

# On the Teaching Path of “Four Integration “ in College English Course in Context of New Liberal Arts

Hairong Wu\*

Heyuan Polytechnic, Heyuan 517000, Guangdong Province, China

\*Corresponding author: Hairong Wu, 707347403@qq.com

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**Abstract:** With the development of information technology and the proposal of the new liberal arts, traditional liberal arts education is facing new challenges and opportunities. The new liberal education emphasizes interdisciplinary integration and the cultivation of critical thinking. In this context, it is urgently essential to explore the “four integration” teaching path in college English, which is an important part of higher education. That is, the integration of local culture and English, digital technology and English, outcome-based education and English, and cultural education and English to comprehensively improve teaching quality and cultivate high-quality English talents with global vision and cross-cultural communication ability.

**Keywords:** New liberal arts; Local culture; Digital technology; Outcome-based education; Cultural education

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## 1. Introduction

In 2017, Hiram College in the United States took the lead in putting forward the educational concept of new liberal arts, which marked a profound change in the field of humanities and social sciences, emphasizing interdisciplinary integration, the cultivation of innovative thinking and the promotion of humanistic spirit<sup>[1]</sup>. Wu Yan (2019) believes that teachers and colleges should grasp the general trend of higher education development, accelerate the construction of new liberal arts, and cultivate high-quality foreign language talents<sup>[2]</sup>. College English is an important part of higher education. Under the background of the new liberal arts, it is urgent to explore new teaching paths to meet the needs of the times and cultivate high-quality English talents with global vision and cross-cultural communication ability. This paper explores the “four integration” teaching paths of college English under the background of new liberal arts. That is, the integration of local culture + English, digital technology + English, results-oriented + English, cultural education + English, to provide references for college English teaching reform.

## **2. The dilemma of college English teaching in the context of new liberal arts**

### **2.1. Limitations of traditional teaching mode**

Traditional college English teaching tends to emphasize the teaching of language knowledge, focusing on vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing skills, and neglecting the cultivation of students' cross-cultural communication ability, innovative thinking ability and humanistic quality.

#### **(1) Insufficient cultivation of cross-cultural communication skills**

In the traditional college English teaching model, teachers mainly focus on the content of textbooks, and most of the articles and exercises in textbooks focus on the training of language knowledge, while the content of cross-cultural communication is less involved. Teachers also tend to focus on language forms. The introduction of cultural background, values, social etiquette and other aspects of English-speaking countries is relatively small. In addition, teachers often ignore the cultural diversity of other countries and regions, as well as the contrast and integration of local culture and English culture, lack in-depth analysis and comparison of different cultures, and it is difficult for students to fully understand the differences and commonalities between different cultures. The lack of attention to local culture in the teaching content makes it difficult for students to combine English with local culture in the learning process, and cannot effectively carry out cross-cultural communication.

#### **(2) The training of innovative thinking ability is insufficient**

The new liberal arts emphasize the integration and innovation of disciplines and require the cultivation of talents with critical thinking, creative thinking and the ability to solve complex problems. However, traditional college English teaching aims mainly focus on the teaching of language knowledge, with students mastering vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing skills as the core. This kind of single teaching goal makes students only focus on the improvement of language skills in the learning process, and lack the training and development of innovative thinking. Teachers usually explain according to the content of the textbook and occupy a dominant position in the class, while students are passive listeners and learners, lacking opportunities for independent exploration and innovation. This teaching method ignores the subject status of students and the cultivation of innovative thinking.

#### **(3) The cultivation of humanistic quality has been neglected**

Traditional college English teaching lays more emphasis on the training of language knowledge and skills, and teachers often neglect the in-depth exploration of humanistic topics, resulting in students' lack of thinking about the cultural connotation, values and humanistic spirit behind the language. However, in the context of the new liberal arts, students not only need to have solid professional knowledge and skills but also need to have good humanistic literacy to better face and solve many problems that may occur in their future study and work. For example, in cross-cultural communication, misunderstandings and conflicts may occur due to the lack of understanding and respect for different cultures. When facing complex social problems, it may be difficult to come up with effective solutions due to a lack of critical thinking and innovative spirit.

### **2.2. The unification of teaching resources**

At present, college English teaching resources are relatively simple and lack deep integration with local culture, digital technology, and results-oriented and cultural education, which limits the expansion of students' vision and

the improvement of comprehensive quality.

(1) Insufficient integration with local culture

At present, there are few contents related to local culture in college English teaching resources. In the teaching process, teachers rarely guide students to introduce and spread local culture in English, and students have an insufficient understanding of the cultural characteristics of their region, and it is difficult to express and communicate in English. This is not only detrimental to the inheritance and development of local culture but also limits students' vision and way of thinking.

(2) Insufficient integration with digital technology

The aggregation of digital educational resources and the construction of platforms have changed the traditional education paradigm, broken geographical restrictions, and enabled educational equity to the maximum extent<sup>[3]</sup>. However, the existing college English teaching resources are mainly in the traditional form of textbooks and courseware and lack rich digital teaching resources. The development and application of various high-quality English online courses, virtual laboratories, English learning software and other digital teaching resources are insufficient. The essence of language learning is that learners participate in practice and experience in the social context in which the language is spoken, and construct social meaning through two-way interaction with specific objects<sup>[4]</sup>. However, the current college English teaching fails to make full use of digital technology to create a real situation and context for students and provide an immersive language and cultural learning space, resulting in a relatively simple learning style for students, which is difficult to meet the personalized and diversified learning needs of students. At the same time, teachers are not skilled in digital technology in the teaching process, so it is difficult for them to give full play to the advantages of digital technology.

(3) It is not deeply integrated with results orientation

In the context of New Liberal Arts, based on the results-oriented concept, college English teaching should not only train students' basic language ability but also cultivate their cross-cultural communication ability, critical thinking, innovative thinking and other practical abilities and qualities. However, the current college English teaching does not fully embody the results-oriented concept, which is mainly manifested in three aspects. First, the expected learning outcomes of students are not clear enough and lack of specific measurement standards, which makes students lack clear goals and motivation in the learning process, and it is difficult to improve the learning effect. Second, the teaching design does not reflect the principle of student-centered, and the form of teaching activities is simple, which fails to stimulate learning interest and enhance participation. Third, the evaluation method is simple, and teachers often measure students' learning results by the final paper results, ignoring the specific assessment of students' cross-cultural communication ability, critical thinking ability and innovative thinking ability.

(4) It is not tightly integrated with cultural education

In current college English teaching, the function of cultural education has not been fully developed. The curriculum mainly focuses on the training of language knowledge and skills, while it lacks of courses on cross-cultural communication and humanistic quality. In college English textbooks, language knowledge and skills training occupy a large amount of space, and there is relatively little content about the culture of English-speaking countries and cross-cultural comparison. In particular, insufficient attention is paid to the English expression and transmission of Chinese native culture, and there is a lack of comparative teaching between the culture of English-speaking countries and Chinese culture. Although students have

learned a lot of English language knowledge, they lack cross-cultural communication practice activities, and it is difficult to accurately introduce and spread excellent traditional Chinese culture in English. It is also difficult to deeply understand the differences and commonalities between different cultures and the problems that should be paid attention to in cross-cultural communication through comparative analysis. At the same time, in the teaching process, teachers fail to guide students' cultural awareness and cultivate their cultural literacy, resulting in the serious phenomenon of "aphasia" of Chinese culture and the lack of dialectical education of Chinese and Western culture, which is not conducive to the cultivation of correct values of college students [5].

### **2.3. Lack of students' subjectivity**

In the traditional teaching mode, students are often in a passive position to accept knowledge, lacking initiative and creativity. It is difficult to stimulate students' learning interest and internal motivation, which affects the improvement of teaching effect.

#### **(1) Passive learning process**

In traditional teaching, students are often passive receivers of knowledge, accustomed to learning under the arrangement of teachers, and cannot independently make learning plans, or choose learning content and learning methods. Teachers take the dominant position in class and give a lot of explanations, from vocabulary, and grammar to text analysis. Students just sit and listen carefully, take notes, and memorize and understand knowledge according to the pace and requirements of teachers, without actively participating in the process of knowledge construction.

#### **(2) The uniformity of learning style**

Under the traditional teaching mode, learning resources are limited and teaching mainly focuses on paper textbooks, which limits students' comprehensive cognition of English language learning. English language learning environment is relatively closed, mainly limited to in-school classroom learning and lacks real language practice opportunities. Learning activities also focus on the training of language knowledge and lack the cultivation of comprehensive language application ability. Online learning resources have not been fully integrated and utilized, resulting in single English learning resources and learning channels, and it is difficult to achieve personalized learning needs.

#### **(3) Lack of motivation to learn**

Many students study primarily to pass exams, earn credits, or meet graduation requirements, rather than out of a genuine love of the English language and culture. This kind of utilitarian learning purpose makes students lack internal motivation and enthusiasm in the learning process. Once they achieve the short-term goal, they will relax their English learning. In addition, students lack the ability for self-motivation. Due to the lack of stimulation of external factors, it is easy to lose the motivation to learn. When facing learning difficulties and setbacks, it is easy to give up the idea.

## **3. College English teaching approaches under the new liberal arts background**

Under the background of the development of the new liberal arts, adhering to the concept of interdisciplinary integration with information technology, the "four integration" teaching model is proposed to break the discipline barrier, strengthen discipline integration, and open up a new path for college English teaching.

### **3.1. The integration of local culture and English**

Integrating local cultural elements into English teaching can enrich teaching content and enhance students' cultural identity and pride. By setting up English courses related to local culture, organizing field trips and cultural exchange activities, students can learn about local culture while learning English and improve cross-cultural communication skills.

#### **(1) Textbook adaptation and curriculum setting**

Local culture thematic units are added to the textbooks, and representative local historical stories, traditional customs, folk art, historical sites and other places are selected as text materials to describe and introduce them in English. At the same time, teachers design exercises related to local culture, such as asking students to describe a traditional custom in their hometown in English or introduce a local place of interest. In addition, the second English class about local culture is set up, so that students can have a deeper understanding of the cultural characteristics of their hometown and improve their ability to use English and spread local culture.

#### **(2) Cultural exchange and social practice**

Schools should organize students to actively participate in international local cultural exchange practice activities, introduce the characteristics and charm of local culture to foreign friends, enhance foreign friends' understanding of local culture, better spread local culture, improve cross-cultural communication ability, and promote cultural exchange and integration. For example, in the international cultural festival held in the local, undertake the reception of foreign guests and cultural explanation and publicity work. At the same time, students are encouraged to take the exam for a bilingual tour guide certificate, to provide high-quality tour guide services for foreign tourists who come to visit the local area as much as possible, and better publicize the hometown culture. Students participate in the field research of local culture, make English propaganda materials about local culture, apply the knowledge of English and local culture to practice, and improve their language application ability and social responsibility.

### **3.2. The integration of digital technology and English**

Digitization of education is an important breakthrough to open up a new circuit of education development and shape new advantages of education development in the country. Colleges will further promote digital education to provide effective support for personalized learning, lifelong learning, expanding the coverage of quality education resources and modernizing education. The core of the digital transformation of education is to realize the deep integration of digital technology and education and teaching<sup>[6]</sup>, so as to improve the quality of education, promote education equity, and build a virtuous circle ecology of digital education and digital governance. Under the background of the new liberal arts, the rapid development of digital technology provides a broad platform for college English teaching. The deep integration of digital technology and college English teaching should be achieved in the following aspects.

#### **(1) Update educational concepts and improve teachers' digital literacy**

In order to meet the needs of talent training in the digital era, universities and teachers need to update their educational concepts, establish the goal of individualized education and people-oriented education, adhere to the concept of "connecting first, content-based, and cooperative," so that digitalization can comprehensively empower students' learning, teachers' teaching and research innovation, and realize the important transformation from "standardized education" to "personalized learning." Universities should regularly organize digital technology training for college English teachers. Provide teachers with online

learning course resources to facilitate teachers to independently learn the basic knowledge of digital technology, teaching application skills, case analysis and other content to improve teachers' practical ability to use digital technology to design interactive teaching activities and carry out personalized teaching. Teachers need to continuously improve their digital literacy, not only the ability to use digital technology to teach students English knowledge but also the ability to guide students to use digital technology to create English knowledge.

(2) Build a smart environment and promote resource sharing

In the process of educational reform and development in the digital age, colleges and universities need to establish a mechanism of co-construction and sharing of digital educational resources, innovate educational service formats by relying on digital technology, and promote the optimal supply and allocation of educational resources. Given the learning characteristics and learning needs of higher vocational students, emphasis should be placed on the application demands of immersive learning on teaching resources in diversified learning situations, to promote immersive learning and improve the quality of teaching resources from multiple aspects such as technology input, resource system, methods and supervision and control<sup>[7]</sup>. College English courses need to use digital technology to build an online learning platform, integrate high-quality college English course resources at home and abroad, enrich the forms of teaching resources, and realize the combination of large-scale construction of digital resources and personalized services, such as the production of audio, video, animation and other multimedia teaching materials, which can help students learn language and cultural knowledge in a relaxed and happy atmosphere as well as better understanding and remembering; The development of video courses, micro-courses, online courses, online quality courses, etc., and integration of digital technology into education and learning can meet the personalized learning needs of different types and levels of learners. VR (virtual reality) and AR (augmented reality) technologies are used to create an immersive English learning environment for students, increase the interest and interaction of learning, and improve cross-cultural communication skills.

(3) Broaden the teaching scene and innovate the teaching mode

The application of digital technology can effectively broaden the boundary of college English teaching and improve the quality and efficiency of education. Teachers should fully utilize digital technology, organically combine offline classrooms with online platforms, multimedia software and virtual learning space, and build online and offline multi-scene learning situations. With the help of digital technology, students can construct knowledge graphs, design personalized English teaching content, and integrate new content. At the same time, by introducing flipped classrooms, modular curriculum and project-based teaching, the teaching methods and means are enriched to improve students' English learning experience and build a student-oriented teaching model that emphasizes innovation and practical ability.

### **3.3. Results-oriented + English integration**

The concept of results-oriented education emphasizes the teaching design and evaluation guided by students' learning outcomes and the clarity of teaching objectives, certainty, and measurability. College English curriculum design should focus on learning outcomes and reverse design of teaching content and teaching activities. Teachers need to adopt a variety of teaching methods to meet the needs of different learning outcomes. The design of teaching activities should be targeted, and pay attention to the cultivation of students' comprehensive practical ability. For example, role-playing, case studies, and project cooperation are used to encourage students



to improve their problem-solving skills through participation in learning activities. The integrative approach of formative assessment and terminal assessment is adopted to comprehensively evaluate students' learning outcomes. With in-depth analysis of students' learning outcome assessment results, teachers could find out the problems and deficiencies in teaching, timely adjusting teaching strategies to improve the teaching quality.

(1) Define the expected learning outcomes

Based on the concept of results-oriented education, teachers should clarify the expected learning results that students should achieve in English learning, and refine them into specific goals, making them clear and measurable, such as making clear requirements on students' English language knowledge, skills and cultural literacy. Then, teachers should design teaching content and teaching methods around specific teaching objectives, and ensure that teaching activities revolve around expected learning outcomes.

(2) Reverse design of teaching content and activities

Starting from the expected learning outcomes, the teaching content and activities are reversely designed. The teaching content should be designed closely around the expected results, covering the language knowledge, skills and cultural literacy that students need to master. The design and organization of teaching activities should reflect the student-centered principle, encourage students to actively participate in the learning process, and take the initiative to become the builders of knowledge. Through the design of a variety of teaching activities, such as scenario simulation, case analysis and project cooperation, teachers can better stimulate students' learning interest and motivation, and promote active learning and deep thinking. For example, in the Chinese food culture teaching module of Unit 2, teachers can ask students to make short English videos in groups to introduce the food customs and culture of their hometown, to practice students' English ability, teamwork ability, and problem-solving ability. They can also choose cases of differences between Chinese and foreign food customs and cultures for students to analyze and discuss. Through case analysis, students can learn language expression and communication strategies in actual situations and improve cross-cultural communication skills.

(3) Establish a results-oriented evaluation system

The concept of results-oriented education emphasizes the dynamic and developmental nature of education and requires educators to constantly evaluate the effects of education and make corresponding adjustments and improvements based on feedback. It encourages educators and students to participate in the improvement of the educational process to ensure the continuous improvement of education quality and effects. Teachers should adopt diversified evaluation methods to comprehensively evaluate students' learning effects. Quantitative evaluation, such as regular quizzes, standardized tests at the end of the term and questionnaires, can be used to evaluate learning outcomes. Through classroom observation, interviews, and other forms, teachers can conduct qualitative evaluations on the learning effect, and give timely feedback and suggestions. Students can assess their progress and shortcomings in knowledge, skills, and qualities according to the set of expected learning goals. Students can evaluate each other, and perform objective evaluation on the performance of students' participation in teaching activities, which is conducive to cultivating students' critical thinking and cooperative spirit.

### **3.4. Culture education + English integration**

Universities guide students to pay attention to social issues and cultivate their sense of social responsibility and citizenship by offering humanities courses, organizing social practice and volunteering activities. At the same time, they should integrate socialist core values into English teaching, cultivate students' good moral cultivation

and multicultural awareness, and give full play to the “cultural education” function of the construction of new liberal arts.

(1) Curriculum and textbook selection

In the college English curriculum system, humanities courses related to the culture of English-speaking countries, cross-cultural communication, and world literature are added. In terms of the selection of teaching materials, they should select those that contain rich language knowledge, but also integrate cultural connotations and humanistic spirit, such as human values, social justice, environmental protection, and other topics, to guide students to think about profound social issues. Teachers can skillfully integrate the content of socialist core values into teaching materials and teaching activities, guide students to analyze the values embodied in them, such as integrity, friendliness, dedication, etc., and cultivate students’ good moral cultivation.

(2) Extracurricular practical activities

Teachers organize students to participate in international social practice and volunteer service activities and strive to provide students with opportunities to use English in social service, to cultivate students’ social responsibility and civic consciousness. For example, we organize students to act as volunteers in some international cultural activities and sports events, communicate with people from different countries in English in real situations, learn about the needs and expectations of people in different cultural backgrounds, and at the same time contribute to society.

(3) Construction of teaching staff

As the key implementers of cultural education, the promotion of teachers’ cultural accomplishment is of great importance. Universities should regularly organize teachers to participate in cultural training, academic seminars, and other activities to improve teachers’ professional knowledge and cultural literacy. Teachers are encouraged to explore and innovate teaching methods and means in teaching, to integrate cultural education concepts into college English teaching more efficiently. Meanwhile, teachers are trained to make full use of multimedia teaching resources, online learning platforms and information technology to create a richer and more vivid learning experience for students. Teachers may create an international cooperative teaching model, so that teachers and students can get in touch with the culture and educational resources of different countries, broaden their international horizons, cultivate multicultural awareness, and improve the effect of cultural education.

## 4. Conclusion

In the context of the new liberal arts, the discussion on the “four fusion” teaching path of college English provides a new idea and a new direction for the reform of college English teaching. Through the deep integration of local culture + English, digital technology + English, results-oriented + English, cultural education + English, the current difficulties and problems in college English teaching can be effectively solved, and the teaching quality and effect can be improved. In the future, teachers should continue to deepen our understanding of the new liberal arts concept, constantly innovate teaching methods and means, and contribute to cultivating high-quality English talents with global vision and cross-cultural communication skills. At the same time, more educators are expected to participate in the research and practice in this field and jointly promote the reform and development of college English teaching.



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