

# Foreign Language Courses in Universities Empowering New Development of the Ancient Tea Horse Road — A Case Study of Yuxi Normal University

Xin Ning, Mei Zuo, Xiaoyan Mo\*

School of Foreign Languages, Yuxi Normal University, Yuxi 653100, Yunnan, China

\*Corresponding author

**Abstract:** The Ancient Tea Horse Road, as a vital channel for ancient trade and cultural exchange in China, faces challenges of preservation and inheritance in the context of modernization. Foreign language courses in universities, serving as a critical bridge for international cultural communication, demonstrate unique advantages in empowering the new development of the Ancient Tea Horse Road. Taking Yuxi Normal University as an example, this study explores how foreign language curricula integrate with the cultural heritage of the Ancient Tea Horse Road to promote its preservation and transmission. Through innovative course design, teaching methodologies, and practical engagement, foreign language courses not only deepen students' understanding and identification with the cultural legacy of the Ancient Tea Horse Road but also cultivate their cross-cultural communication skills and cultural confidence, thereby fostering sustainable socio-economic development in the region.

**Keywords:** Ancient Tea Horse Road; university foreign language courses; cultural inheritance; cross-cultural communication

## 1. Introduction

The Ancient Tea Horse Road, an ancient trade route winding through southwestern China, has long borne rich historical and cultural significance. It served not only as a commercial bridge between inland and border regions but also as a testament to multicultural exchanges and integration. Under the impact of modernization, this heritage now faces the risk of being forgotten or eroded. Preserving and inheriting this cultural legacy has become an urgent task[1][2][3][4].

Foreign language courses in universities, as a crucial link between domestic and international cultures, possess unique potential to support the revitalization of the Ancient Tea Horse Road. By integrating cultural elements of the route into foreign language curricula, students gain deeper insights into its history and values, while also contributing to its global dissemination. Innovative pedagogical approaches further inspire students' interest in this heritage, nurturing them as future ambassadors of cultural preservation[1][5][6].

This study examines the practices at Yuxi Normal University, where content related to the Ancient Tea Horse Road is embedded into foreign language courses. Through diverse teaching methods — such as field studies, interviews, and thematic lectures — students engage directly with the cultural and historical essence of the route. This integration not only enriches course content but also provides students with platforms for innovation, thereby advancing the cultural inheritance and sustainable development of the Ancient Tea Horse Road[1][5][6].

## 2. Foreign Language Courses and Cultural Inheritance

Foreign language courses play a pivotal role in cultural inheritance by serving as both a linguistic learning platform and a bridge for intercultural dialogue. These courses broaden students' global perspectives while fostering cross-cultural communication skills. Simultaneously, they bear the responsibility of transmitting local cultural heritage. Integrating the Ancient Tea Horse Road into foreign language curricula enhances students' awareness and appreciation of indigenous culture, strengthening their cultural confidence and commitment to preservation.

The Ancient Tea Horse Road, as a historical corridor for trade and multicultural interaction, embodies profound historical and cultural value. Modernization, however, threatens its survival. To address this, foreign language courses offer a dynamic platform for revitalization. For instance, incorporating the route's commercial history, caravan culture, and ethnic interactions into language courses allows students to explore its multifaceted legacy. Additionally, introducing geographical and environmental contexts of the route deepens students' holistic understanding of its significance.

Traditional music along the route, as a vital component of intangible heritage, can also be integrated into language courses. Teaching relevant musical vocabulary and encouraging multilingual interpretations of folk songs enable students

to appreciate the artistic and cultural nuances of this heritage[7][8][9][10]. Such practices not only enhance linguistic proficiency but also cultivate cross-cultural empathy.

### 3. Curriculum Design and the Ancient Tea Horse Road

Yuxi Normal University seamlessly incorporates the cultural elements of the Ancient Tea Horse Road into its foreign language curricula. For instance, courses on tea culture and regional history are offered in English and Thai programs. These courses emphasize experiential learning, such as field trips to historical sites along the route, enabling students to witness firsthand the landscapes and customs that shaped this heritage. Students are also encouraged to participate in translating and disseminating cultural materials, refining both language skills and cross-cultural competencies.

Modern technologies, including multimedia resources and virtual simulations, are utilized to enhance students' immersive understanding of the route's geography, history, and cultural narratives. This innovative curriculum design broadens students' intellectual horizons while fostering pride in local culture.

### 4. Innovative Teaching Methods

Yuxi Normal University adopts diverse pedagogical approaches, such as case studies, group discussions, and role-playing, to contextualize the Ancient Tea Horse Road's historical and cultural dynamics. Case studies allow students to analyze trade practices and cultural fusion, while role-playing immerses them in simulated historical scenarios, deepening their appreciation of the challenges faced by ancient traders.

Digital platforms and virtual laboratories further enrich learning experiences, offering students flexible access to resources and simulated environments. Additionally, students are encouraged to engage in international cultural exchanges, leveraging their language skills to promote the global visibility of the Ancient Tea Horse Road.

### 5. Student Involvement in Heritage Preservation

The university organizes volunteer programs, such as the "Three Rural Initiatives," where students collaborate with local communities along the route to participate in environmental conservation and cultural preservation. Field research, oral history collection, and bilingual documentation projects enable students to contribute tangibly to heritage protection while honing practical skills.

### 6. Conclusion

This study highlights the role of foreign language courses in revitalizing the Ancient Tea Horse Road through curriculum integration, pedagogical innovation, and student engagement. By serving as a global communication tool, foreign language education not only enhances cultural understanding but also facilitates the international dissemination of local heritage. Future efforts could explore interdisciplinary collaborations with history, ecology, and cultural studies, as well as strengthen international partnerships to amplify the global influence of the Ancient Tea Horse Road.

### Acknowledgments

This paper was supported by Innovation and Entrepreneurship Project for College Students: "Language Interpretation of Yunnan Natural Culture and Foreign Languages Boosting Comprehensive Rural Revitalization" - A Study on the Training Path of Foreign Language Talents for Chengjiang Fossil Site History Museum (S202311390008) Interim Achievements.

### References

---

- [1] Ni Junwei. A new theory on the ancient tea-horse road education-a study on the current situation and mode of college students' social practice in the new period [J]. *Fujian Tea*, 2020,42(12):220-221.
- [2] Li Dongying. Study on the Construction of Traditional Sports Cultural Heritage Corridor of Tea-Horse Ancient Road in Yunnan and Tibet [C]// Chinese Sports Science Society. Summary of Papers of the 11th National Sports Science Conference. Yunnan University for Nationalities; ,2019:7717-7718.DOI:10.26914/c.cnkihy.2019.032500.
- [3] Leng Ting. Study on the spatial evolution of Yunnan-Tibet tea-horse ancient road and multi-ethnic cultural exchanges [D]. Yunnan Normal University, 2019.
- [4] Lu Hanyu. On the development of the ancient tea-horse road in southwest China and multi-ethnic cultural exchanges [J]. *Cross-cultural communication research*, 2023,(01):54-82.
- [5] Long Xia, Shang Lei, Kang Bohan, et al. Tea-horse ancient road, a new theory of education-an analysis of the effective

- connection between secondary and higher vocational education and teaching [J]. *Fujian Tea*, 2020,42(06):197-198.
- [6] Dong Liusha. Research on the present situation of dance culture and the popularization of dance teaching in the ancient tea-horse road [J]. *Fujian Tea*, 2017,39(03):329-330.
- [7] Xie Jiafang, Li Chunmei. The development of local geography curriculum resources based on the ancient tea-horse road culture-taking Songgui Town, Heqing County, Yunnan Province as an example [J]. *Middle school geography teaching reference*, 2018,(03):17-19.
- [8] Lan Zengquan, Tao Yanlan, Juck Zhang, et al. Cultural relationship between ancient tea trees and ancient tea-horse roads [J]. *Journal of Southwest Forestry University (Social Science)*, 2020,4(04):66-69.
- [9] Deng Lan. Analysis of the humanistic connotation and tourism development ideas of “Tea-Horse Ancient Road” [J]. *Chinese Culture Forum*, 2016,(09):132-136.
- [10] Zong Lijia. Yunnan “Tea Horse Ancient Road” folk music culture research [J]. *Fujian Tea*, 2016,38(08):331-332.