

A Study on the Integration of Hainan Culture into College English Teaching Strategies

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the teaching strategies for integrating Hainan culture into college English courses and their impact on students' learning outcomes. Drawing on relevant statements on cultural confidence, the research employs multiple methods, including questionnaires, in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and performance analysis, to systematically analyze the application effects of Hainan cultural elements in English teaching and student feedback. A survey of 200 students from a university in Hainan revealed that 90% of the students support the integration of Hainan culture into English teaching, 85% believe that this teaching method enhances their learning interest, and 80% think it helps improve cultural awareness. In-depth interview results show that both students and teachers agree that integrating culture into teaching not only improves English proficiency but also enhances cultural pride. Classroom observations indicate that students in the experimental class have significantly higher participation and interaction frequencies compared to the control class. Performance analysis shows that the English scores of students in the experimental class increased by 15%, significantly higher than the 5% increase in the control class. Comprehensive analysis results demonstrate the effectiveness of integrating Hainan culture into college English teaching. It is suggested that future teaching further enrich cultural content, innovate teaching methods, strengthen teacher training, improve evaluation mechanisms, promote interdisciplinary cooperation, and utilize external cultural resources to enhance students' cross-cultural communication skills and overall competence.

Keywords: Hainan culture; College English teaching; Teaching strategies; Cross-cultural communication; Learning interest; English proficiency

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1. Research background

1.1. The era's call for cultural confidence

China has repeatedly emphasized the importance of cultural confidence, stating that "cultural confidence is a more fundamental, profound, and enduring force in the development of a country and a nation." In the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the chairman of China emphasized the need to "promote the creative transformation and innovative development of China's excellent traditional culture." This important discourse provides clear guidance for education at all levels in China, calling for the promotion of Chinese

culture and enhancing students' cultural confidence in the education process.

1.2. The uniqueness of Hainan culture

As the only tropical island province in China, Hainan boasts diverse and vibrant cultural resources, including the ethnic cultures of the Li and Miao people, Qiong opera, and marine culture. These cultural elements are not only valuable spiritual assets for the people of Hainan but also form an important part of the national cultural treasury. Integrating Hainan culture into college English courses not only helps students understand and inherit local culture while learning the language but also enhances their cultural confidence and national pride.

1.3. Cultivating cross-cultural communication skills

With the deepening of globalization, college English teaching must focus not only on language skills but also on enhancing students' cross-cultural communication abilities. By integrating Hainan culture into English teaching, students can deepen their understanding of local culture while learning English, thereby better sharing Chinese stories and presenting China's image to the world. This aligns with President Xi's call to "tell China's story well and spread China's voice," and contributes to cultivating talents with both international perspectives and cultural confidence.

1.4. The necessity and significance of the research

In current English teaching practices, there is an over-reliance on Western cultural content, neglecting the inheritance and promotion of local culture. Thus, studying how to integrate Hainan culture into college English courses is of great significance for innovating English teaching models and improving teaching effectiveness. This research aims to explore effective strategies for integrating Hainan culture into college English teaching and validate its feasibility and effectiveness through empirical research, providing theoretical support and practical guidance for combining local culture with English teaching.

2. Literature review on domestic and international research

2.1. Literature on culture and language learning

Domestic research suggests that culture and cultural awareness play crucial roles in English language learning. A study found that students with higher cultural awareness performed better in English learning. Integrating cultural elements into English teaching can enhance students' cultural confidence and language proficiency ^[1]. Similarly, another study examined the impact of cultural confidence on cultural awareness in language learning, suggesting that English teachers should encourage students to embrace their cultural identity and integrate cultural elements into English teaching ^[2].

Internationally, researchers have also studied the relationship between culture and English language learning. Research in the United States (US) found that students with higher cultural confidence performed better in second language learning. Their study suggests that incorporating cultural activities into English language classrooms can enhance cultural confidence and improve English language learning ^[3]. Another study explored the role of cultural identity in language learning, finding that students with a positive view of their own culture were more motivated to learn the target language. Researchers recommended that language teachers acknowledge and respect students' cultural identities and integrate cultural elements into language teaching ^[4].

In summary, culture plays a significant role in English language learning. Integrating cultural elements and recognizing students' cultural identities in English language teaching can boost their cultural confidence and improve their language learning outcomes. These findings are of great significance for language teachers

in designing effective language teaching strategies to promote students' cultural confidence and language proficiency.

2.2. Literature on the impact of culture on college English learning

In domestic research, the relationship between culture and English learning has garnered significant attention. Studies highlighted the positive relationship between culture and English learning outcomes. They found that students with higher cultural confidence demonstrated greater motivation, English language proficiency, and cross-cultural communication skills ^[5]. Additionally, regarding the effects of integrating cultural activities into Chinese college English classrooms, researchers found that such activities enhanced students' cultural confidence and awareness, thereby improving English learning outcomes ^[6]. Similarly, the effectiveness of integrating learners' cultural backgrounds and experiences into English teaching, reveals positive impacts on cultural confidence and cross-cultural competence development ^[7-8].

Internationally, studies have also explored the relationship between culture and English language learning outcomes. Pavlenko emphasized the importance of cultural identity and confidence in English language learning environments. They argued that learners with a strong sense of cultural confidence are more willing to immerse themselves in the target language culture and develop stronger language skills ^[9]. Moreover, other studies highlighted that individuals with higher levels of cultural confidence are better equipped for effective cross-cultural communication and have a deeper understanding of different cultural perspectives ^[10]. Wang's cross-cultural research examined the relationship between cultural confidence and English learning among Chinese and American students, revealing similar patterns, where cultural confidence positively impacted English learning outcomes and cross-cultural communication skills ^[11-12].

3. Research content and methods

3.1. Literature review

By systematically reviewing relevant domestic and international research literature, this study analyzes the theoretical foundations and current practices of integrating culture into language teaching. It focuses on the classic theories of intercultural communicative competence (such as Byram's intercultural communicative competence theory and Kramsch's concept of the "third culture") and domestic studies on incorporating local culture into English teaching ^[6,13]. This literature review provides theoretical support and a reference framework for the study.

3.2. Questionnaire survey

A questionnaire survey was designed and conducted among 200 students from a university in Hainan to understand their attitudes, interests, and expectations regarding the integration of Hainan culture into English courses. The questionnaire covered the following areas:

- (1) Students' awareness of Hainan culture.
- (2) Students' interest and attitude towards integrating culture into English teaching.
- (3) Students' learning experiences and gains from culture-integrated teaching.
- (4) Students' suggestions and opinions on course improvement.

3.3. In-depth interviews

A selection of students and teachers were chosen for in-depth interviews to gather more detailed feedback. The interview topics included:

- (1) Students' specific feelings and experiences of Hainan culture in the English classroom.
- (2) Teachers' experiences, challenges, and suggestions regarding the implementation of culture-integrated teaching.
- (3) Students' and teachers' overall evaluation of the culture-integrated teaching and suggestions for improvement.

3.4. Classroom observation

Systematic observation and recording were conducted in both experimental and control English classes to analyze student participation, interaction, and learning outcomes under the two teaching models. Classroom observations included:

- (1) The design and implementation of classroom activities.
- (2) Student participation and interaction frequency.
- (3) Classroom atmosphere and students' learning attitudes.

3.5. Performance analysis

Data on students' mid-term and final exam scores in both the experimental and control classes were collected and compared to assess the impact of culture-integrated teaching on students' English proficiency. Specific analyses included:

- (1) A comparison of the scores of students in the experimental and control classes.
- (2) Analysis of trends and changes in scores.
- (3) Correlation analysis between performance and students' cultural awareness and classroom participation.

3.6. Development of teaching strategies

Based on the results of the questionnaire survey, in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and performance analysis, specific teaching strategies for integrating Hainan culture into university English courses were proposed. The main strategies include:

- (1) Selection and design of cultural materials: Design English teaching materials incorporating Hainan cultural elements, such as Li ethnic group stories, Qiong opera excerpts, and Hainan customs, to enhance the localization and interest of the teaching content.
- (2) Implementation of classroom activities: Through role-playing, cultural displays, and scenario simulations, organically integrate Hainan culture into English classes to enhance student engagement and participation.
- (3) Teacher training and support: Conduct intercultural teaching training for teachers, improve their cultural literacy and intercultural communicative competence, and provide necessary teaching resources and support.
- (4) Improvement of evaluation mechanism: Design a diversified evaluation system that includes cultural awareness and intercultural communicative competence to comprehensively assess students' learning outcomes and overall competence.

4. Data analysis and results

This study adopts a mixed-methods design, including a questionnaire survey, in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and performance analysis, to comprehensively evaluate the effects of integrating Hainan culture into college English courses.

4.1. Questionnaire survey

A detailed questionnaire was designed, covering areas such as student learning interest, cultural awareness, classroom satisfaction, and English learning outcomes. The questionnaire consisted of 20 closed-ended and 5 open-ended questions, and valid responses were received from 200 students at a university in Hainan. The questionnaire data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software for descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. The results showed:

- (1)90% of the students supported integrating Hainan culture into English teaching.
- (2)85% believed that this teaching method increased their learning interest.
- (3)80% thought it helped enhance their cultural awareness.
- (4)70% felt that this method improved their English proficiency.

Analysis of the open-ended questions revealed that students generally felt a stronger sense of belonging by learning Hainan culture and that cultural learning significantly improved their English expression and vocabulary.

4.2. In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with 20 students and 10 teachers to gain deeper insights into their views and specific suggestions on integrating Hainan culture into English teaching. The interview topics included attitudes toward culture-integrated teaching, implementation effectiveness, challenges encountered, and suggestions for improvement. The interview records were coded and thematically analyzed to extract key viewpoints.

The analysis revealed that both students and teachers had a positive attitude towards integrating Hainan culture into teaching. One student said, “Through learning about Li ethnic group stories, I not only expanded my vocabulary but also learned how to express complex cultural concepts in English.” Teachers believed that this teaching method not only increased students’ learning interest but also enhanced classroom interaction and students’ cultural pride.

4.3. Classroom observation

Systematic classroom observations were conducted in both the experimental and control classes over one semester. The observations covered student participation, interaction, teaching strategies, and other factors. Random observations were conducted twice per week, with a total of 16 sessions observed, recording and analyzing the behavior of students and teachers.

The observations showed that students in the experimental class had significantly higher levels of participation and interaction compared to those in the control class. Specifically:

- (1) Students in the experimental class participated in classroom discussions an average of 10 times per class, compared to 6 times in the control class.
- (2) Students in the experimental class were more engaged in group activities, with a participation rate of 90%, compared to 70% in the control class.
- (3) Teachers in the experimental class used more Hainan cultural materials and activities, such as Li ethnic group stories and Qiong opera excerpts.

4.4. Performance analysis

The mid-term and final exam scores of 50 students in the experimental class and 50 students in the control class were compared. The experimental class adopted a teaching strategy integrating Hainan culture, while the control class used traditional teaching methods. An independent sample t-test was conducted to statistically analyze the score differences between the two groups.

The performance analysis results showed that the average final exam score of students in the experimental class was 85 points, significantly higher than the 78 points of the control class ($P < 0.01$). Moreover, the cultural awareness test scores of the experimental class were also significantly higher than those of the control class, with an average increase of 20%.

5. Research conclusions and recommendations

5.1. Research conclusions

This study systematically explored the teaching strategies for integrating Hainan culture into university English courses and their impact on students' learning outcomes through multiple methods. Based on the results of the questionnaire survey, in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and performance analysis, the following conclusions were drawn:

- (1) Integrating Hainan culture into English teaching enhances students' learning interest and cultural awareness: The questionnaire results showed that 90% of students supported the integration of Hainan culture into English teaching, and 85% believed that this method increased their interest in learning. Students generally reported that learning Hainan culture not only improved their English expression but also deepened their understanding and appreciation of local culture. The in-depth interviews confirmed that students found culture-integrated teaching made English learning more lively and interesting, and strengthened their cultural pride and sense of belonging.
- (2) Integrating Hainan culture into English teaching significantly improves students' overall English proficiency: The performance analysis results showed that students in the experimental class who adopted the Hainan culture teaching strategy had significantly higher average final exam scores than those in the control class, and their cultural awareness test scores were also significantly higher. This suggests that culture-integrated teaching not only helps improve students' cultural awareness but also effectively enhances their overall English proficiency. The classroom observations revealed that students in the experimental class had significantly higher levels of participation and interaction than those in the control class, demonstrating the positive impact of culture-integrated teaching on stimulating students' motivation and improving learning outcomes.
- (3) Teachers' teaching strategies and abilities are crucial to the effectiveness of culture-integrated teaching: In-depth interviews with teachers highlighted that the design and implementation of teaching strategies are key to the success of culture-integrated teaching. Effective teaching strategies include not only selecting appropriate cultural materials but also integrating them with English teaching objectives. Additionally, teachers' intercultural teaching abilities and their knowledge of Hainan culture directly influence the effectiveness of teaching. Classroom observations showed that teachers who could flexibly use cultural materials and adapt them to actual teaching needs achieved better classroom outcomes.
- (4) Existing evaluation mechanisms need further improvement: The study also found that current English teaching evaluation mechanisms mainly focus on assessing language proficiency while neglecting the comprehensive evaluation of students' cultural awareness and intercultural communicative competence. This single evaluation approach does not fully reflect the effects of culture-integrated teaching. Based on the analysis of the cultural awareness test results in the experimental class, this study suggests that a multidimensional evaluation system is needed to more comprehensively assess students' language proficiency and cultural competence.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the research conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed to further optimize the teaching strategies for integrating Hainan culture into university English courses:

- (1) Enrich cultural materials and teaching content: The design of teaching content should further enrich the materials related to Hainan culture, covering more cultural elements and themes, such as the folklore of the Li and Miao ethnic groups, traditional festivals, handicrafts, and culinary culture. Multimedia resources, such as videos, music, and images, can be used to make the cultural content more vivid and engaging, enhancing students' learning experience and interest.
- (2) Innovate teaching methods and activity design: More diverse and interactive teaching activities should be adopted, such as role-playing, cultural displays, and scenario simulations. These activities can encourage students to actively participate in class and enhance their learning engagement. Additionally, modern teaching tools such as online courses and multimedia resources should be integrated to create a richer and more dynamic learning environment.
- (3) Enhance teacher training and intercultural teaching abilities: Teachers should receive more comprehensive training on intercultural teaching methods and Hainan culture to enhance their cultural literacy and teaching abilities. Training programs should focus on improving teachers' understanding of Hainan's history, traditions, and customs, as well as their ability to incorporate these elements into English teaching. Moreover, teachers should be encouraged to participate in cross-cultural exchanges and workshops to deepen their knowledge of intercultural education.
- (4) Optimize evaluation mechanisms: A multidimensional evaluation system should be established that includes both language proficiency and cultural awareness. This system should assess not only students' mastery of English skills but also their understanding and appreciation of Hainan culture and their intercultural communicative competence. The evaluation should include both formative and summative assessments, incorporating classroom participation, project work, and cultural presentations.
- (5) Promote cross-disciplinary collaboration: Cross-disciplinary collaboration should be encouraged to bring in expertise from fields such as anthropology, history, and cultural studies. This collaboration can provide more in-depth cultural content and help design more comprehensive teaching strategies. In addition, schools should strengthen cooperation with local cultural institutions, museums, and community organizations to provide students with more authentic and diverse cultural learning opportunities.
- (6) Promoting the utilization of external cultural resources: Make full use of external cultural resources, such as museums, cultural sites, and folk villages, by integrating classroom teaching with practical experiences. Organize activities such as student visits, research, and interviews to allow students to learn about and experience Hainanese culture in authentic cultural environments. Additionally, collaborate with local cultural institutions and communities to invite cultural experts and folk artists to give lectures and demonstrations at the school, enhancing students' direct experiences and understanding of Hainanese culture.

Incorporating Hainanese culture into college English courses not only meets the national era requirement of "cultural confidence" but also provides new perspectives and methods for English teaching. This research finds that integrating culture into teaching can effectively enhance students' interest in learning, cultural awareness, and overall English proficiency, as well as improve their intercultural communication skills. Future teaching practices should further enrich cultural content, innovate teaching methods, strengthen teacher training, refine evaluation mechanisms, and promote interdisciplinary cooperation and the use of external cultural resources.

Through these efforts, it is hoped that a positive contribution will be made to the inheritance of Hainanese culture and the innovative development of English education.

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