

Students' Needs towards Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture Integration in the English Course: A Survey of Non-English Major Students in a Chinese Vocational College

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Abstract

This study explores the attitudes and preferences of non-English major vocational college students in China regarding the integration of Chinese excellent traditional culture into their English courses. A survey was conducted with 639 students to assess their cultural knowledge, confidence, and the challenges they face in expressing Chinese culture in English. The results indicate that while students generally display a positive attitude towards learning Chinese culture, significant gaps exist in their cultural knowledge and language proficiency, particularly in speaking and listening. Furthermore, students express dissatisfaction with the current cultural content in their English courses and demonstrate a clear preference for more relatable cultural themes, such as lifestyles, social norms, hobbies, and food. These findings highlight the need for curriculum reforms that integrate more culturally rich content and provide stronger language support. Such changes will better align with students' interests and professional aspirations, preparing them for cross-cultural communication in a globalized world.

Keywords

Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture, Chinese Cultural Aphasia, Vocational College Students, Needs Analysis, Integration, English Course

1. Introduction

1.1. Chinese Culture Aphasia in English Teaching and Learning

In 2000, Professor Cong was the first to link the concept of "Cultural Aphasia

(CA)” to English teaching. He introduced the idea of “Chinese Cultural Aphasia (CCA)”, which describes the challenge many Chinese English teachers face in explaining aspects of traditional Chinese culture, especially deeply rooted topics like acupuncture and *The Analects of Confucius*, during intercultural communication (Cong, 2000). CCA arises when students, despite a curriculum focus on cultural communication, struggle to express their cultural heritage in English (Hu, 2024). Several factors contribute to this issue, including linguistic and cultural differences, inadequate textbooks, and insufficient teacher training (Chen & Liu, 2023). The absence of effective teaching strategies further intensifies the problem (Zhu, 2023). The impact of CCA on learning is significant, as it not only hampers students’ intercultural communication skills but also weakens their sense of cultural identity, an important aspect in a globalized world (Miao, 2024).

The issue of Chinese Cultural Aphasia has drawn the attention of foreign language educators for several years, but it has yet to be effectively improved (Song & Bai, 2018). Most English teachers still stay in the shallow understanding of the connotation of Chinese excellent traditional culture, and they are lack of awareness to infiltrate Chinese excellent traditional culture into daily courses in teaching (Sun, 2023). As a result, contemporary college students are unable to accurately express Chinese excellent traditional culture in English. When tasked with explaining traditional Chinese festivals like the Mid-Autumn Festival or Dragon Boat Festival in English, many students experience “Chinese Culture Aphasia”, finding themselves unable to articulate or share these cultural aspects effectively (Tan, 2021). Students are short of cultural confidence due to Insufficient intercultural competence. This inability not only prevents them from passing on China’s rich cultural heritage but also hinders its global promotion, revealing a significant gap in cultural confidence that contradicts the objectives of China’s socialist cultural development. To address CCA, a comprehensive approach is needed—one that includes curriculum reform, improved teacher training, and the integration of traditional cultural elements into English teaching (Xiao, 2022). However, some critics argue that emphasizing cultural integration may divert attention from the core goal of language acquisition, potentially complicating the learning process.

This issue, often attributed to limited exposure to cultural content and inadequate teaching methods, highlights the necessity of integrating Chinese culture more thoroughly into English curricula. Examining students’ awareness of the importance of learning Chinese culture in English courses is crucial to addressing CCA. Additionally, understanding students’ preferred cultural themes can inform curriculum development, ensuring that English teaching not only enhances language skills but also promotes cultural communication. By aligning English instruction with students’ cultural learning needs, educators can create more impact intercultural exchanges and help bridge the cultural gap caused by CCA.

1.2. The Importance of Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture

Owning a continuous history of more than 5,000 years, China has created a great

and profound Chinese excellent traditional culture which exerts a far-reaching influence on people all over the world. Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture embodies the distinct spiritual essence of the Chinese people, nurturing a shared sense of identity and cultural continuity (An, 2024). It serves as a vital foundation for nation-building, enhancing cultural pride and solidarity among the population (An, 2024). The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China issued a guiding outline emphasizing that the construction of ideological and political curricula in Chinese colleges and universities has reached a crucial phase of deepening and systematization (Wang, 2021). This outline emphasizes the need to enhance the development of literature courses, encouraging students to gain a deep understanding of core socialist values while actively promoting China's rich traditional culture, revolutionary heritage, and advanced socialist culture (Tan, 2021).

At the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities, General Secretary Xi Jinping (2016) emphasized the importance of ideological and political education in shaping the future of higher education in China. He highlighted that it addresses the fundamental questions of who to train, how to train them, and for whom. Xi underscored the need to prioritize moral education, integrating ideological and political work into every aspect of education and teaching. This approach aims to achieve comprehensive, all-encompassing education and foster new advancements in China's higher education system. To accomplish this goal, all higher education institutions, teachers, and courses must take on the responsibility of educating students. It is essential to align various courses with ideological and political education, integrating both explicit and implicit forms of education to create a synergistic effect, ultimately establishing a comprehensive framework for holistic education (Tang, 2021).

1.3. The Necessity of Integrating Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture into English Course

Language serves as a mirror of cultural values and social identities, encapsulating societal norms, beliefs, and practices (Silverstein, 2022). The reciprocal relationship between language and culture means that as cultural values evolve, language adapts in response, influencing how it is taught and understood (Fathima, 2024). Language and culture are inseparable; language is both a vehicle for cultural expression and a product of culture, as it derives meaning from the context provided by cultural beliefs and customs (Xu & Wang, 2022). This profound interconnection highlights why embedding cultural elements into language education is essential for learners to fully grasp social norms and subtleties (Asfaw & Bulbula, 2022). Words and expressions gain depth and significance from the cultural contexts that shape them, making the integration of culture in language study crucial (Saghar, 2023). Incorporating traditional Chinese culture into English learning, for instance, enriches students' sense of cultural identity, fosters appreciation for heritage, and enhances intercultural communication skills, creating a more

meaningful educational experience and encouraging cultural growth (Miao, 2024). Moreover, embedding Chinese cultural themes in English classes has been shown to heighten students' engagement, deepen cultural understanding, and promote cross-cultural communication, contributing to more effective teaching and a richer, more impactful learning environment (Shuming, 2024).

Meanwhile, under the general background of construction of course-based ideological and political education, new requirements of culture integration have also been put forward in English course. As a compulsory course in colleges and universities in China, English course is more obliged to develop traditional cultural education. Chinese excellent traditional culture is more and more important to Chinese, especially for college students of the new era who are the promoters of societal development. Incorporating traditional Chinese culture into English learning allows Chinese civilization to be shared globally through English communication, thereby showcasing China's cultural soft power and strengthening cross-cultural exchanges between nations worldwide (Liu, 2021).

The objective of this research is to conduct a needs analysis to understand vocational college students' attitudes toward learning Chinese culture in their English courses and to identify their preferred themes for integrating Chinese cultural content. By addressing these areas, this study aims to inform curriculum development, aligning the English course with students' cultural interests and enhancing their engagement with Chinese cultural topics. In light of the above, this study conducts a needs analysis and addresses the following two questions:

1. What is students' current attitudes to learn Chinese culture in English Course?
2. What is students' preference themes of Chinese Culture learning in English course?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Needs Analysis

"Needs analysis" plays a crucial role in shaping various components of the educational structure, such as course design, teaching materials, instructional methods, and the evaluation of both students and the course itself (Bocanegra-Valle, 2016; Viktorovna & Viktorovna, 2020). According to Rimkeeratikul (2022), "needs analysis" is essential for improving the effectiveness of English language teaching and learning. Teachers are encouraged to consider students' needs in order to offer relevant and meaningful input. Experts like Jeong Park (2021) note that neglecting students' needs can hinder progress in English language teaching. Kurniawati (2022) highlights that vocational students must develop English skills relevant to their field to remain competitive in their future careers. Consequently, "needs analysis" is widely recognized as a fundamental element in the development of English courses (Rofikah et al., 2022; Salamanca González, 2020; Woodrow, 2018).

In the field of second or foreign language learning and teaching, scholars have

proposed various types of analyses to address learners' needs. The significance of "needs analysis" is evident through its practical application in linguistic theory and language ontology research. It operates at both the macro level, influencing educational policies, and the micro level, affecting specific teaching practices such as curriculum design, setting teaching objectives, syllabus development, creating teaching materials, organizing instructional activities, and evaluating teaching quality (Zhao et al., 2021). Target Situation Analysis (TSA), Present Situation Analysis (PSA), and Learning Situation Analysis (LSA) are widely recognized as the three key approaches for examining learners' language needs (Andana & Munawwaroh, 2019; Jitpanich et al., 2022; Niemiec, 2017; Rahman, 2015; Sujana et al., 2020).

2.2. Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture Integration into English Course

As far as China is concerned, since the 1980s, the academic community has continued to study the integration of Chinese traditional culture into foreign language teaching. Xu (1980)'s article "The Cultural Connotation of Vocabulary and English Teaching" is regarded as the first work of integrating cultural knowledge into foreign language teaching. Since Cong, C. (2000) first proposed the concept of "Chinese Culture Aphasia (CCA)", the foreign language teaching community in China has begun to pay attention to the phenomenon of cultural aphasia. Liu (2003) further clearly pointed out that the purpose of foreign language learning is to achieve "cross communication of bilingual cultures". In 2008, the Olympic Games were held in China, which triggered an upsurge of people learning foreign languages and carrying forward the excellent Chinese excellent traditional culture, promoting the rapid growth of research literature. Wang (2019) presented a problem in foreign language education in China, that are: attaching more importance to foreign cultures while neglecting Chinese culture. In 2020, the Construction Guidelines of Ideological and Political Education in All Courses of Universities and Colleges was issued by Education Ministry of China (Li & Guan, 2020). It brings new opportunities and challenges for integrating Chinese traditional culture into English teaching. Therefore, learning English means that college students should not only learn western culture, but also spread Chinese culture. Domestic research related to Chinese excellent traditional culture integration into English teaching has gone through three stages. It has developed from discussing the close relationship between language and culture at first to focusing on cross cultural communication with equal emphasis on mother tongue and target language, then to proposing "courses with ideological-political elements", thus paying more and more attention to the integration of excellent Chinese excellent traditional culture into English.

The integration of Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture into English courses is essential for enhancing students' cultural identity and communication skills. Incorporating traditional culture fosters students' cultural self-confidence and

national identity, crucial for their personal and academic development (Ma, 2024). Integrating traditional cultural elements into teaching materials and curriculum content is vital. This includes using historical stories, idioms, and traditional festivals (Li, 2024). While the integration of traditional culture is beneficial, there may be resistance due to entrenched Western-centric curricula. Balancing both cultural perspectives is crucial for a holistic educational approach (Li, 2024). As mentioned above, most existing research focuses on the advantages of combining cultural elements to enhance students' global understanding and cultural competence. However, little attention has been given to how students perceive and engage with this integration, or whether it aligns with their learning goals and preferences. Understanding students' needs in this context is essential for designing culturally inclusive English courses that not only promote cultural awareness but also effectively support language acquisition.

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

The present study investigated needs towards Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture Integration into English course of various non-English major students. A survey was conducted to collect data using structured questionnaires, allowing researchers to evaluate attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (Beck, 2024) about students' needs. This survey aimed to explore students' attitudes, preferences, and expectations toward the inclusion of traditional Chinese cultural elements in their English courses, providing insights into how such integration can be tailored to better meet their learning needs.

3.2. Context

This research was conducted at a vocational college in Chongqing, a city known for its rich cultural and economic significance in southwestern China. English courses in such settings are designed not just for general language proficiency but also to meet the specific professional needs of the students. Integrating Chinese excellent traditional culture into these English courses can provide added value by fostering both cultural identity and global competency, aligning with the college's mission of preparing students for a globalized workforce. Moreover, Chongqing's deep historical and cultural heritage makes it an ideal location to explore how regional cultural elements can be integrated into language learning, enriching students' cultural awareness and pride. Understanding the specific needs of students in this vocational college will offer valuable insights for curriculum design in similar educational settings across China, where the balance between cultural education and vocational training is critical.

3.3. Participants

A total of 639 participants were involved in this study, all aged between 16 and 18, sharing a similar pre-university English education background. The participants

in this study were selected through random sampling to ensure a representative sample of non-English major students at the vocational college in Chongqing. Random sampling was employed to avoid bias and to ensure that the diversity of the student body, in terms of academic programs and backgrounds, was reflected in the study. By using this method, every student in the target population had an equal chance of being selected, which enhances the generalization of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The randomly chosen participants provided valuable insights into how students from various disciplines within the college perceive the integration of Chinese excellent traditional culture into their English courses, ensuring that the study's conclusions are applicable across different vocational fields.

3.4. Instruments

The main objective of this study was to explore the attitudes and preferences of Chinese non-English major students regarding the integration of Chinese cultural learning in the English classroom. The questionnaire, adapted from Liu and Lao-hawiriyanon (2013) and Wu (2020), consisted of three sections. The first section gathered background information about the respondents, including their gender and major subject area. The second section examined participants' attitudes toward Chinese culture and assessed their ability to express Chinese cultural concepts in English. The final section asked the respondents to rank 17 cultural themes based on their preferences for learning them in the English class.

3.5. Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection process for this study involved administering a structured questionnaire to 639 non-English major students at a vocational college in Chongqing. The questionnaire was distributed in a classroom setting to ensure a high response rate and was completed within a designated time period. Students were informed about the purpose of the study and given instructions on how to complete the questionnaire.

Once the data were collected, they were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize demographic characteristics and to identify trends in students' attitudes toward cultural learning. The rankings of cultural themes were examined to determine which topics were most popular among the participants. This analysis helped provide a clear understanding of students' preferences and the relevance of Chinese cultural integration within their English language education.

4. Findings

4.1. What is Students' Current Attitudes to Learn Chinese Culture in English Course?

The survey results indicate that while students generally display a positive attitude toward learning Chinese culture in their English courses, there are notable gaps in their cultural knowledge and confidence. As shown in Table 1, although 44.13% "somewhat agree" and 28.17% "strongly agree" that they are familiar with Chinese

Table 1. Students' current attitudes to learn Chinese culture in English course.

Question	Option	Frequency	Percentage
1. You know a lot about Chinese culture.	strongly disagree	16	2.5%
	somewhat disagree	14	2.19%
	uncertain	147	23%
	somewhat agree	282	44.13%
	strongly agree	180	28.17%
2. You would like to introduce Chinese culture in communicating with westerners.	strongly disagree	22	3.44%
	somewhat disagree	10	1.56%
	uncertain	70	10.95%
	somewhat agree	260	40.69%
	strongly agree	277	43.35%
3. It is necessary to learn how to express Chinese culture in English.	strongly disagree	45	7.04%
	somewhat disagree	44	6.89%
	uncertain	138	21.6%
	somewhat agree	242	37.87%
	strongly agree	170	26.6%
4. You are satisfied with the content of Chinese culture in the English course.	strongly disagree	277	43.35%
	somewhat disagree	161	25.2%
	uncertain	134	20.97%
	somewhat agree	35	5.48%
	strongly agree	32	5.01%
5. Chinese culture should be integrated into the English courses.	strongly disagree	44	6.89%
	somewhat disagree	27	4.23%
	uncertain	120	18.78%
	somewhat agree	254	39.75%
	strongly agree	194	30.36%
6. The college English textbook you use contains a lot of Chinese culture.	strongly disagree	268	41.94%
	somewhat disagree	162	25.35%
	uncertain	146	22.85%
	somewhat agree	32	5.01%
	strongly agree	31	4.85%
7. You can introduce Chinese culture in English.	strongly disagree	160	25.04%
	somewhat disagree	184	28.79%
	uncertain	119	18.62%
	somewhat agree	95	14.87%
	strongly agree	81	12.68%

Continued

	lack of cultural knowledge	225	35.21%
8. What are your main difficulties in expressing Chinese culture in English?	English language skills—Listening	435	68.08%
	English language skills—Speaking	479	74.96%
	English language skills—Reading	401	62.75%
	English language skills—Writing	423	66.2%
	others	144	22.54%
9. What are the main sources of learning to express Chinese culture in English?	teaching materials	456	71.36%
	classroom	447	69.95%
	extracurricular cultural activities	292	45.7%
	cultural websites	270	42.25%
	cultural readings	247	38.65%
	others	146	22.85%

culture, a significant 23% remain uncertain about their knowledge. Similarly, 40.69% “somewhat agree” and 43.35% “strongly agree” that they would like to introduce Chinese culture when communicating with Westerners, showing their motivation to engage in cross-cultural exchanges. Additionally, 37.87% and 26.6% of students believe it is necessary to learn how to express Chinese culture in English, demonstrating an awareness of the importance of cultural expression in language learning. However, the students’ uncertainty regarding their cultural knowledge suggests a need for more focused instruction.

Despite this positive attitude, students express widespread dissatisfaction with the current content of Chinese culture in their English courses. A large portion (43.35% “strongly disagree” and 25.2% “somewhat disagree”) report that the content provided does not meet their expectations, with only 5.48% and 5.01% expressing satisfaction. Moreover, 39.75% “somewhat agree” and 30.36% “strongly agree” that more Chinese culture should be integrated into English courses, highlighting a clear demand for more cultural content. Additionally, students feel that their textbooks lack adequate coverage of Chinese culture, as 41.94% “strongly disagree” and 25.35% “somewhat disagree” that their textbooks include sufficient cultural content. This dissatisfaction reflects a significant gap between the curriculum and students’ desires for cultural integration.

Furthermore, students report challenges both in terms of their language skills and confidence in expressing Chinese culture in English. More than half of the students (53.83%) lack confidence in their ability to introduce Chinese culture in English, pointing to difficulties with both cultural knowledge and language proficiency. The most commonly cited challenges include English language skills, particularly speaking (74.96%) and listening (68.08%), which hinder their ability to effectively communicate cultural ideas. Additionally, students rely primarily on teaching materials (71.36%) and classroom instruction (69.95%) for learning how to express Chinese culture in English. These findings suggest that while students

are motivated to engage with Chinese culture, they require stronger curricular support, better resources, and enhanced language instruction to fully develop the necessary skills and confidence for effective cross-cultural communication.

4.2. What Is Students' Preference Themes of Chinese Culture Learning in English Course?

According to **Figure 1**, for vocational college students, the preference for themes like lifestyles (71.18%) and social norms (69.61%) reflects an interest in understanding and communicating aspects of daily life and interpersonal behaviors, which are crucial for building cultural competence. This focus is particularly valuable in fields such as tourism, hospitality, and international business, where students need to navigate diverse social settings and practice cultural sensitivity in their professional roles. Additionally, themes like body language (69%) and customs (67.73%) emphasize non-verbal communication and cultural traditions, skills that are essential for students aiming to work in cross-cultural environments.

The strong preferences for more personal and relatable themes, such as hobbies (62.44%), music and sports (60.1%), and food (61.81%), indicate that vocational college students are also keen on engaging with cultural aspects that directly apply to their lives and potential careers. These topics offer practical opportunities for students to use English in everyday scenarios and professional exchanges, enhancing their ability to communicate effectively in both casual and formal settings. For vocational students, who often prioritize real-world applications, these themes align well with their need for practical language skills that they can transfer to the workplace.

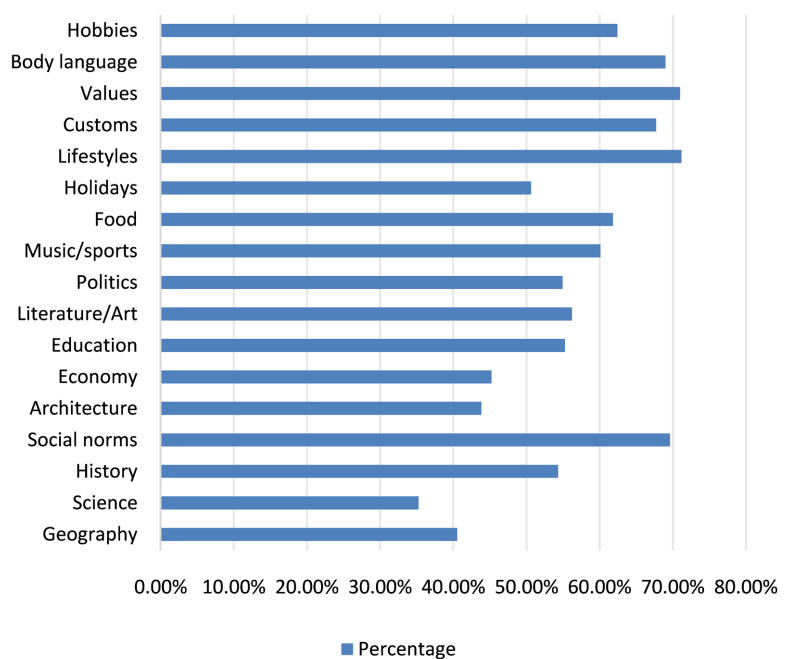


Figure 1. Preference themes of Chinese Culture learning in English Course.

5. Discussion

Students' attitudes toward learning Chinese culture in their English courses reveal both enthusiasm and challenges. Many students express interest in integrating Chinese culture when communicating with Westerners, but a significant portion lacks confidence in their cultural knowledge, suggesting gaps in the curriculum (Brainee, 2024). Nearly half of the respondents are dissatisfied with the existing content, which they feel does not align with their professional goals, signaling a need for reform (Ehlers et al., 2019). Additionally, students struggle with speaking and listening skills, making it difficult to articulate cultural concepts in English (Khawaja & Wotherspoon, 2022; Mulyadi et al., 2024). Addressing these challenges requires an integrated approach that enhances both cultural knowledge and language proficiency, with educators playing a key role in facilitating this process.

Vocational college students show a strong preference for cultural themes that support both their professional and personal growth. Their focus on lifestyles, social norms, body language, and customs underscores the importance of cultural competence, especially for careers in tourism, hospitality, and international business, where cross-cultural communication is crucial (Hu, 2023). These preferences reflect students' understanding of the need to navigate diverse global interactions (Mori, 2023). At the same time, their interest in more relatable themes, such as hobbies, music, sports, and food, highlights their desire for practical, engaging content that connects with everyday experiences. Incorporating these themes into English courses allows students to apply language skills in both informal and professional contexts, enriching their learning experience (Sithira Vadivel et al., 2020). Aligning course content with students' interests and career goals can better prepare them for the global workforce, offering a more relevant and effective education.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study reveals that vocational college students have a positive attitude toward learning Chinese culture in their English courses; however, there are notable gaps in their cultural knowledge and confidence, with many expressing uncertainty about their understanding of Chinese culture. Despite their motivation for cross-cultural communication, students report dissatisfaction with the current curriculum, highlighting the need for reform to better align with their interests. Language proficiency challenges, particularly in speaking and listening, further limit their ability to convey cultural concepts in English. Students also show a clear preference for integrating more relatable cultural themes, such as lifestyles, social norms, and personal interests like hobbies and food, into their English learning.

To address these challenges, tailored suggestions for vocational college students include offering more practical, task-based activities that align with real-world scenarios and enhance cultural learning in an applied context. Developing interactive materials, such as multimedia resources and role-play exercises, can

improve engagement while strengthening listening and speaking skills. Additionally, providing opportunities for collaboration with native English speakers or online exchange programs can increase students' confidence in cultural communication. Finally, designing assessments that emphasize practical application, such as presentations on Chinese cultural topics, can further prepare students to confidently communicate Chinese culture in a globalized professional setting. These targeted curricular enhancements can support students' language development and cultural expression, making their learning experience more relevant and impactful.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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