



# The Cultural Connotations, Value Implications and Pedagogical Applications of the Beijing Central Axis in University-Level International Chinese Language Education

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**Abstract:** According to the Reference Framework for Chinese Culture and National Conditions in International Chinese Language Education, published in 2022 by the Center for Language Education and Cooperation (CLEC) of the Ministry of Education of China, “cultural heritage” constitutes an essential thematic component for Chinese language learners at various proficiency levels to acquire knowledge of Chinese culture and national conditions. The successful inscription of the entire historical ensemble of the Beijing Central Axis on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2024 not only adds a distinguished international calling card for Beijing but also furnishes Chinese learners worldwide with an additional key to understanding Chinese culture and national identity. Adopting international Chinese language education as the overarching macro perspective and drawing upon theories such as cross-cultural communication as analytical frameworks, this paper aims to investigate the value significance and pedagogical applications of the Beijing Central Axis within the domain of university-level international Chinese language education. This paper seeks to provide theoretical and practical insights for cultural teaching and the dissemination of Chinese culture in international Chinese language education, thereby supporting the “going global” strategy of Chinese culture and the branding initiative of “Study in Beijing”.

**Keywords:** Beijing Central Axis; cultural connotation; value implications; pedagogical applications; university-level international Chinese language education

## 1. Introduction

In 2022, the Center for Language Education and Cooperation (CLEC) of China’s Ministry of Education published the Reference Framework for Chinese Culture and National Conditions in International Chinese Language Education, in which the reference content and objectives of teaching Chinese culture and contemporary national conditions has been clearly introduced. In this framework, cultural heritage sites are listed as an important part under the “traditional culture” dimension.

In 2024, the Beijing Central Axis was successfully inscribed on the World Heritage List. Thus, Beijing has another distinguished international symbol and the Chinese language learners worldwide have one more key to know Chinese culture. So, interpreting the value and exploring pedagogical applications of the Beijing Central Axis from the perspective of international Chinese language education became a substantial issue. Some universities have already take practice. Making the related study can enrich the cultural teaching resources and innovation of the international Chinese language education, enhance the effectiveness of Chinese cultural dissemination, and strengthen the “Study in Beijing” brand.

## 2. Overview of the Beijing Central Axis

As an ancient city with a history of 3,000 years and a capital of 800 years, Beijing has preserved numerous cultural treasures of Chinese civilization. It is currently home to eight UNESCO World Cultural Heritage sites, which is the most in the world. This distinction attracts global Chinese language learners and enthusiasts of Chinese culture.

### 2.1 Characteristics of the Beijing Central Axis

The Beijing Central Axis situated at the heart of Beijing’s old city and traverses from north to south. It is a group of architectures that has defined the city’s planning framework since the 13th century. The Central Axis has persist through the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties into the modern era. Stretching 7.8 kilometers from the Bell and Drum Towers in the north to Yongdingmen Gate in the south, the Central Axis comprises ancient royal palaces and gardens, imperial sacrificial altars, historic urban management facilities, state ceremonial buildings, and remains of the central roadway [1]. From north to south, there are 15 constituent elements: the Bell and Drum Towers, Wanning Bridge, Jingshan Hill, the Forbidden City, Duanmen Gate, Tian’anmen Gate, the Outer Jinshui Bridge, the Imperial Ancestral Temple (Taimiao), the Altar of Land and Grain (Shejitan), Tian’anmen Square and its architectural ensemble (including the Square itself, the Monument to the

People's Heroes, the Chairman Mao Memorial Hall, the National Museum of China, and the Great Hall of the People), Zhengyangmen Gate, the Remains of the Southern Thoroughfare, the Temple of Heaven (Tiantan), the Altar of Agriculture (Xiannongtan), and Yongdingmen Gate [1]. Notably, the Imperial Ancestral Temple and the Altar of Land and Grain stand opposite with each other, as do the Temple of Heaven and the Altar of Agriculture. These 4 group of buildings make two pairs of symmetrically arranged elements on the eastern and western flanks of the Central Axis.

UNESCO has recognized the “Outstanding Universal Value” of Beijing Central Axis in two respects. First, it contributes significantly to the global history of urban planning, with its specific characteristics reflecting a cultural and political system developed in China during the imperial dynastic period. This urban planning tradition influenced the planning of other East and Southeast Asian capitals. Second, it is an exceptionally well-preserved example of an urban ensemble developed based on an ancient urban planning theory, founded in Confucian principles related to a ritual dimension with city planning, politics, and governance[2].

## 2.2 The Inscription Process of the Beijing Central Axis

The inscription process of the Beijing Central Axis lasted 12 years from 2012 and went through stages of initiation, acceleration, and critical final efforts. In this process, Beijing gradually established a systematic framework for the protection of the Central Axis by issuing administrative plans and legal instruments, including the Beijing Urban Master Plan (2016–2035), the Medium and Long Term Plan for Advancing the Construction of Beijing as a National Cultural Center (2019–2035), the Three-Year Action Plan for the Protection and Inscription of the Beijing Central Axis, and the Beijing Central Axis Cultural Heritage Protection Regulations, etc. It can be said that the microgovernance practice during the inscription—such as the principle of “no further demolition of the old city,” the cross-departmental coordination between central and local governments for the relocation of cultural relics and historical buildings along the Central axis, and the organization of international academic symposiums and public participation activities—also represents Beijing’s practical efforts and process to build itself into a national cultural center.

## 3. Theoretical Framework of International Cultural Communication

As an iconic symbol of Chinese civilization, the Beijing Central Axis encompasses extensive, profound, and multifaceted cultural content. However, if we introduce it in the context of international communication, in order to convey its cultural connotations accurately and achieve optimal effects, we still need to combine communication theories with practical considerations.

Richard Braddock’s “7W model” of communication outlines 7 key components in communication process: Who (communicator), Says What (message), To Whom (receiver), In What Situation (context), In Which Channel (medium), For What Purpose (motive), With What Effect (effect). Braddock particularly emphasizes the influence of context and motive[3]. The same message communicated in different time, society, or cultural settings may have different outcomes. While the motive can greatly influence the selection of content, the communication channels, and the intended effects. The more clearer the motive, the more targeted the communication.

Stuart Hall’s “encoding and decoding” theory argues that meaning is not “transmitted” by the communicator but is co-produced through encoding and decoding, which is the production of meaning and the interpretation of meaning. Because of different cultural backgrounds and social positions, audiences may have the following three interpretive stances: dominant/hegemonic (full identification), negotiated (partial identification), or oppositional (full opposition)[4].

Edward Hall’s “high-context and low-context” cultural theory suggests that Chinese culture is characteristic of a high-context culture. In such cultures, communication depends heavily on internalized, tacit contextual cues. History, tradition, and relationships are crucial factors to convey meaning implicitly. By contrast, European and American cultures typically belong to low-context cultures, which rely on explicit, clear, and direct verbal messages[5].

So in the international context, the cultural connotations interpretation of the Beijing Central Axis’ should follow 4 principles. First, the connotations should highlight a people-centered humanistic dimension while downplay its ancient imperial overtones. Second, the communication motive and purpose need to demonstrate China’s cultural confidence and soft power so as to attract the audience’s active and full identification. Third, the communication process have to take audience feedback of the Central Axis’ cultural connotations carefully so as to adjust the communication contents or methods. Last but not least, considering crosscultural communication differences, the connotations interpretation should be clear, explicit, and comprehensible. The revealing of its cultural concept need to go from simple to profound and avoid overly abstruse or grandiose narratives.

## 4. Cultural Connotations of the Beijing Central Axis in the Context of International Communication

As a precious world cultural heritage asset, the Beijing Central Axis serves as a physical manifestation of urban planning and Chinese culture. Its inherent cultural elements and connotations are exceptionally profound, offering multiple perspectives for interpretation.

### 4.1 Chinese Cultural Connotations of the Beijing Central Axis

Based on the historical functions of the historical heritage along the Beijing Central Axis, we can define the cultural types as sacrificial culture, commercial culture, red revolutionary culture, ancient court culture, and folk culture [6].

According to different categories in traditional Chinese culture, the Beijing Central Axis embodies nine aspects of culture, including: the aesthetic culture of left-right symmetry; the traditional culture of the five elements (wu xing), the five stabilizing mountains (wu zhen), and the five colors (wu se); the liqi culture of yinyang harmony (vital energy); the culture of ancient celestial phenomena; the culture of auspicious mythical beasts; the mystical culture of numbers; and the culture of bridges and water systems [7].

We can also classify from the perspective of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Except the tangible heritage buildings, numerous intangible cultural heritage items are distributed along the Central Axis and within its buffer zones, including folk literature, traditional music, traditional dance, traditional opera, qu yi (storytelling and crosstalk), traditional sports, games and acrobatics, traditional fine arts, traditional crafts, traditional medicine, and folk customs. There are no fewer than 80 national level intangible cultural heritage and no fewer than 128 municipal level ones. Well-known examples include the Shao music of the Temple of Heaven (Tiantan), Peking opera (jingju), crosstalk (xiangsheng), the craftsmanship of cloisonné (Jingtai lan), the pharmaceutical culture of Tongrentang, and the Twenty-Four Solar Terms of the Chinese lunar calendar [8].

Some scholars have interpreted the Beijing Central Axis based on five characteristics of Chinese civilization: continuity, innovation, unity, inclusiveness, and peacefulness. First, the continuity can be found in the process of planning and construction with the same principles from Yuan dynasty to modern period. Second, the successive additions and refinements of the Central Axis in different dynasties reflect innovation. Third, we can understand the pluralistic unity of the Chinese nation through architectural layout and cultural landscape. Fourth, the inclusiveness can be seen in the forms and details of architectures, which skillfully integrated with Chinese and foreign styles from different eras and origins. Finally, for the peacefulness, we can comprehend that the Central Axis has witnessed the Chinese history of pursuing peace, so it is testifying the Chinese nation and people's enduring love for peace [9].

Some researchers also consider the Central Axis as a symbol of ecological civilization of China. The Chinese ecological wisdom of harmonious coexistence of humanity and nature can be found in the Central Axis' site selection, spatial layout, architectural construction, landscaping, biodiversity conservation, and environmental protection advocacy, etc [10].

### 4.2 Cultural Connotations of the Beijing Central Axis in the Context of International Communication

In the international communication context, the Central Axis' historical, cultural, and aesthetic connotations can be introduced in 4 aspects.

#### 4.2.1 Distinctive Eastern Architectural Culture and Craftsmanship Spirit

Having endured nearly a millennium of historical changes, the 15 cultural heritage along the Central Axis reflect the superlative level of ancient Chinese architecture. For example, the spacing and height designs of the main buildings in the Forbidden City adhere to sophisticated mathematical proportions. The foundation construction and the use of mortise and tenon joint structures (sunmao) represent sound earthquake-resistant measures.

The Central Axis proves the unbroken lineage of the Chinese craftsmanship spirit. It is the wisdom and labor of successive generations of artisans. Figures such as Bingzhong Liu, An Ruan, Xiang Kuai, the Yangshi Lei family, and countless unnamed craftsmen had made great contribution during the construction process lasting from Yuan to Ming and Qing dynasties.

#### 4.2.2 “Neutrality” (Zhong) and “Harmony” (He) Culture Exemplified by Architectural Layout and Urban Planning

The Central Axis is a concrete demonstration of the traditional Chinese philosophy of “Neutrality” (zhong) and “harmony” (he) in architectural layout and urban planning.

“Zhong” means impartiality and avoiding excess or deficiency. “He” means balance, order, stable and harmony. When applied to architectural layout and urban planning, these concepts are translated into “establishing the capital at the center,”

“positioning the imperial palace at the center,” left-right symmetry, and a balanced layout.

For example, along the Central Axis, the east area of the Forbidden City was occupied by the Imperial Ancestral Temple (Taimiao) for venerating ancestors. The west area stood the Altar of Land and Grain (Shejitan) for worshiping heaven and earth. This traditional layout of “ancestral temple on the left, altar of land and grain on the right” persists in modern times. The National Museum of China stands east of Tian’anmen Square, and the Great Hall of the People stands to the west. The layout continuity illustrates that China has a long-lasting tradition of respect for humanity and society and the people has an aspiration to create a stable and harmonious society through orderly and balanced urban construction[11].

#### **4.2.3 The “Unity of Heaven and Humanity” (Tian Ren He Yi) Culture of Harmonious Coexistence between Humans and Nature**

The site selection, water systems, vegetation, and protection of the Beijing Central Axis fully respect natural laws. From the harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, we can understand the “unity of heaven and humanity” concept of Chinese civilization.

Beijing is backed by the Yanshan mountain and faces the plains, which is a classic example of the traditional Chinese architectural concept of “nestled between mountains and waters, embraced by mountains and rivers.” The Central Axis and its nearby areas are surrounded with convenient water systems, which is a proof of the wisdom of ancient Chinese in utilizing water resources. People can also see numerous century-old and even millennium-old ancient trees around the Central Axis, which represent the Chinese cultural concept of cultivating trees to protect environment and buildings.

#### **4.2.4 Vibrant and Diverse Intangible Cultural Heritage**

Numerous intangible cultural heritage (ICH) practices thrive along the Beijing Central Axis and its buffer zones. Together with the historical architectures, they have formed a holistic “tangible + intangible” culture. Compared with the building remains, these ICH practices can make foreigners feel Chinese culture in a more vivid way.

The “Shao music of the Temple of Heaven” (Zhong he Shao yue) was the ritual court music performed on the royal heaven worshiping ceremony, embodying the spirit of “unity of heaven and humanity.” The court opera and cloisonné craftsmanship of the Forbidden City is the aesthetic taste of the imperial court. The crosstalk (xiang sheng) and acrobatics of the Tian qiao area preserve folk memories and customs. The timing traditions of the Bell and Drum Towers, expressed by the evening drumbeat and morning bell, is the wisdom of ancient agricultural civilization. These lively intangible cultural heritages make the Central Axis more attractive and vibrant.

In summary, under the international communication context, the introduction of the Beijing Central Axis primarily aims to let people know the answers of the following questions: how Chinese people planned cities and capitals? Why did the Chinese capital establish such an order? What Chinese cultural connotations does this city’s order reflect? From ancient to the present, distant to the near, and spatial forms to philosophical concepts, the interpretation of Beijing Central Axis need to make foreigners feel and understand China and Chinese culture, as well as how Chinese people understand the relationships among the individual, family, state, and nature.

## **5. Value Implications of the Beijing Central Axis in University-level International Chinese Language Education**

International Chinese language education and the dissemination of Chinese culture are inseparable. Adding Chinese cultural heritage content to the cultural teaching in international Chinese language teaching classes can not only benefit the international dissemination of Chinese culture but also enrich the pedagogical content of international Chinese language education.

The cultural symbols along the Beijing Central Axis have high reputation and extensive cultural connotations. The incorporation of it into university-level international Chinese language education curricula entails the following significant values:

### **5.1 Stimulating International Students’ Interest in Exploring Chinese Historical Architecture and Other Cultural Heritage Sites**

The Beijing Central Axis is a type of Chinese cultural heritage integrating architectural art, urban planning, and dynastic politics, and it differs from other categories of Chinese world cultural heritage, such as Yin Xu (the origins of civilization), the Great Wall (military and architectural art), and the Ancient City of Pingyao (ancient urban heritage). Instructors in international Chinese language education can compare the differences of Chinese cultural heritages, guiding students to study other Chinese cultural heritage assets.

For example, after the class of the Beijing Central Axis, teachers may introduce further knowledge of the Great Wall’s

construction history and defensive functions, the Temple of Heaven's sacrificial rituals, or the garden art of the Summer Palace. The Beijing Central Axis is a good "starting point" of Chinese culture which may open a lasting pathway for international students to further explore the historical, philosophical and contemporary values of China.

## **5.2 Facilitating International Students' Comprehension of the Spiritual Connotations of Chinese Culture**

The concepts of "Neutrality" (zhong), "harmony" (he), and "unity of heaven and humanity" (tian ren he yi) embodied by the Beijing Central Axis are highly representative of Chinese culture. They carry the historical and political evolution of China, serve as a vital source of spiritual confidence and ideological identity of Chinese people. When teaching the Beijing Central Axis to international students, teachers need to tailor contents and methods according to students' proficiency levels and cultural backgrounds. By gradually elucidating the profound significance of the Beijing Central Axis, students can broaden their understanding scope and have a deeper comprehension of the spiritual essence of Chinese culture.

For example, students can start learning from the architecture and urban planning, gaining knowledge of Chinese traditional concepts of governance. Then, they can know more about ancient sacrificial rites in Tiantan, understanding the agricultural society characteristics of this civilization which respects ancestors and cherishes peace greatly. Furthermore, by learn Beijing's transformation from ancient to modern times, students can understand China's explorations and achievements in its contemporary history.

## **5.3 Enhancing International Students' Understanding of Contemporary Urban Governance and Cultural Heritage Protection in China**

Beijing is not only a famous historical and cultural city but also a modern metropolis with more than twenty million people. In the inscription process of the Beijing Central Axis, the relevant government authorities confronted various issues closely related to people's livelihoods, such as the relocation of historical buildings, the renovation of residential space, and the remaking of streets. The protection of world cultural heritage is a global significant topic with local governance characteristics. Thus, when teaching the Beijing Central Axis in international Chinese language classes, it is important to emphasize the broad value of this world cultural heritage and make case studies. The case study should introduce objectively how Chinese people balanced cultural relic protection, cultural inheritance, economic development, and urban governance.

For example, teachers can introduce some authentic TV or media stories about ordinary Beijing citizens participating in the inscription process. These cases can help international students observe and think about the following questions: why Chinese people would like to protect these historical buildings, what is the people's enthusiasm and perseverance, how they do it and what is the effects of the governance approaches. Thus, students can understand more about China.

## **5.4 Improving International Students' Cross-Cultural Communication Competence**

International Chinese language education not only imparts Chinese language skills but also cultivates learners' crosscultural communication competence. The process of knowing the Beijing Central Axis is definitely a process of crosscultural learning. No matter conducted in or out of classrooms, the classes such as language teaching, lectures, field trips, performance can contribute to crosscultural understanding in different ways. Through this learning process, Chinese language learners could develop tolerance, adaptability, and cultural sensitivity to cultural differences, which helps reduce misunderstandings and biases.

## **5.5 Enhancing the Attractiveness of "Study in Beijing"**

Beijing is heading towards the strategic goal of becoming the cultural and international exchange center in China. It has a unique appeal for international students thanks to its profound history and culture as well as its concentration of high-quality higher education resources. As the backbone of the capital, the Central Axis serves as an important showcase of the city's charm to the world. Integrating the Central Axis into international Chinese language curricula and developing diverse teaching resources can attract international students to know about the city, visit here, learn here and grow to love here. This will enhance the appeal of "Study in Beijing" .

## **6. Pedagogical Application of the Beijing Central Axis in UniversityLevel International Chinese Language Education**

Because of the profound cultural information, the Beijing Central Axis requires a certain level of knowledge and cultural accumulation to fully understand. So it is particularly suitable for international students of universities to learn. University instructors may develop pedagogical application of the Beijing Central Axis to international students in the follow aspects.

## 6.1 Teaching Resources Development

Based on the culture of Central Axis and with the innovation direction of “language + culture + AI technology”, instructors can design traditional and digital teaching materials in different thematic modules for Chinese learners worldwide.

For example, a module on Beijing’s world cultural heritage could introduce the architectural features and functions of heritage sites including the Beijing Central Axis, the Great Wall, and the Temple of Heaven. A module about Beijing’s historical urban evolution could take the Central Axis as the main thread, guiding students to know the city’s ancient, modern, and contemporary urban planning and landscapes changing. Instructors can also make modules about the intangible cultural heritage along the Central Axis, such as scenic and historical sites, former residences of celebrities, and folk customs, etc.

The International Education College of Tianjin Foreign Studies University developed a textbook series titled Learning Chinese through the Forbidden City. This textbook uses knowledge of Forbidden City culture as its core linguistic data, covering foundational Chinese characters, words, and sentences instruction. Learners can experience the charm of fine traditional Chinese culture in the process of learning the language knowledge of architecture, cultural relics, and historical stories of the Forbidden City. The series has also developed digital versions incorporating multi-modal digital modules such as interactive exercises, virtual scenes, and audio-video resources [12].

Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication developed the “Tracing Beijing, Sensing the Central Axis” mini-program. It converted abstract cultural heritage into a perceptible, operable, and communicable digital experience and attracted more than 70 international students to participate in the field study and seminars.[13]

## 6.2 Classroom Teaching Innovation

In terms of teaching techniques, instructors can use text, images, videos, and multimedia technologies to enhance the interest of class, avoiding purely didactic teaching.

There are lots of innovation ways. For example, pictures and short videos can help students observe the characteristics of historical buildings along the Central Axis. Video stories about people along the Central Axis, cultural relic excavation and protection stories can help students understand Beijing’s folk customs. Instructors can use creative cultural products, such as building blocks and puzzles of ancient structures like the Temple of Heaven, to enable students to understand Chinese architectural features through hands-on and minds-on activities. Instructors can also organize interactive drawing and design activities to guide students experience the urban planning concept of “Neutrality”. All these approaches contribute to “telling China’s stories well” from diverse perspectives.

Moreover, instructors can leverage digital technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance classroom teaching effects. For example, they can guide students to use AI to design and generate virtual scenes and stories related to the architecture, nature, people, and stories of the Central Axis, deepening students’ understanding of the culture and boosting classroom engagement.

From the perspective of teaching methods, instructors can adopt case-based instruction, comparative analysis, and group discussion to teach the Central Axis. For instance, comparing the architectural features and capital planning from different regions of the world can be a case topic. Instructors can also divide students into several teams to complete tasks such as information gathering, idea synthesis, and presentation sharing. These approaches enhances students’ autonomous learning skills, teamwork awareness, and cross-cultural communication abilities, while deepening their understanding of Chinese culture.

Beijing City University offered a Central Axis Chinese Experience Class to foreign students. Teachers elaborated on keywords like “symmetrical aesthetics” and “unity of heaven and humanity,” skillfully integrating language teaching with Chinese philosophy. The class also added interactive games such as “Central Axis Knowledge Quiz” , which used stories of the Forbidden City’s three main buildings as fun quiz material. Students competed to answer in Chinese and body language of traditional delicacies like “Peking duck”[14]. This activity made students practicing Chinese vocabulary in a lively and interactive way. The Beijing Normal University organized an event named “Chinese: A Gift through the Beijing Central Axis,” combining a special lecture and a walk along the Central Axis heritage sites. As international students traced the route on foot, teachers systematically explained the historical significance of the Central Axis[15].

## 6.3 Second-Classroom Immersive Study Tours

Second-classroom and immersive cultural study tours form a key link in moving students from merely “knowing about” a subject to truly “understanding” it and finally “identifying with” it. Organizing field study tours for international students is one of the most effective ways to deepen their understanding of the Central Axis and to promote the dissemination of its culture. In order to let students understand the Central Axis as a whole and distinguish it from the other famous heritages like the Forbidden City, instructors can choose the lesser-know heritage. Such activities can also be combined with cultural

lectures, performances, and intangible cultural heritage experiences.

For example, the Altar of Agriculture (Xian nong tan) is less famous than the Forbidden City or the Temple of Heaven. However, it is the largest existing royal sacrificial site in China dedicated to the God of Agriculture. Emperors also need to personally plow the land here to promote the spirit of valuing agriculture. This heritage reflects the long history of China's agricultural culture.

Universities in Beijing have accumulated rich experience in second-classroom teaching on the Central Axis. This practice closely integrates traditional Chinese culture with contemporary China conditions education in field study tours. Beijing Language and Culture University organized international students to visit the Beijing Urban Planning Exhibition Hall and Jingshan Park. There they studied the historical value and modern significance of the Central Axis[16]. Tsinghua University organized Chinese and international students to conduct immersive cultural practice at the Altar of Agriculture (Xian nong tan). The activity arranged sites like Yi mu san fen di (the emperor's symbolic personal plot), the Taisui Hall (which worship the deity of the year), and the Shencang (granary for sacrificial grains). The tour also paid special attention to the "imitating heaven and earth" (xiang tian fa di) construction philosophy and the concept of "unity of heaven and humanity." The event organizers also designed a "Heritage Hunt" task. Chinese and international students were divide to small mixed groups and their tasks were to document the patterns of eaves tiles (wa dang) and architectural paintings through photography, surveying, and rubbing[17]. Students had a chance to understand the wisdom of traditional Chinese architectural craftsmanship by hands-on practice. These diverse second-classroom study tours combine knowledge with action and enable international students to touch culture through direct experience.

Instructors can also make full use of the rich museum resources distributed along the Beijing Central Axis to enhance second-classroom study. Venues such as The Beijing Urban Planning Exhibition Hall, the Capital Museum, the China Arts and Crafts Museum, and the former residences of celebrities along the Central Axis can all serve as offline second-classroom resources. The "Splendid Central Axis" special exhibition at the Capital Museum brings together extensive textual, pictorial, and material resources on the Central Axis's layout, history, cultural relics, and development. Through innovative audio, visual and lighting technology, it vividly presents a complete picture of the Central Axis. This exhibition serves as a highquality resource for international Chinese language education on this landmark.

Furthermore, instructors can engage international students in various cultural activities related to the Central Axis organized by Beijing. These include events like the Beijing Central Axis Cultural Heritage Inheritance and Innovation Competition[18]and the "Central Axis Cultural Heritage Lecture Hall on Campus" campaign[19],etc.

## 6.4 Construction of Cross-Cultural Practice Platforms

Relevant cultural protection institutions and universities can create cross-cultural practice platforms for international students deeply engaging with cultural heritage communication and turn international students from passive "recipients of knowledge" into active "cultural learns".

Beijing Municipal Cultural Heritage Bureau and five universities in Beijing jointly planned the "Bridging Cultures" series of international cultural exchange projects. There are five parts in this project: lectures, seminars, field study, hands-on practice, and exhibitions. From 2024 to 2025, it has organized 30 events, attracting nearly 3,000 participants both online and offline. In 2025, this project selected 10 international students from countries including Jordan, Lebanon, Cameroon, Russia, and Malaysia to form a "Cultural Ambassador" team. Among them, 5 ambassadors undertook foreign-language interpretation practice at cultural venues and produced a series of videos[20]. For example, a Russian student named Nikole has grown into a confident student cultural ambassador, who can explain the Chinese intangible cultural heritage for audience at the Drum Tower[21].

The National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts held the "Feel the Central Axis" opera workshop. In the lecture "Opera Rhyme of the Central Axis," the teacher delivered the intrinsic relationship between traditional opera stages and the spatial aesthetics of the Central Axis. The workshop also included activities such as opera mask painting, Peking opera singing, and teaching of operatic body movements, which provided international students with an immersive experience of Chinese culture[22].

Additionally, instructors can also use role-playing, interactive discussions, and small-group teaching methods to design simulated scenarios about multicultural encounters and conflict resolution. Take the building renovation topic for example, students could role-play various stakeholders, such as local residents, the Central Axis preservation authorities, and medias, to simulate real problem-solving situations. Students can experience different communication styles in decision-making processes and deepen their understanding of China's urban governance model.

## 7. Conclusion

As an outstanding world cultural heritage in China, the Beijing Central Axis is a comprehensive, profound, and a must-see attraction. Its unique characteristics reflect the cultural traditions of China such as architecture, urban planning, governance, and the coexistence between humans and nature. Thus, the teaching of the Beijing Central Axis can guide international students know more about Chinese culture, understand the contemporary urban governance of China and enhance their cross-cultural communication competence. Based on technology and practice, it is becoming a series of crucial, diverse and vivid teaching contents or materials in the Chinese language cultural classes for international students in universities. The exploration of the Beijing Central Axis under the context of international Chinese language education can also help to build the “Study in Beijing” brand and disseminate Chinese culture.

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