

Integrating Minnan Culture into High School English Reading Instruction: A Case Study of Xiamen

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Abstract: Using Xiamen as an example, this study investigates the practical route of incorporating Minnan culture into high school English reading instruction. It does this by combining the materials of Compulsory 2 UNIT4 History and Traditions, Compulsory 2 UNIT1 Cultural Heritage, and Compulsory 3 UNIT3 Diverse Cultures, and by creating a series of English reading lessons with a Minnan cultural theme. To enhance students' English reading skills and cultural literacy, southern Fujian cultural elements like Nanyin, lacquer thread carving, and Pok Pok were incorporated into the classroom through the use of games, pre-reading activities, reading activities, and post-reading activities. The results of the study show that the integration of southern Fujian culture into English reading teaching is feasible and effective, can stimulate students' learning interest, enhance the sense of cultural identity, and provide practical references for cultural integration in English teaching.

Keywords: Minnan culture; High school English; Reading teaching; Cultural integration

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1. Introduction

As an important part of Chinese culture, southern Fujian culture has unique regional characteristics and a deep cultural heritage. Xiamen, as one of the core areas of southern Fujian culture, has rich cultural resources, such as Nanyin, lacquer thread carving, and Bo cake. However, in the current high school English reading teaching, the problems of single cultural content and insufficient student interest are more prominent. Integrating Minnan culture into English reading teaching can not only enrich the teaching content but also enhance students' cultural confidence and cross-cultural communication skills ^[1]. This study takes Xiamen as an example to explore the practical path of integrating southern Fujian culture into high school English reading teaching, which provides a model case for cultural integration in English teaching.

2. Theoretical basis for the integration of culture, language, and teaching

2.1. Cultural pedagogy

Cultural pedagogy emphasizes the combination of language learning and cultural transmission, and believes that cultural background knowledge plays an important role in reading comprehension. By integrating Minnan culture into English reading teaching, it can help students understand the characteristics of Minnan culture and enhance their sense of cultural identity while learning the language.

2.2. CLIL model

The Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) teaching model promotes language learning through subject content and emphasizes the dual goals of language and content ^[2]. Incorporating Minnan culture in English reading teaching can enhance students' language skills as well as deepen their understanding of culture.

2.3. Multicultural education

The theory of multicultural education emphasizes cultural diversity and inclusiveness. Combined with the content of UNIT3 Diverse Cultures in Compulsory 3, the integration of Minnan culture can help students understand the characteristics of different cultures and develop intercultural communication skills ^[3].

3. Teaching practice design integrating southern Fujian culture into the English classroom

3.1. Teaching themes and objectives with double enhancement of language proficiency and cultural literacy

This teaching practice is based on the main line of Minnan culture, combining the contents of Compulsory 2 UNIT4 History and Traditions, Compulsory 2 UNIT1 Cultural Heritage, and Compulsory 3 UNIT3 Diverse Cultures, and designing a set of English reading teaching program with Minnan culture as the theme. The teaching objectives are divided into two aspects: language objectives and cultural objectives. The language objectives include mastering vocabulary and expressions related to the culture of southern Fujian, and improving reading comprehension, especially the ability to understand and analyze cultural texts; the cultural objectives are to help students understand the characteristics of the culture of southern Fujian, and to enhance their sense of cultural identity and cross-cultural communication skills through reading and activities ^[4]. For example, students are not only able to describe the historical origin of Nanyin in English, but also introduce the production process of lacquer thread carving to others in English, thus realizing the double enhancement of language proficiency and cultural literacy.

3.2. Fun game introduction to ignite learning enthusiasm

In the introductory section, two games, "Minnan Culture Guessing" and "Minnan Culture Quick Question and Answer," are designed to stimulate students' interest in learning and activate their background knowledge through interesting activities.

3.2.1. Minnan Culture Guessing Game

Teachers prepare pictures or props related to Minnan culture in advance, such as Nanyin musical instruments (pipa, dongxiao), lacquer thread carving crafts, and bocai dice. Students are divided into groups, and each group sends a representative to describe in English based on the pictures or props, while the other group members

guess the answers. For example, a picture of the pipa, a Minnan musical instrument, is displayed and described: This is a traditional Minnan musical instrument. It has four strings and is often used in Nanyin performances^[5]. The other group members guess the answer as “Pipa.” Through this activity, students not only learnt relevant vocabulary but also gained a preliminary understanding of Minnan culture.

3.2.2. Minnan Culture Quick Question and Answer

The teacher prepares simple questions related to Minnan culture, such as “What is the most famous Minnan musical performance? What is the traditional activity during the Mid-Autumn Festival in Xiamen?” and the students answer the questions and get points for the correct answers. This link not only enlivens the classroom atmosphere but also helps students enter the learning state quickly and paves the way for subsequent reading activities.

3.3. Pre-reading activities paving the way for deep reading

The main purpose of pre-reading activities is to help students clear reading barriers and stimulate reading interest. Firstly, to warm up the vocabulary, the teacher demonstrates key vocabulary related to Southern Fujian culture through pictures, objects, or short videos, such as Nanyin, lacquer carving, mooncake gambling, etc., and combines them with example sentences to help students understand the usage of this vocabulary. For example, the teacher shows pictures of lacquer carving crafts and explains, “Lacquer carving is a traditional Minnan craft. It uses fine threads to create intricate patterns on wooden surfaces.”

Teachers provide the title of the article, “Exploring Minnan Culture in Xiamen,” and guide students to predict the content of the article. For example, if the teacher asks, “What aspects of Minnan culture do you think the article will cover?” students may answer, Nanyin performances, traditional crafts, and local festivals^[6]. Through the prediction activity, students not only become curious about the content of the article, but also activate their existing cultural background knowledge, which prepares them for deep reading.

3.4. Reading activities exploring cultural mysteries in the text

Reading activities are the core of teaching practice, aiming to help students understand the text deeply and improve their reading skills through diversified task designs^[7]. In this session, the teacher designed three levels of tasks to guide students to explore the mysteries of Minnan culture in terms of overall comprehension, detail extraction, and knowledge sorting respectively.

The rapid reading task requires students to answer the main idea question, “What are the main aspects of Minnan culture mentioned in the text?” by skimming through the article quickly. The goal of this task is to help students grasp the overall structure of the article and develop the ability to quickly capture key information. For example, through a quick glance, students may find that the article mainly introduces representative elements of Minnan culture such as Nanyin, lacquer thread carving, and bocai. Teachers can direct students’ attention to the headings, subheadings, and first and last paragraphs of the article, which usually contain the main message of the article. Through this task, students can not only quickly understand the main content of the article, but also lay the foundation for subsequent detailed reading.

The detailed reading task requires students to read the article carefully and answer detailed questions: “What is the historical significance of Nanyin? How is lacquer carving made?” The goal of this task is to develop students’ ability to extract specific information from the text. Students may find the following information during reading: “Nanyin, with a history of over 1,000 years, is considered the ‘living fossil’ of Chinese ancient music.” or “Lacquer carving is an important part of Chinese ancient music.” or “Lacquer carving is a traditional

Minnan craft that uses fine threads to create intricate patterns on wooden surfaces.” In order to help students complete the task better, teachers can provide some reading strategies, such as looking for key words, focusing on numbers and proper nouns. Through this task, students will not only be able to deeply understand the content of the text, but also develop the habit of careful reading.

The task of drawing a mind map requires students to work in groups to draw a mind map of Minnan culture, showing its characteristics, history, and development. For example, the mind map can include branches such as “Nanyin,” “Lacquer Thread Carving,” “Pok Pok,” etc., and each branch can be subdivided into specific contents. For example, under the branch “Music,” students can add sub-branches such as “Nanyin instruments” and “Historical significance.” Under the branch of “Crafts,” students can add sub-branches such as “Materials used” and “Cultural value.” This task not only helps students to sort out the content of the article, but also develops their logical thinking and teamwork skills. Teachers can provide examples of mind maps before the task and encourage students to use different colors and shapes to enhance the visual effect. Through this task, students will not only be able to systematically grasp the knowledge about Minnan culture, but also improve their information integration and expression skills.

3.5. Post-reading activities for cultural expression from input to output

3.5.1. Role-playing

Students work in groups to act as tour guides and tourists and introduce Xiamen’s southern Fujian cultural attractions in English. For example, one student plays the role of a tour guide and introduces Gulangyu Island: “Gulangyu is known as the ‘Piano Island’ because of its rich musical heritage. It is also home to many traditional Minnan buildings.” Another student plays the role of a tourist and asks the question, “What is the most famous Minnan musical performance on the island?” Through role-playing, the students not only practiced their oral expression, but also deepened their understanding of Minnan culture.

3.5.2. Cultural comparison

Teachers guide students to compare Minnan culture with other local cultures, such as multicultural cities in UNIT3 Diverse Cultures in Compulsory 3. Students can compare and contrast the Mid-Autumn Festival Pok Pok in Xiamen with Christmas in the West and discuss the similarities and differences in the way festivals are celebrated in different cultures^[8]. This activity helps students understand cultural diversity and inclusiveness and develop intercultural communication skills.

3.5.3. Creative writing

Students write a short essay to introduce Minnan culture to their foreign friends. Students can write an essay entitled “Discover Minnan Culture in Xiamen,” introducing cultural elements such as Nanyin, lacquer thread carving, and bocai. Teachers provide a writing framework and language support, such as: “Minnan culture” is an important part of Chinese heritage. One of its most famous traditions is Nanyin, which is a traditional Chinese art form. Through creative writing, students not only consolidate what they have learnt, but also improve their written expression skills.

4. Promoting teaching and learning through evaluation

4.1. Evaluation goals: Multi-dimensional assessment of learning effectiveness

The objectives of teaching evaluation are to assess the students’ understanding of Minnan culture and the

improvement of their English reading ability, as well as to assess the effectiveness of teaching activities and students' participation.

4.2. Evaluation methods: Combination of formative and summative evaluation

Evaluation methods include formative evaluation, summative evaluation, and students' self-assessment and mutual evaluation. Formative evaluation assesses students' learning process and participation in real time through classroom observation, group discussion, and student presentation. Summative assessment assesses students' comprehension and language use of texts related to Minnan culture by designing reading comprehension and writing tasks ^[9]. Students' self-assessment and mutual assessment guide students to reflect on their learning outcomes and promote cooperative learning through group mutual assessment.

4.3. Application of evaluation results to optimize the continuous improvement of teaching and learning

Based on the evaluation results, teaching strategies are adjusted, teaching design and activity arrangements are optimized, and personalized counselling and support are provided for students' weaknesses.

5. Conclusion

The integration of Minnan culture into high school English reading teaching is feasible and effective, and can enhance students' language ability and cultural literacy. Through the game introduction, pre-reading activities, reading activities, and post-reading activities, students not only mastered the vocabulary and expressions related to Minnan culture, but also enhanced their understanding and identification of Minnan culture. In order to further optimize the teaching effect, it is recommended to strengthen teachers' learning of Minnan culture, develop more localized teaching resources, design more interactive teaching activities to stimulate students' participation, and explore the interdisciplinary teaching mode by combining English teaching with subjects such as history and art.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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