very easy to learn, and only 3 participants (2.3%) considered it difficult. Notably, interviews indicate that the core factor affecting perceived difficulty was not Chinese proficiency but the logical clarity of

the procedure demonstration. One Russian interviewee stated, "The hardest part was not the language, but that if I missed one step, everything afterward became confused." Classroom observation also showed that when key steps were skipped in the demonstration, students' operational error rates increased significantly, indicating that for zero-beginner language students, "logical inferability" is more important than "language comprehensibility." Furthermore, 96.5% of participants were willing to share their work on social platforms, and 61.2% expressed a very positive attitude. Shared content mainly consisted of photos of finished products (88%), but also included short videos of the production process (42%), photos of people with their works (36%), and written explanations of cultural meanings (12%). The latter two types of deeper sharing all came from the experimental-group samples, suggesting that the layered plan is more likely to stimulate deeper expressions of cultural identification. Moreover, in addition, 83.5% of participants hoped to experience more Chinese traditional handicrafts, indicating that the rolling lantern sachet experience has an "entry effect;" a single successful experience can increase learners' willingness to participate in other ICH activities subsequently. As shown in Table 2, the data were drawn from the author's field questionnaire survey conducted from September 2025 to January 2026 with 128 participants, and the table reports audiences' subjective experience, willingness to share, and degree of cultural understanding.

Table 2. Acceptance of the Rolling Lantern Sachet Experience among Zero-Beginner International Chinese Language Students (N = 128)

Survey item	Proportion of positive responses
Perceived the production process as simple and easy to learn	93.6%
Willing to use the finished work as a gift/souvenir	90.4%
Hoped to participate in more Chinese handicraft ICH experiences	83.5%
Could fully and accurately understand its core folk meaning	80.7%
Willing to share their work and experience on social media	96.5%

Note. Data source: field questionnaire survey conducted by the author(s).

5.3 Effects of the Differentiated Strategy

Table 3 verifies the actual communication gains of the cross-cultural layered plan. The data found that the overall cultural-symbol recognition rate of the experimental group was 88.1%, which was 22.3 percentage points higher than that of the control group (65.8%; $\chi^2 = 9.87$, $p < .01$), indicating that the layered plan had a statistically significant advantage. Among students from the East Asian cultural circle, the proportion of experimental-group participants who answered all 3 meanings correctly—"circle = reunion," "Chinese knot = auspiciousness," and "mugwort = health"—was 85.2%, compared with 68.5% in the control group. One Korean student in the experimental group noted that the teacher explained that the circular form represents "completeness" in Chinese culture and connected it with the round-table experience in Korean weddings, whereas many control-group students retained only the vague memory that "a circle means good." By contrast, the difference was even more pronounced among learners from European and North American cultural circles: the proportion of experimental-group students who answered all 3 meanings correctly was 92.3%, compared with only 57.1% in the control group. One German student translated "circle, Chinese knot, and mugwort" into "eternity, knot of unity, and herbal protection," respectively, suggesting that layered explanation encouraged learners to complete cross-cultural translation through their own cultural frameworks. As shown in Table 3, the quasi-experimental comparison included 67 participants in the experimental group and 61 participants in the control group (N = 128) during September 2025–January 2026; the χ^2 test yielded $p < .01$, confirming the statistically significant advantage of the layered strategy.

Table 3. Comparison of the Implementation Effects of Differentiated Promotion Strategies (N = 128)

Indicator	Experimental group (layered differentiated plan)	Control group (uniform non-layered plan)	Difference
Accuracy of complete understanding of cultural meanings	88.1%	65.8%	+22.3%
Proportion highly satisfied with learning	67.2%	49.2%	+18.0%
Proportion willing to explain proactively to others	83.6%	65.6%	+18.0%
Proportion willing to share on social media	98.5%	93.4%	+5.1%

Note. Data source: field questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews conducted by the author(s).

5.4 Comprehensive Analysis

The quantitative data confirm that the lightweight adapted rolling lantern sachet technique fully matches the practical ability and cultural experience needs of zero-beginner international Chinese language students. The simple and clear operational process, safe and risk-free production form, and high completion rate of finished products greatly reduce the frustration of zero-beginner students. As a result, most students can independently complete the entire production process and gain a strong sense of achievement, thereby addressing the limitations of traditional ICH experiences, which often have great difficulty and cause frustration among novice audiences.

Furthermore, the layered communication strategy, combined with the three-dimensional collaborative promotion mechanism, shows stable and reliable implementation effects. Compared with the traditional "one-size-fits-all" teaching model, layered explanation according to cultural circles better fits the cognitive habits of different groups and improves audiences' depth of understanding and acceptance of the ICH technique and folk meanings of the rolling lantern sachet. The synchronous advancement of technique, language, and identity not only facilitates the lightweight living transmission of ICH but also improves students' practical use of Chinese on site and strengthens their sense of identification with and closeness to Jiangnan small-scale ICH culture.

In addition, the rolling lantern sachet's small size, portability, attractive form, and positive meaning strongly stimulate students' motivation to share on social media. Most students are willing to share the finished product and the experience process through social media, creating positive word-of-mouth and secondary communication effects, expanding the overseas exposure of small-scale ICH, and alleviating the field-wide problems of weak communication strength and insufficient long-term sustainability.

6. Conclusion

This study selected Fengxian rolling lantern sachet culture as its object of analysis and addressed the practical problem that small-scale ICH has weak cross-cultural adaptability and lacks a mature communication plan for zero-beginner international Chinese language students in China. It combined literature review, field visits, questionnaire surveys, semi-structured interviews with inheritors, and quasi-experimental control analysis, and conducted quantitative analysis using a sample of 128 zero-beginner international Chinese language students from four Shanghai universities. The study objectively tested the adaptability of the lightweight adapted rolling lantern sachet in international experiential scenarios and the effectiveness of the promotion mechanism.

Results show that after simplifying the structure to six frames and adopting lightweight materials, the sachet production process and difficulty matched the manual ability and cognitive rhythm of zero-beginner learners. Importantly, the layered explanation model designed according to audiences' cultural circles, combined with the three-dimensional collaborative framework of technical experience–language

acquisition–cultural identity, can effectively improve international learners' recognition of the visual symbols of rolling lantern ICH, classroom oral-expression initiative, and willingness to share on social platforms. The plan shows stable implementation effects.

At the theoretical level, this study supplements the research gap concerning the communication of small-scale ICH cultural and creative products to zero-beginner international Chinese language students. It refines the application boundaries of audience segmentation theory in overseas-oriented ICH teaching scenarios and, drawing on Kolb's experiential learning theory, Swain's output hypothesis, Schumann's acculturation model, and Hall's cross-cultural theory, constructs a logical chain suitable for ICH experiential learning communication. In doing so, it expands research at the intersection of international Chinese language education and ICH cultural communication. At the practical level, the adapted rolling lantern sachet, with its low operational threshold and intelligible folk meanings, is suitable as a communicative carrier for small-scale ICH international communication. The lightweight promotion process has clear steps and replicability and can provide an operational model for overseas experiential courses and international cultural exchange activities involving similar Jiangnan handicraft ICH products.

Nevertheless, this study has limitations. The sample was limited to universities in Shanghai, and the national and cultural composition of participants was not sufficiently diverse. The data recorded only the effects of a single short-term experience and did not allow long-term tracking of changes in learners' cultural attitudes or autonomous overseas communication behavior. Future research may expand geographical scope and country-based sample size, integrate audience feedback from multiple regions, optimize layered teaching and operational explanations, and develop digital and immersive bilingual introductory materials, thereby improving the lightweight, precise, and sustainable cross-border cultural communication of small-scale Jiangnan ICH.

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