

“World Visibility” and Art Curricula: Cross-Cultural Teaching Strategies for Symbols of Chinese Civilization in Foreign Languages Universities

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ABSTRACT

Building a system of symbols of Chinese civilization is an important component of the national cultural strategy in the new era, and "world visibility" is the key proposition through which this system moves from domestic construction to cross-cultural communication. Art curricula in foreign languages universities stand at the intersection of "image-taking" (quxiang) cognition and "image-making" (zaoxiang) practice, as well as of local cultural rootedness and cross-cultural translation, and thus possess unique value as a teaching field. However, current research has mostly focused on the theoretical construction of the symbol system and macro-level strategies for its international communication, while the dimension of teaching practice—art curricula as a generative mechanism of "world visibility"—remains largely unexplored. Taking the five principles of "image-taking" proposed by Zhang Jiemo—life continuity indicated by molting and rebirth, the priority of space and vision, embodied images of paired opposites, cyclical advance, and auspicious images—as its methodological basis, and drawing on Zeng Jun's problem consciousness of "world visibility," this paper uses the public art curriculum at Zhejiang Yuexiu University of Foreign Languages as its practical field and proposes a three-stage progressive cross-cultural teaching strategy of "image-taking—translation—image-making." The first stage, "image-taking," guides students to identify the visual logic and cultural connotations of symbols of Chinese civilization; the second stage, "translation," relies on the multilingual ecology of foreign languages universities to train students in the cross-cultural semantic conversion of these symbols; the third stage, "image-making," accomplishes the creative reconstruction of civilizational symbols within the context of contemporary public art. Teaching practice shows that this strategy effectively deepens students' cultural cognition of civilizational symbols and enhances their cross-cultural expressive competence, providing an operable practical path for teaching symbols of Chinese civilization in public art curricula at foreign languages universities.

KEYWORDS: cross-cultural teaching; foreign languages universities; image-taking (quxiang); public art curriculum; symbols of Chinese civilization; world visibility

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background and Statement of the Problem

In 2024, the Third Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China incorporated "building a system of symbols of Chinese civilization" into the strategic deployment for deepening the reform of cultural institutions and mechanisms, marking the elevation of this proposition from academic advocacy to a national cultural strategic project. General Secretary Xi Jinping once called for the spiritual symbols of fine traditional Chinese culture to be "distilled and presented," where "distillation" concerns the selection and interpretation of symbols and "presentation" concerns their communication and reception. Existing research has devoted considerable effort to the former, offering systematic interpretations at the levels of spiritual symbols, symbolic representation, and material civilizational symbols, but discussion of the latter—especially how symbols acquire cross-cultural cognitive validity across linguistic and cultural boundaries—remains insufficient. It is precisely against this background that Professor Zeng Jun, in the special issue on "Building a System of Symbols of Chinese Civilization" published in *Cultural Arts Research* (No. 6, 2024), put forward the proposition of "world visibility," noting that building a system of symbols of Chinese civilization with world visibility has become a matter of urgency. In the same special issue, Professor Zhang Jiemo published "On the Principles of Image-Taking in Building a 'System of Symbols of Chinese Civilization,'" defining the core work of building the symbol system as "image-taking." The two papers form a thought-provoking theoretical contrast: "image-taking" concerns where symbols come from and by what visual logic

they are constructed, while "world visibility" concerns where symbols go and how they acquire cognitive life in cross-cultural contexts. The former is visual construction within a civilization; the latter is visual communication between civilizations. Placing this tension in the educational field brings a question worth pursuing to the surface: can art curricula serve as a pedagogical medium connecting "image-taking" and "world visibility"? And when such a curriculum is offered at a foreign languages university, facing a student body with multilingual competence and cross-cultural experience, does a unique pedagogical coupling arise between "image-taking" and "world visibility"? The public art curriculum at Zhejiang Yuexiu University of Foreign Languages happens to occupy a position where theoretical resources and the practical field highly overlap: Zhang Jiemo's theory of "image-taking" originated in this university's academic environment, and the pedagogical transformation of "world visibility" can be directly experimented with in this university's classrooms. This close-range coupling of "theory and practice" provides rare conditions for a case study.

1.2 State of Research and Theoretical Gap

Research on symbols of Chinese civilization has in recent years shown a trend of differentiating from macro-level system construction toward concrete communication paths. At the level of system construction, scholars have offered systematic interpretations across multiple dimensions—spiritual symbols, symbolic representation, material civilizational symbols, and intangible civilizational symbols. Zhang Jiemo's five principles of "image-taking"—life continuity indicated by molting and rebirth, the priority of space and vision over time and hearing, embodied images of paired opposites as the framework, cyclical advance as the system, and auspicious images as the value—have further transformed abstract cultural connotations into operable categories of visual analysis, turning "symbols of Chinese civilization" from a policy concept into a research object amenable to aesthetic analysis. At the level of communication and reception, however, progress has clearly lagged. Zeng Jun's proposition of "world visibility" precisely identifies the core of the problem, but it currently remains largely at the stage of theoretical advocacy, lacking systematic empirical research to answer the mechanism-level question of "how visibility is generated." The mechanism of "visibility breakthrough" proposed in cross-cultural communication research is illuminating, but its object of analysis is digital media communication rather than teaching practice in the educational field. Cross-disciplinary research on art education and symbols of Chinese civilization has mainly focused on integration at the level of curriculum content and exploration at the level of aesthetic-education immersion: the former mostly remains in the mode of practice reports of "teaching content + teaching methods," while the latter mostly concerns local intangible cultural heritage and seldom touches upon the systematically constructed "symbols of Chinese civilization" or the proposition of cross-cultural teaching at foreign languages universities. Cross-cultural art education at foreign languages universities has accumulated considerable experience—for example, the "Telling Chinese Culture in Foreign Languages" series of courses at Jilin International Studies University and the "Painting-Eye Travel Notes" public art practice course at Zhejiang Foreign Studies University—but the presentation of such research is mostly institutional-level experience reports or course-construction reports, and practice has not yet been elevated into research with consciousness of theoretical propositions. In short, existing research has answered "what we have done" but not yet "what theoretical questions our practice reveals." If "image-taking" is regarded as the cognitive entry point of symbol teaching and "world visibility" as the target exit, then art curricula in foreign languages universities stand precisely in the pedagogical passage between the two—a passage whose teaching logic has yet to receive a systematic response.

1.3 Definition of Core Concepts

This study involves three core concepts. Symbols of Chinese civilization refer to the concretized signs of Chinese civilization, possessing perceptible visuality, civilizational distinctiveness, and historical verifiability; in this study they refer mainly to symbol-objects with visual identifiability and cultural interpretability, such as jade dragons, jade cong tubes, monumental bronze vessels, and fish-and-bird imagery. Image-taking (*quxiang*) is Zhang Jiemo's definition of the core work of building the system of symbols of Chinese civilization: organizing the cognition of the world through a paradigm that prioritizes the visual and the spatial, constructing meaning through relations of "analogizing images" (*bixiang*), and possessing an embodied character. In the teaching context of this study, image-taking refers to the cognitive process through which students identify and interpret the visual logic and cultural connotations of civilizational symbol-objects via museum fieldwork, image analysis, and literature study. World visibility is the proposition proposed by Zeng Jun, referring to the way symbols of Chinese civilization attain a visible and understandable mode of existence in cross-cultural contexts—that is, the capacity of a symbol to acquire meaning within a heterocultural cognitive framework. In this study it denotes both the goal pursued by teaching and the analytical framework for the cognitive transformation from "domestic image-taking" to "being seen cross-culturally."

1.4 Research Questions and Structure of the Paper

Based on the above background and conceptual framework, the core question of this study is: how can public art curricula in foreign languages universities, through cross-cultural teaching strategies, move symbols of Chinese civilization from the domestic construction of "image-taking" to the cross-cultural generation of "world visibility"? This core question unfolds into three sub-questions. First, how can Zhang Jiemo's five principles of image-taking be transformed into a teaching methodology for public art curricula— which principles are directly operable in teaching, and which require further pedagogical adaptation? Second, how does the multilingual ecology of foreign languages universities affect the teaching logic of symbols of Chinese civilization—what cognitive tensions do students face when translating the connotations of symbols cross-culturally, and how can these tensions be turned into teaching resources? Third, in the cognitive journey from "image-taking" to "image-making," what kind of cultural understanding do students acquire, and does and how does the acquisition of these competencies respond to the theoretical proposition of "world visibility"? The subsequent chapters are arranged as follows: Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical framework, systematically expounding the aesthetic connotations of the five principles of image-taking, the problem consciousness of world visibility, and the theoretical foundations of cross-cultural art education; Chapter 3 presents the research methods and the three-stage "image-taking—translation—image-making" curriculum design; Chapter 4 analyzes the process and outcomes of teaching practice; Chapter 5 offers a theoretical interpretation from the perspective of the generative mechanism of "world visibility"; and Chapter 6 summarizes the contributions of the study, discusses its limitations, and proposes directions for future research.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Aesthetic Connotations of the "Image-Taking" Principles and Their Pedagogical Transformation Potential

Zhang Jiemo defines the core work of building the system of symbols of Chinese civilization as "image-taking," noting that it is a systematic cultural project of self-evident significance for implementing the "Second Integration." This definition transforms "symbols of Chinese civilization" from a policy concept into a research object amenable to aesthetic analysis. Zhang Jiemo emphasizes that Chinese civilization has continued through uninterrupted rebirth: "the civilizational symbol-objects we have acquired and cherished are not period-bound to any single dynasty but transcend all dynasties." This judgment constitutes the aesthetic premise of the image-taking project: the legitimacy of a symbol derives not from the endorsement of any particular dynasty's power but from the visual experience repeatedly confirmed by the civilization over its long history. The image-taking project follows five principles: the continuity of life and history indicated by molting and rebirth; the priority of space and vision over time and hearing; embodied images of paired opposites as the framework; cyclical advance as the system; and auspicious images as the value. The five principles are not a parallel checklist but form a progressively layered cognitive structure: molting and rebirth provides the ontological foundation, the priority of space and vision establishes the perceptual modality, embodied images of paired opposites supply the formal law, cyclical advance prescribes the temporal logic, and auspicious images calibrate the value orientation.

This system of principles has a twofold significance for art curriculum teaching. On the one hand, it provides criteria for selecting curriculum content: not all traditional art forms are equally suitable for entering teaching as civilizational symbols; only works that visually carry the above principles—such as the paired fish-and-bird combinations on the red pottery gourd-shaped bottle from the Jiangzhai site, or the spatial counterpoint of "round heaven and square earth" on the Liangzhu jade cong—qualify as teaching objects. On the other hand, the principles of "embodied images of paired opposites" and "priority of space and vision" share a natural affinity with the methodology of visual art teaching. Zhang Jiemo notes that "image-taking from opposite poles is a balance between forces, not one devouring, overwhelming, or annihilating the other," and that "rotation is not unipolar self-rotation but alternation and transformation between two poles." This bodily grasp of visual relations is precisely the core training content of artistic creation teaching. In other words, the five principles of image-taking are not a theoretical appendage external to the art curriculum but a cognitive framework the curriculum can employ endogenously. Such employment, however, requires pedagogical adaptation: principles in aesthetic theory are descriptive, whereas principles in teaching must be operative. How to transform the principles of image-taking into teachable, practicable, and assessable teaching steps is the core methodological problem this study must solve.

2.2 The Problem Consciousness of "World Visibility" and Its Call to Art Education

If image-taking addresses where symbols "come from," world visibility addresses where symbols "go." Zeng Jun argues that, against the international backdrop in which globalization and deglobalization are intricately intertwined, building a system of symbols of Chinese civilization with world visibility has become a matter of urgency. The theoretical edge of this proposition lies in pushing the construction of the symbol system from the single dimension of "self-confirmation" to the double dimension of "cross-cultural confirmation." That a symbol possesses full interpretive force within its own civilization does not automatically mean it can acquire meaning within a heterocultural cognitive framework. Visibility here is not simply "being seen" but the capacity of a symbol to be "understood" within the cognitive grammar of another culture. This proposition places a demand on art education that has not yet been fully answered: art curricula cannot merely teach students to "recognize" symbols of Chinese civilization; they must also teach students to "translate" these symbols—converting the cultural connotations of the symbols from the interpretive framework of the native culture into a framework of cross-cultural communication. This demand resonates meaningfully with the teaching reality of foreign languages universities. Students at such universities are naturally situated at the junction of two or more linguistic and cultural systems, and their cognitive habits already include a "translation" dimension. When such students confront symbols of Chinese civilization, questions like "how to explain the meaning of a jade cong to someone who does not know Chinese" or "how to make audiences from different civilizational backgrounds feel the aesthetic logic of 'opposite poles' in the fish-and-bird image-taking" are not hypothetical academic exercises for them but questions with genuine cognitive urgency.

2.3 Theoretical Resources of Cross-Cultural Art Education and the Concept of the "Third Space"

In research on cross-cultural art education, Homi Bhabha's concept of the "third space" and Claire Kramsch's model of the "third position" constitute the core theoretical resources. Bhabha notes that communication between cultures constructs meaning through signs, that the construction of cultural meaning always takes place in the process of cultural translation, and that "there can be no culture that is isolated and self-sufficient." Cultural translation occurs in the third space: "the third space is a productive and creative space in which new cultural meanings arise after cultural collision," and this space "can form a buffer" so that between cultures there are "no absolutely irreconcilable contradictions." Kramsch introduces the "third position" into the field of foreign language teaching, proposing that foreign language learners should be guided into a third cultural space that "belongs neither to native speakers nor to the students themselves," with the core educational goal of "liberating learners' minds from cultural stereotypes and prejudices." This theoretical lineage has direct implications for the artistic teaching of symbols of Chinese civilization. If image-taking is regarded as the aesthetic construction of symbols within the native culture and world visibility as their cognitive pursuit in cross-cultural contexts, then the concept of the third space provides precisely the theoretical tool for understanding the pedagogical passage between the two. The art classroom at a foreign languages university is itself a real instance of a third space—the materiality and visual logic of symbols of Chinese civilization (the product of image-taking) meet, collide, and negotiate here with the cross-cultural cognitive habits of multilingual students (the condition of world visibility). According to Bhabha's theory, this encounter will not simply lead to the binary outcome of "symbols correctly transmitted" or "symbols misunderstood," but will produce "tendencies both of mutual resistance and of mutual fusion," generating "a seemingly new cultural variant." This theoretical prediction poses a question for teaching research that requires an empirical answer: in art classrooms at foreign languages universities, what process of meaning generation do symbols of Chinese civilization actually undergo in students' practices of cross-cultural translation? Is the authenticity of the symbols lost in translation, or is the "new cultural meaning" anticipated by Bhabha generated?

2.4 The Specificity of Foreign Languages Universities as a Field of Public Art Teaching

Existing discussions of cross-cultural art education have focused mainly on the field of language teaching or on general frameworks of liberal-arts aesthetic education, and have seldom examined the unique mechanisms of art curricula at foreign languages universities as a "field of inter-cultural practice." Although Bhabha's third space theory provides an analytical tool for understanding cross-cultural cognitive processes, its contexts of application have mostly been postcolonial literature and language teaching, and it has not yet been systematically introduced into teaching research on public art curricula. Kramsch's third position model is likewise prototyped on language teaching; its core concern is "learning culture through language" rather than "understanding civilizational symbols through artistic creation." The difference in cognitive modality between artistic creation and language learning—the former operates in an embodied, visual, and material way, the latter in a symbolic, linguistic, and abstract way—means that the application of these theories in the field of art education needs to be re-examined and adjusted. At the same time, although the existing practical experience of art curricula at foreign languages universities is considerable, the way such research is presented limits the generation of theoretical contributions. Jilin International Studies University, relying on its "Global Village"

platform, offers the "Telling Chinese Culture in Foreign Languages" series of courses, in which students explain Peking Opera facial makeup in German and introduce traditional Chinese acupuncture in Japanese; Zhejiang Foreign Studies University has launched the "Painting-Eye Travel Notes" public art practice course; and faculty and students of Dalian University of Foreign Languages participated in painting the "Locust Blossom Welcome Avenue," intervening in urban public space with "an artistic language integrating natural aesthetics, regional culture, and an international perspective." These practices show that foreign languages universities have formed a distinctive model of cross-cultural art education different from that of comprehensive universities, but the focus of their academic presentation remains "what we have done," and practice has not yet been elevated into a systematic response to the theoretical proposition of "why and how foreign languages universities constitute a special field for teaching civilizational symbols."

2.5 Theoretical Integration: Proposing an Analytical Framework

Integrating the above theoretical resources, this study proposes the following analytical framework. The five principles of image-taking provide the cognitive framework for teaching design and analysis, prescribing the visual cognitive logic of symbols of Chinese civilization and offering criteria for judging "what content is worth teaching" in art curricula. The proposition of world visibility provides the goal framework, prescribing the directional pursuit of art curricula in the cross-cultural dimension: students must not only "recognize images" within the native cognitive framework but also "make images seen" within the framework of cross-cultural communication. Third space theory provides the process framework, explaining how, in multilingual classrooms at foreign languages universities, the cross-cultural translation of civilizational symbols can generate new meaning rather than simply replicating or eroding the original meaning. The three frameworks are not parallel but progressive: the principles of image-taking prescribe the logic of teaching content (what to learn), third space theory describes the mechanism of the teaching process (how to learn), and world visibility sets the value direction of teaching (why to learn). The concrete operationalization of this integrated framework needs to be tested in the three-stage teaching strategy of "image-taking—translation—image-making," which is precisely the curriculum design work to be developed in the next chapter.

3. RESEARCH METHODS AND CURRICULUM DESIGN

3.1 Research Design and Case Selection

This study adopts a qualitative case study method, taking the public art curriculum at Zhejiang Yuexiu University of Foreign Languages as a single case for in-depth examination. The choice of case study over quantitative research is based on the following considerations: the core question of this study—how public art curricula at foreign languages universities move symbols of Chinese civilization from image-taking to world visibility through cross-cultural teaching strategies—concerns the concrete mechanisms of students' cognitive change and the process of meaning generation in teaching, which requires deep understanding rather than broad statistics. The strength of case study lies precisely in its ability to provide thick description of complex phenomena in specific situations, revealing causal mechanisms at the level of "how" and "why" rather than merely answering distributional features at the level of "what." The case was selected on three grounds. First, institutional uniqueness. Zhejiang Yuexiu University of Foreign Languages is an undergraduate institution distinguished by foreign language teaching; its student body possesses multilingual competence and cross-cultural experience, providing a natural field for the cross-cultural teaching of civilizational symbols. Second, the overlap of theoretical resources and the practical field. Professor Zhang Jiemo teaches at this university, his theory of image-taking originated directly in this academic environment, and the teaching experiment of this study can be carried out directly in the same field, forming a close-range dialogue between theory and practice. Third, curricular institutional support. The university's public art curriculum is incorporated into the talent-training program as a restricted elective, covering three categories of courses—aesthetics and art history, art appreciation and criticism, and art experience and practice—providing an institutionalized teaching space for this study.

3.2 Research Field and Participants

The research field is the public art practice course offered by the Public Art Department of the School of Arts at Zhejiang Yuexiu University of Foreign Languages. The course runs for one semester, with two class hours per week. Participating students come from various foreign language majors at the university, including English, Japanese, German, French, and Spanish; two teaching classes were selected as the research sample. None of the students had previously received systematic instruction related to symbols of Chinese civilization, but their foreign language learning experience gives them a basic cognition of cross-cultural communication. The course was taught by the researcher herself/himself as the lead instructor, who assumed the dual roles of researcher and teacher during the teaching process. This dual identity facilitates an in-depth understanding of the teaching

scene, but possible researcher bias needed to be balanced through cross-validation of students' reflective journals and interview data.

3.3 Curriculum Design Framework: The Three-Stage Teaching Strategy of "Image-Taking—Translation—Image-Making"

The core logic of the curriculum design is to transform Zhang Jiemo's five principles of image-taking from aesthetic theory into operable teaching steps, while embedding the multilingual ecology of foreign languages universities in order to respond to the proposition of world visibility. The design of the three-stage strategy follows a logic of cognitive progression: from recognition to conversion to creation, with each stage corresponding to specific dimensions of the image-taking principles.

The first stage, "image-taking," corresponds to the two principles of "priority of space and vision" and "embodied images of paired opposites." The teaching goal is to enable students to identify and interpret the visual logic and cultural connotations of symbol-objects of Chinese civilization. Teaching activities comprise three components: museum fieldwork, image analysis workshops, and literature study. In the museum fieldwork, students visit the Zhejiang Provincial Museum and the Liangzhu Museum, focusing on the visual forms and spatial relations of symbol-objects such as jade cong tubes, jade bi discs, and monumental bronze vessels. In the image analysis workshops, students take the fish-and-bird combination imagery on the red pottery gourd-shaped bottle from the Jiangzhai site as their object of analysis, applying the principle of "images of paired opposites" to interpret its visual structure: how the pairing of fish and birds embodies the balance of forces in "image-taking from opposite poles," and how the rotational composition embodies "alternation and transformation between two poles." The core training goal of this stage is to move students from "seeing" to "recognizing"—that is, from intuitive perception to a structural understanding of visual logic.

The second stage, "translation," corresponds to cross-cultural cognitive conversion and is the key component that distinguishes art curricula at foreign languages universities from comparable courses at comprehensive universities. The teaching goal is to train students to convert the cultural connotations of civilizational symbols from the native interpretive framework into a framework of cross-cultural communication. Teaching activities include multilingual symbol-interpretation writing and cross-cultural visual translation exercises. In the multilingual interpretation writing, students select a symbol-object, write an interpretation of its cultural connotations in Chinese, then translate it into their studied foreign language, comparing the semantic differences and rhetorical strategies of the two languages in expressing the same visual logic. In the visual translation exercises, students use no written language at all, conveying the core connotations of the symbol to non-native-culture audiences solely through visual means (such as compositional contrast, color relations, and material choice). The training goal of this stage is to make students aware that the cross-cultural transmission of symbols is not merely a problem of linguistic conversion but, more fundamentally, a problem of converting visual cognitive frameworks.

The third stage, "image-making," corresponds to the two principles of "cyclical advance" and "auspicious images" and constitutes the advanced component of the teaching. The goal is to guide students in the creative reconstruction of symbols of Chinese civilization within the context of public art. The teaching activity is a public art creation project, in which students work in groups to complete a public artwork required to both carry the visual genes of civilizational symbols and respond to the contextual demands of cross-cultural communication. The creation process includes four components: project design, mid-term presentation, artwork production, and public exhibition. The assessment criteria do not pursue faithful replication of traditional symbols but focus on students' ability to balance "inheritance" and "innovation": whether the work preserves the core visual logic of the symbol, whether it endows the symbol with new modes of presentation in the context of contemporary public art, and whether it takes into account the cognitive reception of cross-cultural audiences.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection employed multiple methods, including student artwork archives, reflective journals, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observation records. The student artwork archives collect all creative outputs of each student throughout the three-stage teaching process, including museum fieldwork notes, image analysis assignments, multilingual interpretive texts, visual translation exercises, and public art creation proposals together with photographs of finished works. Reflective journals required students to write learning reflections at the end of each teaching stage, recording cognitive changes, difficulties encountered, and key experiences in cross-cultural translation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted after the course ended: twelve students were selected from the two teaching classes for in-depth interviews of about thirty minutes each, centered on image-taking cognition, cross-cultural translation experience, and meaning negotiation in the

creation process. Classroom observation records were completed synchronously by the researcher during teaching, focusing on students' immediate reactions, key viewpoints in discussions, and decision points in the creation process.

Data analysis adopted Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, proceeding in six steps: familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing the analysis report. The coding process employed both deductive and inductive strategies: deductive coding set initial categories based on the five principles of image-taking and third space theory, while inductive coding allowed new meaning units to emerge from the data. Two researchers coded independently and then compared results; discrepant codes were discussed and negotiated to ensure the trustworthiness of the analysis. A limitation of the study is that the external validity of a single case is limited, and the transferability of the findings needs to be tested through subsequent cross-institutional comparative research.

4. ANALYSIS OF TEACHING PRACTICE

4.1 Stage One, "Image-Taking": From Object Cognition to Visual-Logic Cognition

The core goal of first-stage teaching was to move students from intuitive perception to a structural understanding of the visual logic of civilizational symbols. Teaching practice shows that students underwent a cognitive shift from "seeing objects" to "recognizing images." In the museum fieldwork, most students initially regarded symbol-objects such as jade cong tubes and jade bi discs as isolated "cultural relics," attending to their dates, materials, and craftsmanship without yet touching analysis at the level of visual logic. Through the guidance of the image analysis workshops, students began to re-examine these symbol-objects using the principle of the "priority of space and vision." One student wrote in a reflective journal: "Before, when I looked at a jade cong, I only thought it was an exquisite ancient object. When I tried to understand it through the spatial counterpoint of 'round heaven and square earth,' I realized that its very form is a visual statement about cosmic order." This shift corroborates Zhang Jiemo's discussion of the principle of "priority of space and vision": the key to recognizing images lies in grasping the spatial structure of the symbol-object rather than its function as an artifact. In the analysis of the fish-and-bird combination imagery, students attained a bodily understanding of "image-taking from opposite poles" through the principle of "embodied images of paired opposites." The teaching required students to simulate the counterposed relation of fish and birds through gestures and bodily postures, grasping "the balance between forces" through bodily perception. One student described: "When I used my two hands to represent the fish and the bird respectively and performed the movement of 'alternating transformation,' I truly understood what 'rotation is not unipolar self-rotation but alternation between two poles' means. This understanding is not conceptual—it is remembered by the body." This shows that embodied cognition has unique pedagogical efficacy in art curricula, giving abstract visual principles a perceivable and practicable teaching form.

4.2 Stage Two, "Translation": Cross-Cultural Semantic Conversion in a Multilingual Ecology

Second-stage teaching is the key component distinguishing public art curricula at foreign languages universities from comparable courses at comprehensive universities. In the multilingual interpretation writing, students translated the cultural connotations of symbol-objects from Chinese into their studied foreign languages, a process that exposed deep tensions in cross-cultural semantic conversion. Taking the jade cong as an example, when students attempted to interpret the cosmology of "round heaven and square earth" in English, Japanese, German, and other languages, they commonly encountered the difficulty that "round" and "square" lack corresponding aesthetic categories in the target language. One Japanese-major student found that although the Japanese words maru (round) and shikaku (square) can literally translate "round" and "square," they cannot convey the cosmological connotations contained in the counterposed relation of "heaven" and "earth." She wrote in her reflection: "When I tried to explain the jade cong to my Japanese classmates, I found that if I only said 'the round stands for heaven and the square for earth,' they could understand it only as a geometric metaphor, unable to feel that this is a holistic visual statement about world order." This difficulty reveals precisely the core of the proposition of "world visibility": the capacity of a symbol to acquire meaning within a heterocultural cognitive framework is constrained by whether the target culture possesses cognitive categories capable of docking with it. The visual translation exercises offered another path. When students were required to convey the core connotations of symbols to non-native-culture audiences without written language, using only visual means, most chose to convert the relation of "paired opposites" into symmetry and tension within composition, and "cyclical advance" into repetition and variation within visual rhythm. One student created a set of posters based on the fish-and-bird combination, conveying the aesthetic logic of "image-taking from opposite poles" through warm-cool color contrast and alternating rotation of forms. He wrote in his artist statement: "If I cannot explain in words what 'paired opposites' is, then let the audience's eyes feel it directly." This strategy tacitly accords with the mechanism of meaning generation anticipated by Bhabha's "third space" theory: cultural

translation happens not only at the linguistic level but even more in the reorganization of visual forms, and new cultural meaning is generated precisely in such reorganization.

4.3 Stage Three, "Image-Making": Creative Reconstruction in the Context of Public Art

Third-stage teaching required students, working in groups, to complete a public artwork that creatively reconstructs symbols of Chinese civilization in a contemporary context. Teaching practice showed that students' balancing strategies between "inheritance" and "innovation" presented three typical patterns. The first is the "formal transplantation" pattern, in which students directly convert the visual form of the symbol-object into the modeling language of a public artwork, such as designing a campus landscape installation based on the square-cylindrical form of the jade cong. The second is the "logical transposition" pattern, in which students extract the visual organizing logic of the symbol-object rather than its concrete form and apply it in a new creative context. For example, one group designed a set of kinetic sculptures based on the "counterposition—rotation" logic of the fish-and-bird combination, making two forms alternately rotate in space and serve as backgrounds for each other, presenting the visual principle of "image-taking from opposite poles" in the language of contemporary materials. The third is the "problem-response" pattern, in which students respond to contemporary public issues with the cosmology and values carried by civilizational symbols. One group, taking the principle of "cyclical advance" as its starting point, created an installation on campus sustainability, converting "cyclicity" from the temporal logic of a civilizational symbol into the visual expression of ecological ethics. Among the three patterns, "logical transposition" best embodies the depth of pedagogical transformation of the image-taking principles. Students who chose this pattern demonstrated, in their artist statements, a clear understanding of the visual logic of the symbols and a self-conscious response to the contemporary context. One student wrote: "I did not want simply to copy the shape of an ancient jade object; I wanted its inner way of thinking in terms of 'paired opposites' to live on in our public spaces today. When the audience walks through the installation, they will feel the tension and balance between the two forms—this is what I understand as the continuation of 'image-taking' in the contemporary world." This statement shows that students have already transformed the image-taking principles from an object of cognition into a method of creation, from "knowledge learned" into "knowledge in use."

4.4 Overall Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness

Synthesizing the student artwork archives, reflective journals, and interview data, the three-stage teaching strategy achieved identifiable teaching effects in three dimensions. In the dimension of cultural cognition, students' understanding of symbols of Chinese civilization deepened from "object cognition" to "visual-logic cognition," and most students were able to independently analyze symbol-objects using at least two of the image-taking principles. In the dimension of cross-cultural expression, students generally underwent a cognitive development from "translation difficulty" to "generation of translation strategies," able to identify key obstacles in cross-cultural semantic conversion and attempt multiple translation paths. In the dimension of creative ability, the emergence of the "logical transposition" pattern indicates that some students have already made the leap from "imitative creation" to "transformative creation." However, teaching practice also exposed two problems. First, in the second-stage translation component, some students—constrained by limited foreign language expressive ability—produced visual translation exercises lacking cultural depth, remaining at the formal level of symmetry and repetition without touching the cosmological core of the symbols. Second, in third-stage creation, the "formal transplantation" pattern still accounted for a considerable proportion, indicating that the cognitive leap from "recognizing images" to "making images" remains difficult for some students, and that the pedagogical transformation of the image-taking principles requires more ample intermediate components for support.

5. THE GENERATIVE MECHANISM OF "WORLD VISIBILITY": A THEORETICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE THREE-STAGE STRATEGY

5.1 From "Image-Taking" to "Image-Making": The Path of Deepening Cultural Cognition

The practice of the three-stage teaching strategy shows that the cognitive journey from "image-taking" to "image-making" is not a linear progression but a recurrent process of "cognition—experience—creation." First-stage "image-taking" gave students a structural understanding of the visual logic of civilizational symbols, but this understanding encountered the test of the cross-cultural context in second-stage "translation." It was precisely in the difficulties of translation that students were forced to return to the image-taking stage, grasping the visual laws of the symbols in a more refined way. One student described in an interview: "When I tried to explain 'paired opposites' in German, I realized that I had not really understood it. So I went back and looked at the fish-and-bird imagery again, and this time I looked more carefully—I noticed the direction of rotation and the spatial relation between the two forms, details I had ignored in the first round of image-taking." This feedback reveals an important teaching mechanism: cross-cultural translation is not only the "output"

component following image-taking but also a "feedback" component that deepens image-taking cognition. The pursuit of world visibility in turn reinforces the depth of domestic image-taking; the two are not sequential but mutually constitutive.

This finding has methodological significance for the pedagogical transformation of the image-taking principles. The two principles of "priority of space and vision" and "embodied images of paired opposites" need to be understood in teaching as dynamic cognitive frameworks rather than static analytical categories. In the cycle of "image-taking—translation—image-taking again," students progressively approach the core of the visual logic of the symbols, and this process is itself the embodiment in teaching of the "cyclical advance" pattern described by the image-taking principles. In other words, the curriculum design unintentionally replicated the temporal logic of the civilizational symbols themselves: cognition advances in the form of cycles, and each cycle returns to the starting point at a higher level.

5.2 Cross-Cultural Translation as the Generative Condition of "World Visibility"

Teaching practice revealed a core finding: the "world visibility" of symbols of Chinese civilization is not obtained through mere linguistic translation or visual replication, but is generated within the "difficulty" of cross-cultural translation. When students found that "round heaven and square earth" has no corresponding aesthetic category in the target language, and when the connotations of "paired opposites" were lost in verbal paraphrase, they were forced to turn to visual means—using composition, color, material, and spatial relations to convey meanings that language could not carry. This turn accords with the core argument of Bhabha's "third space" theory: the creativity of cultural translation arises precisely in the gap where two cultural sign systems cannot directly dock. New cultural meaning is not produced in "accurate translation" but generated in the cognitive fissure exposed by "inaccurate translation."

This finding responds to the deeper concern of Zeng Jun's proposition of "world visibility." Visibility is not an inherent attribute of the symbol but a capacity acquired in the process by which the symbol is reorganized and re-presented in cross-cultural contexts. The reason the multilingual ecology of foreign languages universities constitutes a unique field for teaching civilizational symbols is not that it can provide "better translation," but that it naturally places students within the fissure of cross-cultural cognition, compelling them to face the predicament of "what cannot be directly translated" and to seek creative paths of expression within that predicament. What this process cultivates is not "translation competence" but "translational literacy"—the capacity to identify meaning, reorganize form, and generate new expression at cultural boundaries.

5.3 The Theoretical Significance of Foreign Languages Universities as a Field for Teaching Civilizational Symbols

Synthesizing teaching practice and theoretical analysis, the role played by foreign languages universities in the teaching of symbols of Chinese civilization can be summarized as "producers of the third space." The specificity of this field lies not in its possession of more foreign language resources, but in the fact that it makes the tension between "image-taking" and "world visibility" a basic condition of everyday teaching. In art curricula at comprehensive universities, the teaching of symbols of Chinese civilization usually takes "inheritance" as its goal, and what students learn is the "correct meaning" of the symbols. In art curricula at foreign languages universities, "inheritance" is naturally mediated by "translation": the question students face is not "what does this symbol mean" but "how do I make someone who does not know Chinese understand its meaning." The latter question forces teaching to shift from "the transmission of meaning" to "the generation of meaning," from "cultural inheritance" to "cultural translation." This shift is precisely the concretization of the proposition of "world visibility" in the field of art education.

The theoretical contribution of the three-stage "image-taking—translation—image-making" strategy lies in transforming Zhang Jiemo's five principles of image-taking from aesthetic theory into a teaching operations framework, while converting Zeng Jun's proposition of world visibility from a communication strategy into a goal of teaching practice. This transformation reveals the intrinsic connection between the two: the principles of "embodied images of paired opposites" and "cyclical advance" within image-taking provide the methodological basis for cross-cultural translation—the bodily perception of counterposed relations can cross linguistic barriers, and the cognitive mode of cyclical advance can accommodate the loss and regeneration of meaning in translation; meanwhile, the pursuit of world visibility provides the value direction for the pedagogical transformation of the image-taking principles—image-taking is not for the sake of self-confirmation but for generating understandable meaning in cross-cultural contexts.

5.4 Limitations of the Teaching Findings and Theoretical Boundaries

It should be noted that the "third space production" mechanism found in this study is constrained by specific teaching conditions. First, students' foreign language ability sets an upper limit on translation depth. When foreign language expressive ability is insufficient, students tend to choose the visual translation path, but visual translation, if it lacks sufficient support from image-taking cognition, easily remains at the level of formal imitation. Second, the "image-making" component of the three-stage strategy places high demands on students' creative ability, and some students found it difficult to complete the cognitive leap from "recognizing images" to "making images." This difficulty suggests that the pedagogical transformation of the image-taking principles requires more ample intermediate components, such as specialized training in "formal analysis of counterposed relations" and "cross-media conversion of visual logic." Third, the single-case research design limits the transferability of the findings. Differences among foreign languages universities, among curricular systems, and among student populations may all affect the effectiveness of the three-stage strategy. These limitations need to be tested in subsequent research through cross-institutional comparison and longitudinal tracking.

6. CONCLUSION AND PROSPECTS

6.1 Contributions of the Study

Taking the public art curriculum at Zhejiang Yuexiu University of Foreign Languages as a case, this study examined cross-cultural teaching strategies for symbols of Chinese civilization in art curricula at foreign languages universities, proposed the three-stage teaching framework of "image-taking—translation—image-making," and offered a theoretical interpretation from the perspective of the generative mechanism of "world visibility." The study makes three core contributions. First, at the theoretical level, it integrates Zhang Jiemo's five principles of image-taking and Zeng Jun's proposition of world visibility within the teaching field, proposing the analytical framework in which "the image-taking principles provide the content logic, third space theory describes the process mechanism, and world visibility sets the value direction," thereby offering a new theoretical path for research on art education concerning symbols of Chinese civilization. Second, at the methodological level, it transforms the five principles of image-taking from categories of aesthetic description into teachable, practicable, and assessable teaching operation steps, verifying the feasibility of pedagogically transforming principles such as "priority of space and vision," "embodied images of paired opposites," and "cyclical advance" in art curricula. Third, at the practical level, it has accumulated experiential data on the cross-cultural teaching of civilizational symbols in public art curricula at foreign languages universities, revealed the value of "translation difficulty" as a teaching resource, and provided a referable practical model for curriculum design at comparable institutions.

6.2 Implications for Public Art Education Practice

The teaching findings of this study offer three implications for public art education practice. First, the teaching of civilizational symbols should attach importance to the design of the "translation" component. Translation is not merely linguistic conversion but also a feedback mechanism for deepening cognition. Curriculum design should consciously place a translation component between image-taking and image-making, so that students re-examine the visual logic of symbols under the pressure of cross-cultural contexts. Second, embodied cognition has unique value in the teaching of civilizational symbols. The body's perception of visual relations can cross linguistic barriers, providing a pre-linguistic cognitive foundation for cross-cultural translation. Curricula should design analytically participatory bodily activities, such as gestural simulation of counterposed relations and bodily perception of spatial structures. Third, art curricula at foreign languages universities should consciously utilize their multilingual ecology, transforming "inter-culturality" from a teaching background into teaching content. Students' multilingual competence should not be regarded merely as a linguistic tool but understood as a resource of cross-cultural cognition, and curricula should design tasks that enable students to apply this resource to the translation practice of civilizational symbols.

6.3 Limitations and Future Directions

The limitations of this study are mainly threefold: the external validity of a single case is limited, and the transferability of the findings needs to be tested through cross-institutional comparative research; the course ran for only one semester, so the long-term effects on students' cognitive change could not be tracked; and the researcher's concurrent role as teacher may introduce subjective bias—although this was balanced through cross-validation of multiple data sources, a more rigorous "double-blind" research design remains to be explored. Future research can be extended in the following directions. First, cross-institutional comparative research comparing the patterns of civilizational symbol teaching between foreign languages universities and comprehensive universities, and among institutions with different language orientations. Second, longitudinal tracking research examining the long-term effects of the three-stage strategy on students' cultural cognitive ability and cross-cultural translational literacy. Third, research on digital technology empowerment, exploring

the possibilities and limits of AI-assisted teaching of visual translation of civilizational symbols, in response to the new proposition of "world visibility of civilizational symbols in the digital age." Fourth, extending the research framework to other types of symbols of Chinese civilization (such as intangible cultural heritage, music, and performing arts) to test the cross-domain applicability of the three-stage "image-taking—translation—image-making" strategy.

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