



Study on the Significance of Integrating Chinese Traditional Culture into College English Teaching

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Abstract

Driven by the tide of globalization, cultural exchange has become a pervasive global phenomenon, with its significance continuously escalating. Benefiting from the Chinese government's implementation of the 144-hour transit visa policy, China's traditional culture has garnered widespread attention from the international community. Against this backdrop, college students, as the main force in cultural dissemination, face the critical challenge of maintaining cultural confidence and actively promoting China's unique and outstanding culture in cross-cultural communication, which has become a key issue that higher education, especially English teaching, urgently needs to address. This paper, through an in-depth analysis of relevant policies and a study of the issue of cultural aphasia, emphasizes the necessity of integrating China's traditional culture into college English teaching. This integration is not only crucial for strengthening students' cultural confidence and sense of responsibility but also significantly contributes to broadening their international perspective and enhancing their cross-cultural communication skills.

Subject Areas

Linguistics, Literature

Keywords

College English, Cultural Confidence, Intercultural Communication, Chinese Traditional Culture

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, cultural interaction around the world has shown unprecedented prosperity. China, as one of the birthplaces of world civilization, has a

rich traditional culture that has aroused increasing interest worldwide. Especially in the context of the 144-hour transit visa policy implemented by the Chinese government, the learning and appreciation of traditional Chinese culture in Western countries is gradually growing. According to the latest data from the National Immigration Administration, the number of foreigners coming to China in the first quarter of this year increased by more than three times compared with the same period in 2023, with the number of visa-free foreign visitors reaching 1.98 million, up 266.1 percent year-on-year. The implementation of this policy has not only greatly promoted the international flow of people, but also opened a new window for the international spread of Chinese culture.

More and more foreign bloggers and travelers are sharing their Chinese travel experiences on social media, and this sharing not only increases China's visibility internationally, but also promotes understanding and exchange between different cultures. At the same time, the Chinese people are increasingly aware of the profound value of national culture and its important position in global cultural exchanges. Since 2013, the translation of traditional Chinese cultural passages has been added to the CET-4 and CET-6, which indicates that the foreign language export of Chinese native culture has begun to attract the attention of the education circle.

In this context, the dissemination of national culture is particularly crucial. It is not only a manifestation of cultural self-confidence, but also a demonstration of cultural soft power. Therefore, it has become the trend of The Times to strengthen students' main awareness of Chinese culture, improve their cultural literacy, and take advantage of the contrast between Chinese and Western cultures in foreign language teaching to cultivate cross-cultural international talents who have a deep understanding of Western culture and can skillfully express Chinese culture in English [1]. This is not only the need for education, but also the urgent requirement of talent training in the era of globalization.

2. The Necessity of Integrating English Education into Chinese Traditional Culture

2.1. Requirement of College English Curriculum Teaching: Cultivating Talents through Culture

The theory of second language acquisition (SLA) came into being in the 1970s. In the context of higher education, cultural education has emerged as a core component of college English instruction. The "College English Teaching Guide" issued by the Ministry of Education in 2017 explicitly emphasizes that "College English courses form a crucial part of university humanities education, possessing not only instrumental value but also profound humanistic significance." This highlights the dual role of college English instruction, integrating both practical language skills and broader cultural and humanistic education. The guide further emphasizes that the integration of socialist core values is an inevitable trend in college English classrooms. Subsequently, the "Guiding Outline for Curriculum Ideological and Political Construction in Colleges and Universi-

ties", issued by the Ministry of Education in 2020, places special emphasis on integrating ideological and political education into the curriculum. This initiative aims to deepen the education of China's excellent traditional culture, with the goal of guiding students to inherit and promote the essence of Chinese culture. The objective is to cultivate a new generation of youth with a deep sense of Chinese identity and cultural pride, ensuring that they embody distinct Chinese characteristics and cultural confidence in the context of globalization [2]. These policy documents clearly demonstrate the significant emphasis the education authorities place on integrating traditional Chinese culture into college English education. This approach not only enriches the content of English teaching but also reflects the expectation for enhancing students' cultural literacy. Under this guiding ideology, college English education is gradually evolving into a crucial avenue for promoting Chinese culture and cultivating students' global perspectives. This indicates that college English, as a core compulsory course, should not only focus on language acquisition but also shoulder the responsibility of fostering students' cultural confidence.

2.2. Cultural Aphasia among College Students

"Cultural aphasia" refers to the difficulty in accurately conveying cultural meanings and social values in cross-cultural communication, stemming from a lack of deep understanding and an inability to effectively express one's native culture. The concept of cultural aphasia was first introduced by Professor Cong Cong of Nanjing University in 2000. He highlighted that English teaching tends to overemphasize Western cultural education while neglecting the English expression of Chinese native culture. This creates a one-sided focus on "target language cultural education," leaving the English articulation of Chinese culture in a "state of neglect." Consequently, students struggle to fully convey the unique essence of Chinese culture during cross-cultural exchanges. The issue of cultural aphasia has become a problem that warrants serious attention.

In the current landscape of college English teaching, cultural aphasia remains a prevalent issue. Terms such as "Siheyuan," "the lunar calendar," and "the character fu," which are deeply rooted in Chinese culture, continue to pose significant challenges for many students in the 2024 College English Translation Test (CET). These culturally specific concepts often become insurmountable obstacles, highlighting the gap in students' ability to effectively express aspects of their native culture in English. Li Ye's study, conducted on 40 non-English major undergraduates at Ningxia Medical University, revealed that up to 90% of the students felt they were unable to express traditional Chinese culture in English and struggled to communicate effectively [3]. This highlights a significant gap in students' cross-cultural communication skills, particularly in conveying the nuances of their native culture. Additionally, a questionnaire survey conducted by Yu Huiwen and Kuang Ying on 154 college students at Jilin University of Foreign Languages found that only 20% of the respondents could accurately express Chinese culture in English, while nearly 80% used imprecise terms when trans-

lating traditional Chinese cultural concepts. This reflects a widespread deficiency among college students in their ability to convey Chinese culture effectively in English. Chinese cultural aphasia can diminish students' recognition and appreciation of their own culture [4]. When students' sense of identity and confidence in Chinese culture wanes, it can lead to more pronounced instances of cultural aphasia. This neglect of native culture often originates during the talent training phase. Therefore, it is crucial to enhance college students' ability to express Chinese culture in English. Educators should create more opportunities for students to discuss and share Chinese culture in English, thereby fostering greater cultural confidence and improving cross-cultural communication skills.

3. The Role of Integrating English Education into Chinese Traditional Culture

3.1. Promote the Building of Students' Cultural Self-Confidence

In cross-cultural communication, maintaining self-confidence and pride in one's own culture is crucial for successful interactions. Equally important is an openness and respect towards other cultures. By studying traditional Chinese culture, students can develop a deeper understanding of their own cultural roots and values, thereby enhancing their sense of identity and national pride. This sense of identity is the basis of cultural confidence, which helps students to confidently display the unique charm of Chinese culture in international exchanges. Culture flourishes, and the nation flourishes; culture is strong, and the nation is strong. Without a high degree of cultural confidence and cultural prosperity, there can be no great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. College represents a critical period for developing accurate cultural perspectives and building cultural self-confidence. Integrating traditional Chinese culture into college English teaching serves not only to honor cultural heritage but also to foster cultural self-confidence. This approach enables students to confidently articulate traditional Chinese stories and to effectively balance their native cultural values with Western cultural perspectives. Taking the recently popular Chinglish phrase "you swan, he frog; you beautiful, he ugly," for example, it comes from the Chinese saying "toads want to eat swan meat", which is often used as a metaphor for people who do not know themselves clearly and are bent on obtaining something impossible. This creative form of expression has attracted the interest of many overseas netizens, becoming a vivid example of cultural exchange. It can not only stimulate students' innovative thinking, and enhance cultural pride, but also promote the spread and understanding of Chinese culture on a global scale [5].

3.2. Improve Students' Cultural Quality in Language Learning

Claire Kramsch, an American linguist, emphasized, "To truly understand a foreign culture, we need to compare and analyze it with the native culture. Cultural teaching in language teaching involves not only a deep understanding of the target language culture, but also a re-examination of the mother tongue culture." In this

learning process, students will not only be able to more deeply grasp the essence of the ancient wisdom, but will also strengthen their cultural self-confidence. The process of translating exemplary traditional Chinese culture into English is fundamentally a journey of reinterpreting and reaffirming these cultural elements. Integrating traditional Chinese culture into English teaching is not only a reinterpretation of Chinese culture, but also an in-depth study of the educational concepts, moral concepts, and ideas behind the language. This practice can not only deepen students' understanding of language, improve their cultural expression ability, but also promote students to form a conscious cultural awareness from language.

4. The Significance of Integrating English Education into University Education

4.1. Promote the Improvement of Cross-Cultural Communication Skills

Integrating traditional Chinese culture into college English education has a significant impact on improving students' intercultural communication ability. With the ongoing development of economic globalization, the demand for cross-cultural communication skills has become increasingly prominent. In today's globalized world, the competition between nations extends beyond economic and military realms to encompass cultural soft power. A nation with strong cultural self-confidence, capable of articulating its values clearly, can engage in dialogues on an equal footing with other cultures and secure greater influence in the international arena. In this context, college students, as future participants in international cultural exchanges, will play a pivotal role in shaping and promoting the national cultural image. Cross-cultural communication not only emphasizes the exchange of knowledge between the two parties but also involves a comprehensive approach to sharing and preserving their respective historical and cultural heritage. Additionally, it seeks to cultivate mutual cultural influence, fostering deeper cooperation and understanding between both sides.

For instance, in the naming of lunar soil samples collected during the Chang'e-5 lunar exploration mission, scientists employed Chinese pinyin abbreviations, such as "YJFM" and "YJYX." This approach represents an innovative departure from traditional English naming conventions and highlights China's growing influence and confidence in cross-cultural communication. This practice underscores the country's ability to assert its cultural identity on the global stage. The lunar soil samples not only captured the attention of scientists globally, but the unique naming method also sparked widespread interest and discussion about traditional Chinese culture. The question, "Why should we name our Chinese sample in English?" highlights a growing sense of cultural awareness and pride in cross-cultural communication. This international curiosity turned into a cross-cultural puzzle, as intrigued foreign netizens became explorers themselves, attempting to decipher the mysterious pinyin symbols. The act of their exploration initiated a process of

cultural exchange and mutual understanding.

These vivid examples not only showcase the unique charm and profound cultural heritage of the Chinese language, but also demonstrate that modern Chinese, traditional characters, and classical literature can continue to thrive in the contemporary era. Moreover, they highlight the significance of integrating core elements of traditional Chinese culture into English education. Such integration will have a far-reaching impact on cultivating individuals with strong cultural confidence, who will play a crucial role in future international cross-cultural exchanges and cooperation.

4.2. Cultivate the Formation of Global Vision and Enhance the Ability of International Communication

Through in-depth study and understanding of traditional Chinese culture, students can gain deeper insights into multicultural phenomena and develop a broader international perspective. As the integration of traditional culture in English teaching becomes the norm, it will become natural for students to spread traditional culture, especially on topics that can arouse the interest of college students. The popularization of this mode of education will help students to spread Chinese culture more confidently on the international stage, thus exerting a greater impact on global cultural exchanges.

For instance, the launch of the highly anticipated game “*Black Myth: Wukong*”, China’s first AAA game, not only signifies a breakthrough for the Chinese gaming industry but also introduces new avenues for cultural dissemination. As a cultural carrier, the game presents the unique charm of traditional Chinese culture to global audiences, enhancing international awareness and interest in China’s traditional cultural heritage.

In promoting game culture, students face the dual challenge of not only language translation but also the deeper, more crucial task of understanding and accurately interpreting “*Journey to the West*”, a classic of Chinese literature. While “*Journey to the West*” is widely known and cherished within China, it remains unfamiliar and potentially challenging for foreign audiences to grasp. College students, who represent a key demographic for such games, are tasked with effectively conveying the spiritual essence and cultural significance of “*Journey to the West*” to international players, thereby facilitating greater cross-cultural understanding.

Taking the translation of “Black Myth: Wukong” as an example, “tudigong” is translated as “keeper”. How can we explain this role to foreign friends who have not read *Journey to the West*? For example, when completing the game, Wukong is put on a “Jingu”, foreign players may shout “oh golden crown”, thinking that after many hardships, finally put on the gold crown symbolizing victory, and become “monkey king” is a symbol of victory, however, Chinese players have different emotional experience: “Sad, put on the Jingu again”. Regretting that Wukong is constrained again, this cultural difference and subtle difference in un-

derstanding is exactly what we need to explore and spread deeply in cross-cultural communication. Therefore, integrating Chinese history and culture into English education and strengthening the cultivation of traditional culture is the most direct and effective way to open a global perspective and improve students' international communication ability.

Excellent culture requires cultivating talents to better understand and spread, which is an important goal of our higher education. Through such cultural communication practices, we can revitalize traditional culture in modern society, contribute Chinese wisdom to cultural exchanges in the era of globalization, and expand the international influence of Chinese culture.

5. Results and Discussion

Since the new era, China has further intensified its opening up to the outside world, and the concepts of the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, "Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind" and "Building a Humanistic Community" have been further advanced, providing a broad space for the rapid development of foreign language education in our country's colleges and universities [6]. China's foreign language education should have the courage to shoulder the mission entrusted by the times, and regard improving students' Chinese cultural literacy, cultivating students' strong feelings for home and country, and enhancing students' ability to spread Chinese culture in foreign languages as important talent training goals.

Therefore, college English education should assume the responsibility of spreading and carrying forward traditional Chinese culture, clarify the importance of English expression of Chinese culture, select reasonable teaching content, formulate scientific evaluation system, and cultivate compound talents with international vision and local cultural confidence through education. This is not only a respect for cultural heritage, but also the cultivation of cross-cultural communication capabilities in the context of globalization, and an improvement of the country's cultural soft power. Through such education, we can teach students to better show the unique charm of Chinese culture to the world and promote mutual understanding and respect between different cultures.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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