

CULTURE

Survey finds foreigners sketchy on China icons

Data provide guidance on how to connect effectively with the world

By **LUO WANGSHU**
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What things generate associations?

The list of symbols recognized by foreigners as representing Chinese culture from the most widely recognized (top) to the least recognized:

1. Panda
2. Green tea
3. Yin/yang
4. Confucius
5. Yangtze River
6. Kung fu
7. Chinese ink painting
8. Hua Mulan
9. Peking Opera
10. Spring Festival
11. Shangri-La
12. *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu
13. Chinese suit (*Tangzhuang*)
14. Li Bai
15. Filial piety
16. Dunhuang Cave Mural
17. Face (*mianzi*)
18. The theory of harmony between nature and human

The panda is the mostly widely recognized symbol among foreigners to represent Chinese culture, followed by green tea and yin/yang, according to a survey released on Saturday.

The survey, conducted by the Beijing Institute of Culture Innovation and Communication, also found that the Chinese theory that humans are an integral part of nature; the concept of face, or *mianzi*; and the Dunhuang Cave Murals are not so readily associated with Chinese culture.

“It is interesting to find that foreigners have a very different understanding of Chinese culture from us,” said Yu Dan, a professor of Chinese culture at Beijing Normal University and director of the Beijing Institute of Culture Innovation and Communication. “The Dunhuang Cave Murals are a marvelous example of traditional art that we are justly proud of, but foreigners know little about them.

“The harmony theory between man and nature, which is a fundamental of Chinese philosophy, is also little known among foreigners.”

Yu views the survey as useful in providing intellectual guidance for China to “go out” and connect with the world.

The survey collected 2,407 questionnaires from the United States, United Kingdom, France, Australia, Japan and South Korea. Respondents were asked to rate their understanding of Chinese culture on a five-point scale from excellent to poor.

The results indicated that 13.3 percent of respondents have a poor understanding of Chinese culture; 60.9 percent had a fair understanding; 15.3 percent a good understanding, 4.5 percent very good; and 6 percent an excellent understanding of Chinese culture.

Yu said the next move to promote Chinese culture should target the group that has a fair understanding, in that it represents nearly two-thirds of foreigners.

Researchers selected 18 symbols of Chinese culture, including Confucius, the panda, Beijing opera and kung fu.

South Korean and United States respondents scored highest, and French respondents scored lowest.

“People from various countries gain knowledge of China in different ways and for diverse reasons,” Yu said. “South Korea is our neighbor and shares a similar traditional culture with China. In their daily life, they also have the *mianzi* concept. However, people in the US know about legendary female warrior Hua Mulan and green tea thanks to Hollywood movies.”

While Japan and South Korea are both China’s neighbors, their attitude toward Chinese culture varies.

“Japanese respondents generally hold a negative attitude, and South Koreans hold a comparatively positive attitude,” Yu said.

She added that bilateral relations also affect foreigners’ perception of Chinese culture.

Through the survey, we also found that foreigners in general are willing to learn about Chinese culture, Yu said.



Reservoir comes up dry

A large area of the Chitian reservoir in coastal Sanya, a tourist attraction in Hainan province, has been dried out by drought, as seen on Saturday. In the first five months of the year, the average rainfall in the city declined by 92.7 percent from previous years. The drought has left more than 14,000 residents with inadequate drinking water supplies. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

EDUCATION

English teachers to get better training

By **LUO WANGSHU**

To improve English-language teaching, the British Council and Beijing Language and Culture University have started the first official teacher training program in the Chinese mainland for the International English Language Testing System, known as IELTS.

The IELTS Teacher Essentials program offers online and face-to-face training for IELTS teachers that is aimed at deepening their understanding of the test often used by universities for admission, including examination philosophy and evaluation systems.

Greg Selby, director of examinations for East Asia at the British Council, which designed the program, said the program seeks to better serve and support test takers.

“Improved IELTS teaching will mean improved candidate performance,” he said, as it aims to further

professionalize the test preparation sector in China in order to teach test takers “language for communication, rather than teach to the test”.

More than 2.5 million IELTS tests were taken around the world in 2014, according to the British Council. Testing in China has experienced double digit growth in recent years.

The program intends to improve IELTS teachers’ understanding of the test, including increasing their familiarity and understanding of the exam and test philosophy, said Ma Xiaoming, director of the overseas study training department at BLCU’s College of Continuing Education.

Participants are required to take at least 30 hours of independent study online, undergo more than two days of face-to-face intensive training at BLCU and take Apts for Teachers, an English assessment system, Ma said.

“China has an increasing number of IELTS learners and teacher quality is very important.”

You Zhuoran, director of examinations for North and Central China at the British Council

The first three classes, which registered up to 25 participants, are full. The program plans to offer eight sessions in 2015.

“Based on data from the first three classes, participants are IELTS instructors from international divisions of public high schools, universities and private training centers,

equally divided,” Ma said.

One challenge for English-language teachers in China is that “teaching for the tests” has become popular and cheating is an issue. In October 2014, the Educational Testing Service, the examination provider of the College Board in the United States, delayed and even canceled some Chinese students’ SAT score results because of alleged cheating.

The ITE program aims to instill a sense in teachers that there is value in inspiring student interest in learning beyond test techniques and skills, said You Zhuoran, director of examinations for North and Central China at the British Council.

“We are making efforts to improve IELTS teachers’ quality, aiming to raise the standard in the IELTS teacher training market,” You said. “China has an increasing number of IELTS learners and teacher quality is very important.”

HEALTH

Innovative sex education wins acclaim

By **XINHUA** in Wuhan

A nurse’s frank approach to teaching her 11-year-old son about sex has led to her being invited to his school to teach sex education, a move which has won acclaim across the country.

Zhou Li, a nurse at Wuhan Third Hospital in Wuhan, Hubei province, conducted the classes earlier this week after her son, Niu Niu, boasted to classmates about the knowledge his mother had imparted at home through PowerPoint presentations.

Now she has given the talk to more than 300 fifth- and sixth-graders at the school in Wuchang district.

“Some of their parents told them they were born from a

rock, just like the Monkey King,” Zhou said, adding that some were even told that they were freebies given away by telecom operators.

Sex talk is still taboo in China, where thousands of years of feudal values cast a shadow over people’s attitudes. Chinese parents are often embarrassed to teach their offspring, resulting in low levels of sex education among the young, many of whom are susceptible to sexual abuse.

Last week, a former school teacher was executed for the rape and sexual abuse of 26 children in Gansu province.

Zhou felt it was urgent to teach Niu Niu as he entered puberty. Last week for Children’s Day, she gave him a

special gift: a sex lesson packaged in PowerPoint slides.

“I gave him three science books about sex when he tried to hide his underwear after his first wet dream two months ago,” Zhou laughed. “He called me sleazy.”

To get Niu Niu to accept that sex education is normal rather than shameful, Zhou came up with an idea. She bought a number of well-known sex education books, including “Where Willy Went” — the story of a sperm cell who lives inside “Mr Browne” with 300 million friends, training for the “great swimming race” — and turned important parts of them into PowerPoint slides after she overheard

Niu Niu saying he had been interested by PowerPoint presentations at school.

The slides, coupled with Zhou’s descriptions, eased Niu Niu’s mind, and made him confident enough to talk to his friends about the lesson.

The story has caused quite a splash on the Internet.

“Sex education should be regarded as a scientific subject instead of obscenity,” wrote one netizen. “Zhou did a good job.”

“Sex education is not evil and scary,” Zhou said. “Only when you view it scientifically can you help your children grow healthily and prevent sexual abuse that can happen because of a lack of knowledge.”

EXCHANGE

Shanghai instructors take math smarts to the UK

By **CAO YIN** in London
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A group of Chinese math teachers are headed to classrooms in United Kingdom primary schools in a program to share their successful teaching methods while improving educational cooperation between the two countries.

Up to 30 Shanghai teachers will participate in the exchange, which starts in September, said Yang Weiren, director of the International Cooperation and Exchange Division at Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, which coordinates the exchange.

Shanghai students topped the ranks in math, reading and science in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s 2012 Program for International Student Assessment, which evaluates education systems worldwide. UK students ranked 26th in math.

Yang said the Shanghai teaching methods have helped pupils deeply understand the structure of math and how numbers work.

30 math teachers

from Shanghai will have an opportunity to share their teaching methods in the UK starting in September

Since November 2014, two other groups of Shanghai teachers have taught in primary schools selected by the UK’s Department for Education, sharing their skills in math education, which local teachers then took to other schools.

“The specific arrangement of the new group’s tour is still being discussed and we will adjust some details in accordance with our discussion,” Yang said on Friday.

British School Reform Minister Nick Gibb highlighted the teacher exchange when the program was first introduced, saying it could enable UK teachers to develop their professional skills by teaming up with those from the most successful math education system in the world.

Yang said the program’s success may lead to additional exchanges in other subjects.

“We are also considering adding some new subject programs. If the UK is willing to cooperate with us in upcoming years, we’ll plan to invite their teachers to Shanghai and provide classes they are good at, such as science, art and music,” Yang said.

Shen Yang, minister counselor at the Chinese embassy in London, spoke highly of the math teacher exchange and said he would encourage more programs that can improve relationships and friendship between China and the UK.

“Teacher exchange makes contributions not only to the two countries’ educational developments, but also to the understanding of the people,” Shen said.

Piao Meizi, deputy of the School of International Cultural Exchange at Shanghai University of Sport, said the most important element of the exchange lies in encouraging innovation and creativity in education.

Piao’s school sends up to 10 teachers abroad every year for six months to a year and after they return, “they bring new ideas in teaching”, she said. “I think it is the core of the exchange.”

“In addition to math, we have many more subjects in need of an international communication and improvement,” she said.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Zhejiang planning 100 specialized ‘towns’

By **YAN YIQI** in Hangzhou
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To reinforce the upgrading of traditional industries, encourage innovation and promote tourism, Zhejiang province is to invest 500 billion yuan (\$81.5 billion) in 100 featured “towns” within three years.

The first group, comprising of 37 towns, with names given by local governments, was announced on Wednesday. It included Internet Town and Cloud Town in Hangzhou, and Traditional Chinese Medicine Town in Jinhua.

Different from administrative divisions, each town, which are no larger than 3

square kilometers in area, will gather companies of one specific industry and provide certain preferential policies to support the development of that industry, as well as undertaking cultural and tourism functions. The industries cover areas including information technology, environmental protection, finance and high-end equipment manufacturing.

Li Qiang, governor of Zhejiang province, said the towns will provide a better environment for the development of their featured industries.

“The towns will include emerging industries like the Internet and cloud computing, as well as traditional

ones. With new concepts and mechanisms, they are bearing the future of fast-track development of the industries,” he said.

Qin Shili, a researcher at Zhejiang Provincial Development Planning and Research Institute, said these towns will play active roles in the province’s exploration in upgrading its industries and looking for new economic growth.

“The biggest advantage of these towns is that they have appealing policies to support startups,” he said.

Qin said that although traditional development zones provide preferential policies for companies settling up, the

incoming thresholds are mainly annual revenue or profits.

“If we use traditional standards to evaluate startups of emerging industries, many of them will fail to meet the thresholds to enjoy preferential policies. But in the featured towns, they can,” he said.

Dream Town, in western suburban Hangzhou, focuses on supporting Internet startups, which can enjoy free offices and basic infrastructure facilities for three years.

Yu Yang established a 3-D printing company in the town after graduating from college. In addition to free office space, Yu’s company also enjoys a free cloud com-



Dream Town in Hangzhou, one of the 37 featured towns in Zhejiang province, is expected to attract an estimated 10,000 entrepreneurs within three years. DONG XUMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

puting service.

“What attracts me here is that they do not evaluate us on our revenue or profits. Instead, they focus on our potential and the venture capital we have attracted,” Yu said.

By Wednesday, the town

had attracted more than 60 startups with 240 projects.

“As the whole nation is attaching great importance to entrepreneurship and innovation, this new path encourages both of them and provides room for them to grow,” Qin said.