

# Practice and Research on the Integration of Hakka Culture into College English Teaching from the Perspective of Constructivism Learning Theory

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**Abstract:** From the perspective of constructivism learning theory, this paper conducts an empirical study on the integration of Hakka culture into college English teaching, aiming at the current situation of neglecting local culture education in college English teaching, low enthusiasm and participation of students in learning, and low learning effect, and evaluates the practical effect through questionnaires, analysis of test scores and feedback from students. The results show that this teaching mode can effectively stimulate students' learning interest, enhance their learning initiative and participation, and improve their learning effect, cultural self-confidence, and intercultural communication ability.

**Keywords:** Constructivism learning theory; Hakka culture; College English teaching

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## 1. The question is raised

Constructivism learning theory is a theory of knowledge acquisition and learning processes, developed from the ideas of psychologists such as Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, whose core ideas include knowledge construction, learner centrality, sociocultural influence, situational learning, and reflective learning. The core elements of constructivism learning theory cover the meaning of learning and the way of learning. According to this theory, knowledge acquisition is mainly acquired by individuals as learners in a specific economic, social, and cultural background, through the interaction with teachers and other learners and the use of necessary learning materials to construct the meaning of knowledge or learned objects <sup>[1]</sup>. Based on this, “situation”, “collaboration”, “conversation”, and “meaning construction” are regarded as the four key elements or characteristics of the educational environment, reflecting the learner-centered knowledge acquisition process.

At present, college English teaching pays too much attention to language knowledge and Western culture

education, but neglects the importance of local culture education. Traditional Chinese culture is the artistic treasure of the Chinese nation and even the whole world, and Hakka culture is an integral part of traditional Chinese culture. Integrating Hakka culture into college English teaching with Hakka students as the main part is an attempt to apply constructivism learning theory in practice. This approach can not only effectively overcome the limitations of current college English teaching but also improve the quality of education and meet the needs of the country and society for high-quality talents.

## **2. Practice of integrating Hakka culture into college English teaching**

### **2.1. Practice objects**

Guangdong Province is the province with the largest Hakka population, which is mainly distributed in Meizhou in northeast Guangdong, Shaoguan in North Guangdong, Heyuan in middle Guangdong, Huizhou, and other cities. Five counties and one district in Heyuan belong to the pure resident county of Guangdong<sup>[2]</sup>. As a higher vocational college serving Heyuan, most of its students are Hakka, and most of them are local students in Heyuan. The study takes Class 2 of Property Management, Grade 2023, as the experimental object. There are 42 students in this class, more than 60% of whom come from the Hakka area of Guangdong Province, and about 50% of whom come from pure guest counties. Based on the fact that most of the students are Hakka, this paper tries to integrate Hakka culture into college English teaching. Constructivism learning theory emphasizes that the process of knowledge learning should be based on students' own experience, which has important theoretical guiding significance for this study<sup>[3]</sup>.

### **2.2. Practical teaching materials**

In the first semester of the College English course, Basic Module 1 of the New Standard Vocational English Course is selected. Although this textbook has tried to integrate traditional Chinese culture into the teaching content, it has not been deeply integrated<sup>[4]</sup>. Some cultural elements in the textbooks are far away from students' cognition, and it is difficult to arouse students' emotional resonance. As a result, teachers face many obstacles when designing teaching activities, and it also has an adverse impact on the stimulation of students' learning interest. Given this, the author and his teaching team adhere to the principle of integrity and innovation to integrate and optimize the teaching resources. Based on the current textbook structure, the local Hakka cultural elements are cleverly integrated into the course teaching. The Hakka cultural elements are close to students' lives and are easy to be perceived and understood by students. This move aims to enhance students' interest in learning and strengthen their cultural belonging and identity.

The teaching reform in this semester focuses on exploring how to efficiently integrate traditional Hakka culture into the college English curriculum system which is constructed with five core modules: patriotism, etiquette principles, food culture, artisans of great powers, and architectural art. This innovative measure of teaching practice promotes the integration process from the three levels of teaching content, teaching method, and activity organization. Through the deep integration of Hakka culture and curriculum themes, the teaching content can be enriched, the shortcomings of the teaching materials can be effectively compensated, the students' learning enthusiasm can be fully ignited, and the teaching effectiveness is significantly improved. More importantly, this teaching integration strategy not only meets the needs of integrating traditional culture into the curriculum but also coincides with the educational philosophy of the college committed to serving local development and cultivating talents<sup>[5]</sup>.

## **2.3. Practical approach**

### **2.3.1. Reform teaching contents**

It is crucial to integrate Hakka culture into college English teaching and reform the teaching content. Teachers should follow the specific demands of the course, closely match the actual academic level and thinking evolution stage of students, and skillfully introduce many rich materials and vivid cases closely related to Hakka culture. For example, the representative educational sites on the history of revolution in the Hakka area retain a large number of precious revolutionary historical sites and touching stories, which can make students deeply feel the bravery of their ancestors. The Hakka traditional values contain the excellent qualities of hard work, simplicity, perseverance, solidarity and mutual assistance, and hospitality, which are the vivid embodiment of the spiritual connotation of Hakka culture. In Hakka food culture, such as the unique flavor of salt-baked chicken, mellow and fragrant Hakka Niangjiu, and other food, their production process and the cultural customs behind them are unique. In terms of Hakka celebrity stories, from politics, literature to science and other fields, there are many outstanding Hakka representatives. Their outstanding achievements and inspirational history are undoubtedly valuable materials to inspire students. There are also Hakka houses with strange shapes and exquisite structures, such as the famous Wailong House, which embodies the unique architectural wisdom and family ethics of Hakka people. With the help of in-depth and detailed explanations of these rich and diverse materials and cases, it can effectively promote students to have a more thorough understanding of the unique characteristics of Hakka culture and its far-reaching value. At the same time, teachers can further guide students to carry out relevant reading training and writing practice activities and gradually improve students' comprehensive literacy and ability level in English reading and writing to achieve a good teaching effect that language learning and cultural inheritance blend and promote together.

### **2.3.2. Innovate teaching methods**

The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China pointed out: "We must promote the digitization of education, and build a learning society and a learning country with lifelong learning for all people." Digital technology-enabled higher education is expected to achieve the organic integration of joint learning and personalized learning to help the construction of a learning society and a learning power<sup>[6]</sup>. This coincides with the core idea of constructivism learning theory.

Integration of digital technologies: Teachers apply virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies to create an immersive local cultural experience environment, superimpose local cultural elements into the real scene, help students better understand and construct knowledge, show students the unique charm of Hakka culture, and stimulate their learning interest and participation enthusiasm. Educator Sukhomlinskii said, "A lesson should inspire students with real excitement." A strong culture will encourage students to work hard, support teamwork, stimulate learning motivation, and enable teachers and students to focus on the main points of learning<sup>[7]</sup>. The application of digital technology has expanded the vision and approach of college English teaching and improved the teaching effect.

Application of social media platforms: In the age of social media, new technologies are used to achieve innovation and diversification of teaching content presentation<sup>[8]</sup>. Teachers can create local cultural English learning accounts through social media platforms such as Wechat, Vlog, Bilibili, Rednote, etc, regularly posting local cultural knowledge and English learning materials, such as English introductions of local traditional festivals, English translation of local dialect words, etc. At the same time, students are encouraged to follow the accounts

and share messages.

Application of mobile learning apps: Students are recommended to use mobile language learning apps and are encouraged to add local culture-related vocabulary lists or customize learning courses in the apps. For example, students can create a word chopping plan of local characteristic food words in the Baicizhan app. and learn the English names and related expressions of food by memorizing word cards.

Since the students of the school are mainly from the Hakka region, Hakka culture is closely connected with their daily life. So, it naturally becomes a valuable educational resource to stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning. While respecting the principal position of students, teachers can adopt diversified teaching methods to guide students to conduct in-depth research on Hakka culture and show their research results, to actively participate in classroom teaching. Traditional teaching materials often require students to discuss Western food in the task training, but students do not know much about it. They often have nothing to say. However, if Hakka life scenes and cultural contents are integrated into the classroom, which the students are familiar with, not only can this predicament be effectively changed, but also students' interest, motivation, and effect in learning English will be significantly improved.

### **2.3.3. Expand practical activities**

Teaching activities in class: Take the thematic unit "The Art of Architecture" as an example. In the reading part of the unit, the emphasis is on the introduction of the "Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes," which can be called the outstanding cultural treasures of Chinese traditional culture. Through careful study of the text, the students deeply appreciate the infinite charm of Chinese culture and art, and the self-confidence and pride of national culture have been significantly enhanced. After completing the learning task of text reading in this unit, teachers can carefully assign extracurricular activities according to this topic in the discussion area of the learning platform. The specific task requirements are as follows. Students are required to make full use of electronic resources and paper materials after class to extensively collect all kinds of information about the Hakka Wailong House and carry out translation practice in accordance with the unique architectural characteristics of the Wailong House and the profound cultural connotation and profound philosophical principles behind it. Afterward, students will share their completed translations in the discussion area so that all students can exchange and learn from each other and make progress together. Teachers select some representative works for in-depth analysis and detailed comments. In this way, students can not only hone their English translation ability but also have a more thorough understanding of the architectural characteristics, cultural heritage, and philosophical thoughts of Hakka Wailong House and further enhance their national cultural self-confidence. In addition, as part of the homework, students are required to shoot an English video independently, in which they use English to give a comprehensive and vivid introduction to the Hakka Wailong House, to exercise and improve their oral English expression ability.

Practice activities after class: English practice activities related to Hakka culture are held regularly (**Table 1**). The theme can be around Hakka food translation, Hakka celebrity story explanation, Hakka scenic spots introduction, Hakka daily life scene simulation, Hakka song competition, Hakka culture exhibition, Hakka revolutionary education base display, Hakka residential exploration, Hakka film appreciation, and other diversified content. These extra-curricular practice activities closely fit the reality of students' daily life, to input traditional Hakka cultural knowledge to students in a more visual and in-depth way. Effectively stimulate their strong interest and love of Hakka culture, enhancing cultural self-confidence and national pride. While expanding the amount of extracurricular knowledge reserves, students will improve their cultural literacy and comprehensive ability in an



all-round way.

Take the “Hakka Food Translation Activity” as an example. Students work in small groups to collect information on the names, ingredients, preparation methods, and cultural background of Hakka cuisine, such as classic dishes (preserved pork with plum vegetables, stuffed tofu, and salted chicken). Make a Chinese-English food handbook, including food pictures, Chinese introduction, English translation, and cultural notes. One representative from each group will be elected to the stage to present the translation results of the group discussion in English, which can be presented through PPT, oral explanation, or role play, such as simulating the scene of Hakka restaurant waiters introducing Hakka food to foreign customers. Teachers set up an activity exchange group or platform to facilitate participants to continue to exchange Hakka food translation experiences and share learning resources after the activity. Collect feedback and suggestions from participants, comprehensively summarize and reflect on the activity, and evaluate the effect of the activity to continuously improve and perfect similar activities in the future.

**Table 1.** Practice projects for integrating Hakka culture into college English teaching

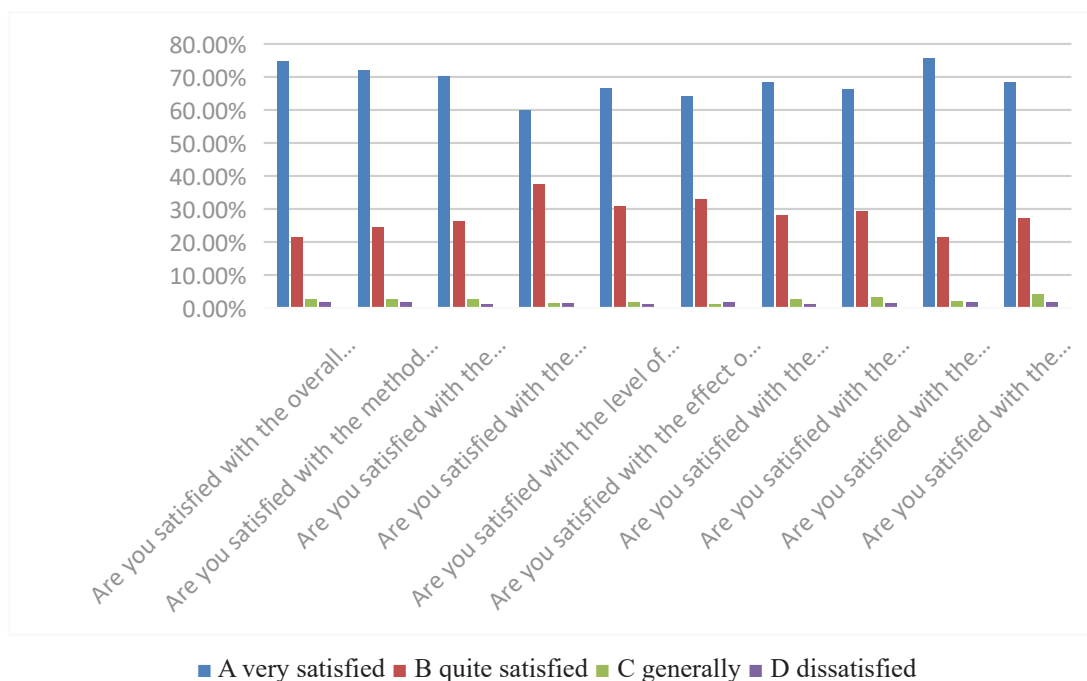
Unit	Theme	Hakka cultural elements are integrated	Practice projects
1	Patriotism	Educational sites on the history of the revolution in Hakka	Writing English comments and case discussion
2	Etiquette principles	Hakka traditional values	Merchants story sharing, real person demonstration
3	Cooking culture	Hakka food culture	Translating food culture into English, fun to answer
4	Great power craftsmen	Hakka celebrity deeds	English dubbing, display of video works
5	Architectural art	Hakka architectural art	Visiting local projects and digital museums

### 3. The effect of integrating Hakka culture into college English teaching practice

To understand the effect of integrating Hakka culture into college English teaching, questionnaire survey, examination result analysis and student feedback were used for evaluation.

#### 3.1. Analysis of questionnaire survey results

After a semester of teaching practice, to understand students' satisfaction with teaching content, teaching methods, activity organization and other practical effects, a questionnaire was designed and issued through the learning platform. There were 10 questions in the questionnaire. 42 students in the experimental class were surveyed, and 42 valid questionnaires were collected; the statistical results are shown in **Figure 1**.



**Figure 1.** Satisfaction with the effect of integrating Hakka culture into college English teaching

According to the statistical analysis, for question 1, “Are you satisfied with the overall learning effect of integrating Hakka culture into college English teaching?”, 74.8% of the students were very satisfied. For question 2, “Are you satisfied with the methods and means of integrating Hakka culture into college English teaching?”, 72% of the students were very satisfied. For question 3, “Are you satisfied with the integration of Hakka culture into the organization of college English classroom activities?”, the proportion of students who are very satisfied is 70.1%. For question 4, “Are you satisfied with the integration of Hakka culture into extracurricular practice activities in college English teaching?”, the proportion of students who are very satisfied is 59.8%. For question 5, “Are you satisfied with the degree of interest in teaching brought by teachers’ integration into Hakka culture?”, 66.4% of the students were very satisfied. For question 6, “Are you satisfied with the effect of integrating Hakka spirit and values into college English teaching?”, 64.2% of the students were very satisfied. For question 7, “Are you satisfied that Hakka celebrities’ stories are integrated into college English teaching?”, 68.3% of the students were very satisfied. For question 8, “Are you satisfied with the integration of Hakka music and film clips into college English teaching?”, 66.1% of the students were very satisfied. For question 9, “Are you satisfied with the integration of Hakka food culture into college English teaching?” 75.7% of the students were very satisfied. For question 10, “Are you satisfied with the integration of Hakka residential buildings into college English teaching?” 68.2 percent of the students were very satisfied.

According to the survey data, more than 50% of the students are satisfied with the effect of integrating Hakka culture into college English teaching, which indicates that the practical reform of integrating Hakka culture with traditional values, such as character stories, life style, residential buildings and art culture, which are close to the reality of students’ life, into college English teaching is well received by students. It has greatly improved students’ interest in English learning and cultural confidence. This practice is not only feasible but also has excellent results.

### 3.2. Analysis of school report

To study whether the integration of Hakka culture into college English teaching has an impact on academic performance, two classes were divided into two groups. Class 1 majored in Modern Property, was considered as the control group, in which Hakka culture was not integrated into college English teaching, while Class 2 majored in Modern Property and was considered as the experimental group, in which Hakka culture was integrated into college English teaching. After one semester, both groups of students took the final college English exam, and their scores were *t*-tested using SPSS 22.0 statistical software for paired samples. The results of the paired sample *t*-test are analyzed as follows.

As can be seen from **Table 2**, the mean score of the control group was 72.19, the standard deviation was 9.62, and the mean standard error was 1.48, while the experimental class was 80.15, the standard deviation was 8.46, and the mean standard error was 1.31.

**Table 2.** Paired sample statistics

	Mean	N	Standard error	Standard error of the mean
Control group	72.1905	42	9.62020	1.48443
Experimental group	80.1548	42	8.45756	1.0503

As shown in **Table 3**, the correlation between the paired variables was not significant because the significance was 0.421, greater than 0.05.

**Table 3.** Pairwise sample correlation coefficients

	N	Correlation coefficients	Sig.
Control group & experimental group	42	.128	.421

As can be seen from **Table 4**, there are significant differences in the mean value of the paired samples because the significance (double tail) was 0.000, less than 0.05, indicating that the integration of Hakka culture into college English teaching has a certain role in the improvement of students' final performance.

**Table 4.** Pair sample tests

	Pairwise difference					<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (bilateral)
	Mean	Standard error	Standard deviation of the mean	95% confidence intervals of the difference				
				lower limit	superior limit			
Control group— Experimental group	-7.96429	11.97120	1.84720	-11.69477	-4.23380	-4.312	41	.000

### 3.3. Analysis of information feedback from students

To verify the effect of integrating Hakka culture into college English teaching practice, face-to-face interviews are conducted with students regularly during the teaching practice, asking them about their learning attitude and feelings towards this teaching mode, and understanding their puzzles and problems encountered in the learning process, as well as their learning needs and hopes for help. Teachers should collect and sort out the feedback from

students. Some of their feedback is as follows.

Student 1: I think it is very meaningful and proud that I can express my hometown culture in English. If I have the opportunity to introduce my hometown culture to people around the world after graduation, my life will become more valuable.

Student 2: When I was learning the unit of “Architectural Art”, the teacher introduced Hakka Wailong House, which made me deeply admire the architectural culture and philosophical thoughts left by our ancestors.

Student 3: Participating in extracurricular practice exercises my organization and coordination ability and broadens my vision.

Student 4: The relaxed and harmonious classroom atmosphere created by my teacher makes me more willing to participate in class activities and dare to express my own opinions.

Student 5: The rich and varied class activities give me more opportunities to express my ideas, which greatly exercises my English language ability and makes me more confident in English learning.

Student 6: Group activities in class not only gave me the opportunity to learn from other excellent students but also exercised my teamwork ability.

Student 7: Through learning Hakka culture in class and extracurricular practice activities, I feel the profound spirit of Chinese culture, and I feel that I need to work harder to learn more about this excellent traditional culture.

It can be seen from the feedback collected from the students that most of them are very interested in the Hakka cultural materials incorporated into the teaching and have a good learning experience. The rich and diverse activities and teaching methods have greatly improved their initiative and consciousness in participating in the learning activities and tasks, and the learning effect is better. The students said that the rich and diversified teaching methods stimulated their interest and enthusiasm in continuous learning and deepened their understanding and feeling of the excellent traditional culture. They can not only master the knowledge points in textbooks but also use the learned knowledge to explore the unknown, broaden their horizons, and cultivate the ability of thinking, analysis, and innovation. They can put what they have learned into practice, introduce the culture of their hometowns in English, and cultivate cross-cultural communication skills. They can understand their hometown culture more deeply and increase the self-confidence and pride of the local culture and national culture.

## **4. Conclusion and suggestions**

### **4.1. Conclusion**

First, the integration of Hakka culture into college English teaching is a beneficial attempt and innovation. Based on studying the teaching objectives, teachers can effectively enhance students' learning interest, learning initiative, and participation by reforming teaching content, innovating teaching methods, and expanding practical activities. Through completing a series of tasks and activities, students build new knowledge, exercise skills, and deepen their literacy.

Second, constructivism learning theory advocates a learner-centered teaching mode, emphasizes fully mobilizing learners' initiative and subjectivity, and emphasizes learners' internal psychological processing and the influence of previous experience on new learning. Practical research has found that the innovative teaching approach of integrating local Hakka culture that students are familiar with and easy to understand into college English teaching has achieved certain results, effectively improving the current situation of students' low interest in learning, low learning efficiency, weak local cultural awareness, and poor cultural communication and

communication ability. This practice has proved the scientificity of constructivism and its important theoretical guiding significance in English teaching reform. Moreover, the teaching effect of this innovative teaching mode is obviously better than that of the traditional teaching effect that attaches too much importance to language knowledge and Western culture.

This teaching mode is now still in the exploration stage, there is a lot of room to deepen and improve. Firstly, teachers' proficiency in Hakka culture and their ability to integrate culture into college English teaching should be further enhanced. Secondly, a small number of students in the class come from non-Hakka areas, and their knowledge of Hakka culture is limited. In addition, some students have poor English foundation and lack learning interest and self-confidence. These problems need to be further solved in the follow-up exploration.

## 4.2. Suggestions

The integration of Hakka culture into college English teaching is of far-reaching significance, which can not only deepen students' cognition of local culture, build a solid foundation of cultural confidence but also effectively enhance their learning interest and cross-cultural communication level. During teaching practice, the following aspects need to be paid attention to.

Curriculum and textbook preparation: Subject units related to Hakka culture, such as Hakka history, tradition, customs, language, etc., are added to the curriculum; Prepare college English lecture notes, add some materials about Hakka culture, such as Hakka songs, stories, proverbs, traditional crafts, etc., and encourage students to deeply integrate language learning into cultural exploration.

Teaching methods and activity design: Integrate digital technology, social media platforms, and mobile learning apps to achieve cutting-edge technology empowerment and multiple interactive learning promotion.

Chinese-foreign cooperation and exchanges: Actively expand the scope of international education cooperation, jointly build Hakka cultural research and teaching cooperation projects with foreign universities, bridge the gap of cultural differences in interaction, and cultivate cross-cultural communication skills.

Evaluation and feedback: Establish a scientific and complete teaching evaluation system and regularly "check the pulse" of students' learning results. Collect data through classroom performance observation, homework completion quality, project results display and tests, focusing on students' in-depth understanding of Hakka culture, accuracy and fluency of English expression, cross-cultural communication awareness and skill development. Based on feedback, teaching strategies are accurately optimized, course progress is adjusted, textbook content is improved, and teaching methods are innovated to ensure steady improvement of teaching quality.

## 5. Concluding remarks

Constructivism learning theory has a constructive guiding significance for integrating Hakka culture into college English teaching. Under the guidance of this theory, the perspective of college English teaching shifts from teachers to students. Starting from students' practical experience and learning needs, the learner-centered knowledge acquisition process is emphasized, and an interactive classroom model is created under the guidance of teachers. Based on the traditional excellent cultural content, we can create diversified learning methods through digital technology to help the integration of joint learning and personalized learning. At present, in the process of practice, this research has effectively enriched the form of teaching activities, injected interesting elements into it, and then effectively stimulated students' interest in learning, and greatly enhanced students' enthusiasm and participation. It

also effectively helps students optimize their learning results and enhance their cultural self-confidence, achieves a higher degree of compatibility with students' development demands, promotes the landing of the fundamental task of cultivating talents, and lays a solid foundation for the training of high-quality vocational skills.

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