

Integrating Regional Culture and College English Teaching by Introducing “Telling Guangxi’s Story” to College English Classes

Wenyi Liao*

Guangxi University of Foreign Languages, Nanning 530222, Guangxi Province, China

*Corresponding author: Wenyi Liao, 18290067897@163.com

Copyright: © 2024 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

Abstract: With globalization, research in intercultural communication and language teaching is becoming more in-depth and extensive. In this context, integrating regional cultural elements into English teaching holds significant value. Exploring the role of regional cultural factors in enhancing cross-cultural communication skills and English learning can offer new perspectives and methodologies for college English education. This study aims to integrate regional culture into college English teaching, particularly focusing on “telling Guangxi’s story.” The goals of this research include improving college students’ learning effectiveness and interest, providing a deeper understanding of Guangxi’s history, culture, and characteristics, and fostering an appreciation and respect for different regional cultures. Additionally, the study seeks to enhance students’ cross-cultural communication skills, cultural cognition, cultural identity, and cultural self-confidence. By doing so, it also contributes to the inheritance and development of local culture in Guangxi, promoting a modern educational approach that bridges local and global cultural understanding.

Keywords: Telling Guangxi’s story; Regional culture; College English teaching

Online publication: May 24, 2024

1. Introduction

Language serves as a vital medium to express, embody, inherit, and promote culture; the two are interdependent and inseparable. In Chinese colleges and universities, public English course textbooks predominantly feature articles from British and American sources, leading to a focus on Western culture. For instance, the textbook *Experiencing English Viewing, Listening, and Speaking* draws all its unit content from TED talks, which are rooted in Western culture, thereby lacking representation of Chinese culture. This imbalance results in Chinese students having poor English speaking skills specifically related to expressing traditional Chinese culture accurately in English. Consequently, they struggle to convey the cultural accomplishments and self-confidence of Chinese scholars, leading to communication failures or inefficiencies and foreign scholars’ misunderstandings of Chinese culture. Fan ^[2] argues that cultural confidence and self-awareness are essential for the development and prosperity of ethnic culture, and the inheritance of ethnic minority culture should

be rooted in cultural confidence. The “poor English” phenomenon stems from an overemphasis on Western language and culture learning, neglecting traditional Chinese culture. A small fragment of cultural geography on a map paper must be embedded in a larger picture^[3]. Regional culture, as a crucial part of Chinese culture, is integral to local cultural teaching and essential for students to tell Chinese stories effectively. Given the ethnic diversity in Guangxi, English teaching should be anchored in national culture and connected to the daily lives of local ethnic groups. This approach promotes the integration of regional culture and English teaching, enhancing the quality of English education in ethnic minority regions, and fostering cross-cultural communication and cultural inheritance^[4]. However, there is currently a research gap in the integration of regional culture into college English teaching in Guangxi. It is thus imperative to focus on incorporating “telling Guangxi’s story” into college English classes and exploring ways and methods to integrate regional culture with college English teaching.

2. Research trends of integrating cultural elements into college English teaching on domestic and abroad

In recent years, extensive research has been conducted on the application of cultural factors in English teaching. Some scholars studied the impact of incorporating regional cultural elements into English teaching on English learning effectiveness and cross-cultural communication ability. For example, Saville-Troike^[5] studied the influence of American culture on English language teaching and proposed corresponding teaching strategies and methods. Kramsch^[6] discussed the relationship between cultural factors and language teaching from the perspective of cultural context and proposed some effective English teaching methods and strategies. Chinese scholars Li and Zhao^[7] found that introducing cultural elements into classroom teaching can improve students’ interest in English learning. In addition, Wang^[8] also studied the cultural awareness cultivation strategies in oral English teaching from the perspective of cultural factors and proposed corresponding teaching methods. Liu and Wang^[9] explored the integration of “Liu Sanjie” culture in teaching Chinese, adding Guangxi’s regional cultural symbol to the curriculum to enrich language teaching and learning content. This approach aims to enhance students’ recognition of Chinese culture through the unique charm of regional culture, thereby promoting cultural exchanges between the East and the West. Similar to the “Liu Sanjie” example, incorporating English expressions of words that embody typical Chinese cultural characteristics and represent unique aspects of Chinese life is essential for effective international communication. Without these culturally significant words, achieving meaningful global communication becomes challenging^[10]. Besides, Liu^[11] states that teachers should fully leverage the unique cultural resources of their local area by establishing a complementary language and cultural teaching model that integrates “in class + out of class” activities. In foreign language classrooms, it is essential to emphasize the teaching of Chinese culture and its expression in English. This approach involves exploring new teaching modes that combine English language learning with regional cultural elements. Such a model is crucial for both the inheritance and promotion of Chinese culture and responding to the demands of cultural globalization. According to Yang’s study^[12], the reform and innovation of teaching methods are essential for cultivating students’ cross-cultural communication abilities in college English translation teaching. This study analyzes the methods and feasibility of integrating Chinese cultural elements into college English classrooms from three aspects: the content of college English textbooks, the teaching platform, and the teaching activities.

3. Significance of the integration of Guangxi regional culture and college English education

In today's society, cross-cultural communication has become an essential and important component of international communication activities^[13]. The purpose of this study is to explore the ways to introduce Guangxi regional culture into university English teaching, to improve students' cross-cultural communication ability and cultural awareness, and to promote the inheritance and development of Guangxi's local culture. Additionally, it seeks to address potential challenges and issues associated with the integration of regional cultural elements into English teaching in Guangxi. Furthermore, it aims to examine the relationship between the preservation and advancement of Guangxi's local culture and the broader promotion of Chinese culture.

Therefore, the significance of this study is the innovative introduction of Guangxi's regional cultural elements into college English teaching to improve students' cultural communication ability and achieve the dual purpose of regional cultural inheritance and promotion. The challenges of introducing "telling Guangxi stories" into the integration of Guangxi's regional cultural elements and English teaching will be described in the following parts.

4. Current status on the integration of Guangxi regional culture and college English teaching in college English classrooms

4.1. Existing problems of integrating regional culture into college English teaching

4.1.1. Limitation of integrating Guangxi's regional culture into teaching materials

In the realm of English teaching, there has been a notable emphasis on Western culture, often overshadowing the significance of Chinese and local traditional culture. This oversight has resulted in Chinese college students swiftly acquiring English language skills and familiarity with Western culture while neglecting the study of their own native culture. Many current university English textbooks predominantly feature British and American cultural references, with limited integration of Chinese cultural knowledge^[14]. For instance, the widely-used college English textbook *Experiencing English Viewing, Listening and Speaking* primarily draws content from TED talks, predominantly focusing on Western culture and technology. Without adequate supplementation and expansion of regional cultural content, there's a notable absence of Chinese and regional culture in college English teaching materials. Consequently, the limited integration of regional culture into teaching materials has hindered students' knowledge and understanding of regional culture and constrained their ability to promote Chinese culture globally.

4.1.2. Lack of innovation in teaching methods and teaching platforms

Currently, college English education lacks sufficient emphasis on cross-cultural communication skills. Moreover, teachers' explanations typically adhere strictly to textbooks, seldom incorporating China's social realities or addressing local phenomena in English expression.

The conventional English curriculum in China overly prioritizes fragmented language knowledge instruction, often segregating language from culture. This traditional teaching approach extends to college English instruction^[15]. It is evident that the lack of innovation in English teaching methods and platforms is the primary driver behind Chinese cultural aphasia. While students may be well-versed in Western culture, they often struggle with expressing themselves regarding Chinese culture and their immediate surroundings.

4.1.3. Lack of awareness of local regional culture

Many college students have studied English extensively, adeptly describing Western festivals like Christmas

Day and Thanksgiving Day in fluent English. However, they often struggle to articulate local festivals such as the Sanyuesan Festival, Cannon Dragon Festival, and Torch Festival, which bear distinct ethnic characteristics in Guangxi. This issue stems from a lack of emphasis on local culture in current English teaching practices, resulting in a disconnect from the local context. In an effort to meet Western standards, English teaching often prioritizes international benchmarks, sometimes mimicking foreign language teaching practices without due consideration for the culture of the students' own country and its people. Consequently, the content taught in English classrooms often feels detached from students' daily lives, leading to a skewed understanding of both Chinese and Western cultures and suboptimal teaching outcomes.

4.2. Ways of integrating regional culture into college English teaching

4.2.1. Integration of local culture and teaching materials

Textbooks serve as pivotal resources in education, particularly for conveying the rich and diverse regional culture of Guangxi. Given the breadth and depth of Guangxi's cultural heritage, it's imperative to establish a meticulous research and collection plan to efficiently gather and store exemplary Guangxi stories. This plan should outline the scope and objectives of the collection, ensuring accuracy and comprehensiveness in the data obtained. The collection process should encompass various aspects of Guangxi's regional culture, spanning historical narratives, folklore, geographical features, and folk customs. This necessitates a combination of field research and literature review to procure relevant materials. Establishing a dedicated team of teachers is crucial for this endeavor. Collaboratively, they can devise detailed research and collection plans to enhance the content of textbooks with diverse and representative materials, including widely circulated, well-known, and iconic Guangxi stories like the myths and legends of Xiangbi Mountain and the tale of Liu Sanjie. Furthermore, leveraging digital platforms is instrumental in organizing and categorizing regional cultural materials. Establishing network databases and digital libraries enables the systematic organization and classification of collected materials for future reference and utilization. By utilizing digital platforms, educators can ensure efficient storage and accessibility of Guangxi's cultural wealth, facilitating its integration into educational resources.

4.2.2. Development of teaching platforms and optimization of teaching methods

Utilizing the scientific and technological innovation platform available at the college is essential for developing diverse and practical teaching resources. Leveraging the college's digital innovation platform, including online teaching platforms and virtual laboratories, enables the integration of Guangxi's local story materials into teaching resources, thereby enhancing teaching effectiveness and students' interest in learning. Incorporating emerging digital platforms for interaction and communication with students, such as social media and short videos showcasing Guangxi's local history, culture, and folk customs, provides valuable insights into students' understanding and interests in local culture. Thus, the formulation of a detailed teaching resource plan is imperative to create diverse and practical teaching resources and optimize the online teaching platform to improve teaching outcomes and student engagement. Furthermore, developing and optimizing corresponding teaching resources, including teaching design, plans, PPT courseware, and video teaching resources, is crucial. These resources should integrate regional cultural elements of Guangxi with English teaching requirements, offering educational value and practicality.

Regarding teaching methods, teachers should consciously integrate Guangxi's excellent classic cultural stories into college English teaching and incorporate local culture into offline classrooms. This integration serves as a vital entry point for reforming college English course teaching. For instance, teachers can seamlessly weave relevant Guangxi regional culture elements into English teaching, encouraging students to objectively

compare Guangxi regional cultures with Western cultures to stimulate their interest in learning the English language. Moreover, teachers can utilize modern information technology and interactive shared learning platforms to supplement offline classroom learning shortcomings, thereby enriching students' learning resources and facilitating personalized and independent learning experiences.

4.2.3. Enriching and expanding regional cultural and educational activities

To promote regional culture education and enhance students' interest and enthusiasm for regional culture, various initiatives can be implemented. These include organizing Guangxi cultural exhibitions, cultural lectures, "Telling Guangxi Stories" speech contests, Guangxi intangible cultural heritage inheritance activities, and cultural experience activities such as folk culture exhibitions and local food tastings. These events aim to deepen students' understanding and experience of Guangxi culture, improve their cognition and appreciation of regional culture, and ignite their interest and enthusiasm for it. Additionally, such activities contribute to the enrichment and diversification of regional cultural materials. In future research, exploring the relationship between cultural factors and language teaching is crucial. This involves developing more English teaching materials and resources suitable for local cultural backgrounds. Moreover, exploring scientific and effective teaching methods and strategies to promote the continuous innovation and development of English education is essential.

5. Conclusion

Telling Guangxi's stories and telling the story of China complement each other, facilitating the promotion and preservation of Chinese culture, bolstering the nation's cultural confidence, and fostering international dissemination and exchange of Chinese cultural heritage. The fusion of regional cultural elements into English teaching serves to heighten students' cultural awareness and confidence, while concurrently advancing the preservation and evolution of Guangxi's local culture. Textbooks like *Telling Guangxi's Stories* offer teaching materials closely aligned with students' learning experiences, providing them with practical and engaging content. As students enhance their cross-cultural communication skills and cultural awareness, they actively contribute to the preservation and advancement of Guangxi's cultural heritage. Moreover, the integration of regional cultural elements into English teaching paves the way for the development of a new interdisciplinary professional framework for college English education.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Dou X, 2022, The Integration of College English Teaching and Regional Culture in Colleges and Universities Under the Background of Recognition Linguistics. *Journal of Jingdezhen College*. 2022(10): 37–51.
- [2] Fan X, 2012, A Brief Analysis of the Cultural Self-Confidence and Cultural Inheritance of the Daur Nation. *Journal of Qiqihar University*, 2012(4): 65–66.
- [3] Mike K, 2006, *Cultural Geography* [Yang S, Song H, Trans.], Nanjing University Press, 2–3
- [4] Zhu G, 2020, Research on the Integration of Chinese Culture and College English Education. Beijing Transportation Humanities Press. 2020(04): 14–21.

- [5] Saville T, 2009, Cross-cultural Communication in Elementary Classrooms. *Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Discourse*, 2009(21): 36–46.
- [6] Kramsc S, 1998, *Language and Culture*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 50–53.
- [7] Li Y, Zhao L, 2017, Application of Project Teaching Method in English Teaching. *Sino-Foreign Communication*, 2017(17): 11–29.
- [8] Wang S, 2018, Pay Attention to Reading Training and Cultivate Students' Reading Ability. *The Road to Success*, 2018(8): 19–23.
- [9] Liu H, Wang P, 2019, The Communication Value and Activity Design of Liu Sanjie's Culture: A Case of the Integration of Regional Culture in the Teaching of Chinese as a Foreign Language. *Educational Observation*, 2019(27): 14–16.
- [10] Wang R, 2000, *Chinese English Exists Objectively. Research on English Lexicals*. Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, Shanghai, 90–103.
- [11] Liu X, 2001, *Introduction to Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language*, Beijing University of Language and Culture Press, Beijing, 32
- [12] Yang G, 2016, Strategies for Reconstructing Chinese Local Cultural Identity in English Teaching in Colleges and Universities: Thinking Triggered by the Phenomenon of “Chinese Cultural Apathy”. *Culture and Teaching*, 2016(2): 12–17.
- [13] Chen Y, 2018, New Ideas for Cross-Cultural Communication Practice Teaching Guided by Language Output. *Journal of Red River College* 2010(08): 112–115.
- [14] Zhang H, Yu R, 2020, Research on the Presentation of Chinese Culture in College English Textbooks. *The Frontier of Foreign Language Education Research*, 2020(03): 42–48 + 91.
- [15] Ma C, 2023, The Integration of Regional Culture into the Reform of English Teaching in Local Colleges and Universities: Take Jingchu Culture Education in College English Courses as an Example. *English Square*, 2023(15): 23–33.

Publisher's note

Bio-Byword Scientific Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.