

Research on Integrating Outstanding Traditional Chinese Culture into College English Teaching

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Abstract: In the context of globalization and normalization, college English teaching bears the mission of cultivating cross-cultural communication skills and cultural confidence, beyond mere language instruction. This paper explores the current situation and influential factors of the combination of Chinese college English and excellent traditional culture. The study identifies challenges such as insufficient attention from teachers and students, biased teaching concepts, and the need for enhanced teacher competence. Recognizing its crucial role in boosting student interest, unifying the “instrumental” and “cultural” aspects of the discipline, serving cultural dissemination, and strengthening patriotism, effective integration is essential. Proposed measures include strengthening teachers’ cultural literacy, innovating teaching methods, and optimizing textbook content to systematically and creatively incorporate traditional culture. This aims to enhance students’ comprehensive English proficiency while fostering cultural confidence, promoting the inheritance and international dissemination of Chinese culture in the new era.

Keywords: Outstanding traditional Chinese culture; College English; Cross-cultural teaching

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1. Introduction

In modern society, English is the most widely used language all over the world. The learning of English not only positively impacts national economic development but also actively promotes international cultural exchange. On this basis, educational circles have proposed a variety of methods to improve the proportion of outstanding traditional Chinese culture in college English teaching. This initiative aims to meet the demands of the new era, strengthen students’ understanding of their nation and culture, broaden their horizons, and enable them to view their own culture with strong national confidence and a rational perspective. Ultimately, this approach seeks to cultivate capable and visionary talents with a robust cultural identity^[1].

2. Current situation and influential factors of integrating outstanding traditional Chinese culture into college English teaching

In order to improve the inheritance and development of national culture, the reform that integrates outstanding traditional Chinese culture into college English teaching has been constantly carried out. Yet as far as it goes, both teachers and students show insufficient attention to this initiative, and in many schools, the integration of culture remains superficial rather than substantive, leading to low student engagement.

This challenge is primarily influenced by three factors: First, the focus of English teaching has long been skewed toward language skills and understanding Western culture, aiming to facilitate international communication, while neglecting the integration and interpretation of local traditional culture. Some teachers intentionally avoid cultural comparison and integration in their teaching to minimize mother tongue interference. Second, the educational philosophy of English should be changed. With the quick development, China has been the world's second-largest economy; meanwhile, China's overall strength has been rapidly improving. In the past, China was committed to studying the advanced technology of the West, while today, an increasing number of countries urge to better understand China. As a result, the English language is playing a crucial role in building the bridge between China and the West. Finally, there is a higher demand for college English teachers' teaching quality and ability. College teachers should improve their ways and strategies to integrate the outstanding traditional Chinese culture into college English teaching.

3. Analysis of the necessity of integrating outstanding traditional Chinese culture into college English cross-cultural teaching

3.1. Stimulating students' enthusiasm for learning English and enhancing language proficiency

As the most important communication method between people, language is the most basic way to express what is in people's minds. To learn a language well, it is necessary to cultivate students' interests in English while teaching, motivate their enthusiasm, enable them to better communicate in English, and enhance their overall English proficiency. Teachers can motivate students' learning interest through many ways, while cultural education is the most important one, undoubtedly. Culture lies behind a language; one of the most significant roles of language is to communicate. Therefore, only by better presenting the cultural attributes of a language can students learn and use it well, fully play its role in its function of cultural transmission.

Students should be guided to experience the culture behind the language, develop a sense of "cultural awareness," experience the depth and richness of traditional Chinese culture, thereby improving their learning interests, motivating their exploration enthusiasm, and enhancing their desire for self-expression. Integrating outstanding traditional Chinese culture into college English classes can strengthen students' sense of belonging to the English course, help them express themselves in the language more effectively, and make them more willing to learn. Through comparisons between Chinese and English, students not only understand Western cultural characteristics but also experience China's national identity, thereby broadening their cultural horizons and increasing their enthusiasm for English learning. Meanwhile, incorporating traditional culture into English teaching can elevate the quality of instruction, improving students' cultural cognition and mastery in practical contexts.

3.2. Highlighting the "instrumental" and "cultural" dimensions to improve overall cultural literacy

"Instrumental" and "cultural" are two fundamental characteristics of language. What distinguishes English from

other disciplines is its linguistic and cultural nature. It serves as the primary means of communication, the main carrier of culture, and a key medium for cultural dissemination and exchange. The main purpose of learning English is to facilitate communication through language, enabling exchange and integration between different cultures, thereby promoting mutual interaction and development between Chinese and Western cultures.

To better leverage the “instrumental” and “cultural” roles of English, teachers must focus on culture. On one hand, they should recognize the “Western” culture embedded in English, including its Western thought patterns and linguistic features. While learning English, Chinese students need to understand the cultural characteristics and thinking habits reflected in English expressions, which will enable effective cross-cultural communication. At the same time, teachers should cultivate high-quality talents who possess a rich knowledge of the humanities, a thorough understanding of outstanding traditional Chinese culture, and the ability to master and use English well, which will make a contribution to promoting the transmission of outstanding traditional Chinese culture, facilitating communication among people of different countries.

College English teaching should emphasize its “humanistic” characteristic by delving deeper into and extending teaching materials, integrating outstanding traditional Chinese culture into instruction, and organically combining the “instrumental” and “cultural” aspects. Only in this way can the status of Chinese culture in the global cultural landscape be elevated, China’s economic development needs be better met, and more outstanding talents be cultivated to shoulder the responsibility of promoting Chinese culture globally and contributing to national revitalization.

3.3. Serving cultural transmission and facilitating global exchange

With the development of Chinese society and economy, we have entered a new stage. The pace of international integration is gradually accelerating, global understanding of China is deepening, China’s international influence is growing, and more countries will open their doors to China. China holds a pivotal position in the global industrial chain, and all countries enjoy China’s abundant products and services. Therefore, in developing foreign trade, alongside emphasizing goods export, cultural export must also be prioritized to promote China’s external economic and cultural exchanges. With economic development, while enhancing China’s economic hard power, its cultural soft power must also be strengthened. This is an important task for our country’s external relations under new historical conditions. Every Chinese person is the best spokesperson for Chinese culture. Communicating with foreign friends in English is the most direct way to transmit cultures; therefore, it is a good chance for China to present its outstanding traditional Chinese culture if more and more Chinese people can speak English. Outstanding traditional Chinese culture should be integrated into English teaching, which will strengthen students’ cultural confidence, offer more opportunities to present our country to the whole world.

3.4. Enhancing university students’ patriotic consciousness

English education should not only improve students’ foreign language skills but also broaden their horizons through the learning process. This enables them to regard their national culture with a relatively rational attitude, preventing them from becoming complacent, blindly arrogant, or self-abandoning in international talent competition. Instead, they become more rational and confident. This method can cultivate students’ patriotic feelings, helping them understand that China’s vast land hosts numerous talents and beautiful landscapes, while all of these will eventually integrate into outstanding traditional Chinese culture. Guiding university students in English learning with an educational philosophy that combines Chinese and Western elements can improve their language skills and make them recognize the importance of “cultural confidence,” conducive to cultivating socialist successors who love their country and people^[2].

4. Measures to integrate outstanding traditional Chinese culture into college English cross-cultural teaching

4.1. Strengthening teachers' emphasis on outstanding traditional culture

To better inherit and develop outstanding Chinese culture in international exchanges, teachers' educational philosophies and methods must be transformed. In English teaching, cultural differences between ethnic groups should be explored, common ground sought, course content limitations broken through, and language used flexibly to provide students with more opportunities to express their ethnic thoughts and culture in English. As "guides" for students, teachers should take outstanding traditional Chinese culture as important extended content, carefully analyzing various cultural expressions to enable students to understand both Chinese and Western cultural characteristics.

Outstanding traditional Chinese culture should be integrated into college English cross-cultural teaching. For example, the word "red" in English signifies anger and danger, but in Chinese culture, it represents luck and celebration. In textbook compilation, Chinese cultural elements should be appropriately incorporated, combining Chinese and Western cultures. This deepens students' understanding of both languages and enhances their knowledge of traditional Chinese culture while promoting English learning. Furthermore, teachers can provide students with English materials and periodicals introducing China, recommending websites, broadcasts, and open courses related to our excellent traditional culture. Additionally, teachers can encourage students to read more English or bilingual books in their spare time, such as *A History of Chinese Civilization*, *Chinese Culture*, *Investiture of the Gods*, etc.; read more books explaining Chinese culture in English, which could be English novels by Chinese authors or works by foreigners with a Chinese cultural background, like Lin Yutang's *Moment in Peking*. It is hoped that such literary works with Chinese characteristics will deepen students' understanding of Chinese culture and integrate it into English learning. Teachers can also explain our excellent traditional culture to students, allowing them greater exposure and acceptance, fostering their national faith and pride.

4.2. Improving teaching methods to understand outstanding traditional Chinese culture

In the teaching process, students' interest in English classes directly affects teaching quality and effectiveness. Currently, enhancing university students' recognition of traditional culture is a noteworthy issue^[3]. Introducing interactive teaching methods into college English classrooms can help students better understand outstanding traditional Chinese culture through creative pedagogical approaches, thereby better linking English learning with understanding traditional culture. This method enables college English teachers to integrate knowledge related to traditional culture more confidently into their teaching, enriching the content of college English instruction in activities related to traditional culture. College English teachers play a significant role in guiding and deciding the teaching content. Therefore, teachers should improve their own cultural literacy and deepen their own understanding of outstanding traditional Chinese culture. At the same time, teachers should create a relatively relaxed classroom atmosphere, innovate and reform the teaching process, and then integrate outstanding traditional Chinese culture into instruction. This maximizes the promotion and inheritance of outstanding traditional Chinese culture, guiding contemporary university students to establish correct values and cultural concepts^[4].

4.3. Incorporating outstanding traditional Chinese culture into English textbooks

Nowadays, some English textbooks contain only Western language and cultural content, lacking integration of outstanding traditional Chinese culture. This leads to an insufficient understanding of traditional culture among students learning English. Therefore, in cross-cultural teaching, teachers should recognize the importance of integrating English with outstanding traditional Chinese culture. Through studying foreign cultures, students

can better identify with local culture and inherit their national culture during the learning process, while also paying attention to the input of Western language and culture^[5]. These outstanding traditional cultural materials should be integrated into college English textbooks, reflected across listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation levels, not merely simple reading. Although current college English textbooks already include some content related to outstanding traditional Chinese culture, most involve relatively little regarding traditional Chinese culture, focusing more on Western cultural thought. As a result, textbook writers should properly integrate content related to outstanding traditional Chinese culture into college English textbooks. This allows traditional diet, antiques, clothing, folklore, architecture, martial arts, and literature to be incorporated into college English cross-cultural teaching classrooms. In English classes, students will gain a better understanding of outstanding traditional Chinese culture if they learn Western culture on this basis. Such teaching methods can improve student learning efficiency and stimulate their interest in English.

5. Conclusion

In college English teaching, teachers must not only cultivate students' language skills but also their communicative competence in different cultural contexts. To this end, college English teachers must continuously improve teaching methods, innovate teaching concepts, and, from the perspective of enhancing cultural confidence and disseminating outstanding traditional Chinese culture, integrate this precious national culture into teaching activities. These efforts will not only enrich the content of English courses but also enable students to express Chinese cultural elements in English more effectively and cultivate a group of high-quality talents with strong national consciousness and humanistic awareness for the country's future development.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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