



Research on Pathways for Foreign Language Classroom Innovation in Holistic Development at Private Universities

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Abstract

Traditional foreign language education in China has long relied on the “dual-basics” training model, which prioritizes linguistic fundamentals (phonetics, vocabulary, grammar) and basic skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing). While this instrumentalist paradigm enhances test-taking proficiency, it systematically neglects the cultivation of humanistic qualities and critical thinking, leading to widespread “critical thinking deficiency syndrome.” Holistic education, emphasizing the integrated development of cognition, emotion, and morality, offers a theoretical framework to address the “skill-over-humanity” dilemma in foreign language education. However, empirical validation of its practical implementation and pedagogical efficacy in private universities remains underexplored. This study conducts a quasi-experiment at Zhejiang Yuexiu University, comparing the effects of a holistic education model (experimental class, $n = 40$) with traditional pedagogy (control class, $n = 40$). Grounded in the ASK framework (Awareness-Skill-Knowledge), the study integrates blended learning and multidimensional assessment. Results indicate that the experimental class significantly outperformed the control class in attention span (82% vs. 68%, $p < 0.01$), CET-4 pass rate (85% vs. 70%, $p = 0.042$), and self-rated critical thinking (4.3 vs. 3.6, $p < 0.05$). Qualitative analysis reveals high-frequency terms in experimental students’ reflective journals, such as “cultural empathy” (28.6%) and “social responsibility” (15.4%), whereas the control group exhibited utilitarian concerns like “exam pressure” (34.2%). The findings demonstrate that holistic education synergistically enhances language acquisition and humanistic literacy through contextualized interaction and metacognitive training, providing a replicable paradigm for transforming private university foreign language education from “knowledge transmission” to “value-oriented cultivation”.

Subject Areas

Higher Education

Keywords

Holistic Education, Private Universities, English Classroom Model, ASK Framework, Blended Learning, Pedagogical Efficacy, Quasi-Experimental Design

1. Introduction

China's foreign language education has long adhered to the "dual-basics" training model, emphasizing linguistic fundamentals (phonetics, vocabulary, grammar) and core skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) as primary objectives [1]. While this instrumentalist pedagogical paradigm enhances short-term examination performance, it systematically neglects the cultivation of humanistic literacy and critical thinking, resulting in widespread "critical thinking deficiency syndrome". In response, holistic education—advocating the integrated development of knowledge acquisition, skill mastery, and value formation—has gained traction as a transformative framework for foreign language education reform [2]. Its core principles align with the mandate of "cultivating virtue through education" outlined in China's *College English Teaching Guidelines*, offering a theoretical foundation for reorienting pedagogy toward humanistic goals.

However, existing scholarship predominantly focuses on macro-level theoretical discourse, leaving systematic exploration of practical implementation strategies—particularly in private universities marked by significant English proficiency disparities and narrow cultural horizons—largely unaddressed. To bridge this gap, this study employs a quasi-experimental design at Zhejiang Yuexiu University to evaluate the efficacy of a holistic education model against traditional pedagogy. It seeks to answer three pivotal questions: What paradigm shifts does holistic education introduce to private university English classroom reform? How can an actionable instructional framework be constructed? And what empirical evidence validates its pedagogical effectiveness?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptual Foundations and Research Status of Holistic Education

This study is grounded in the theory of Holistic Education proposed by American educator Ron Miller. Positioned as an antidote to "half-person education"—a critique of education systems overly prioritizing instrumental goals over humanistic values—holistic education emphasizes the cultivation of comprehensive human development. Its philosophy has evolved into a global educational movement, exemplified by Canadian scholar John Miller's three principles of "balance, inclusion,

and interconnection” and Japanese researcher Yoshiharu Nakagawa’s East-West methodological synthesis. At its core, holistic education embodies the essence of pedagogy, advocating “general knowledge”, “universal virtue”, and “whole-person cultivation”. It fosters harmonious intellectual, emotional, and ethical growth, aiming to nurture individuals with broad knowledge, integrated personalities, and sound values—a paradigm particularly aligned with cultivating innovative foreign language talents in the contemporary era [3].

2.2. Current Research on Holistic Education

Compared to international scholarship, domestic research on holistic education remains nascent, focusing on three primary areas:

1) Theoretical Exploration: Critiquing systemic flaws in Chinese education and proposing reform directions through the lens of holistic principles [4]. These studies analyze the conceptual evolution and feasibility of applying holistic education to national reforms.

2) Theoretical reinterpretation and practical exploration of holistic education through an integrated approach combining theoretical analysis and empirical validation, exemplified by Wang Zhihong’s integration of holistic principles into curriculum design, school management, and teacher development.

3) Higher Education Applications: Guiding university-level pedagogical and talent cultivation reforms [5]. These works advocate systemic institutional changes, emphasizing critical thinking and individualized learning to achieve whole-person development.

In summary, current research on holistic education in the educational field faces the following issues:

1) Praxis Deficiency: While macro-level discussions address “why” and “what” questions (e.g., educational purposes and ideal graduate attributes), they inadequately resolve “how” to implement holistic education in classrooms. Operational strategies spanning curricular design, resource allocation, and assessment systems remain underexplored.

2) Lack of integration with teaching methodologies: The holistic education concept provides macro-level guidance for teaching reform, but without being integrated with micro-level teaching methodologies, it cannot address issues such as: How to apply it in the classroom; How to cultivate students’ critical thinking; How to attend to personalized student needs and how to develop students’ humanistic qualities.

3) Insufficient theoretical exploration and practical research in private universities. Current studies predominantly focus on macro-level institutional frameworks of holistic education, while lacking practical research on foreign language pedagogy, particularly within private higher education institutions. Private university students exhibit significant disparities in English proficiency at enrollment, limited humanistic perspectives, and underdeveloped critical thinking skills. Teachers overemphasize rote memorization in instructional practices while neglecting

the cultivation of students' comprehensive humanistic competencies. Against the backdrop of the 20th National Congress and the national strategic demand for the "Belt and Road" initiative, China urgently requires professionals with robust disciplinary expertise, strong language proficiency, and well-rounded development

2.3. The Necessity of Integrating Holistic Education into Foreign Language Teaching Reform

The National Standards for Foreign Language and Literature Education explicitly reaffirm the humanities-oriented nature of foreign language disciplines, emphasizing their critical role in cultural and moral cultivation. To advance pedagogical reform, foreign language education must anchor itself in holistic development principles, transitioning from the long-entrenched utilitarian and skill-centric training model to a human-centered talent quality education paradigm. This shift necessitates adopting the ethos of "learning languages to cultivate whole persons", thereby moving beyond the traditional "dual-basics" framework. Educators must adopt pedagogical strategies that foreground learners' comprehensive development, positioning the cultivation of well-rounded individuals as their foundational mission. Throughout instructional design and delivery, teachers should engage students in actively enhancing communicative competence, logical reasoning, innovative thinking, and dialectical skills, while embedding psychological resilience and ethical responsibility essential for personal growth, professional competence, and societal success into knowledge instruction.

Previous studies have clarified the necessity of integrating holistic education into foreign language teaching and outlined multi-level implementation pathways [6]. However, these studies predominantly address macro-level conceptual frameworks, failing to provide concrete practical methodologies for classroom application. To address this gap, this study proposes a holistic education-driven innovation in college English classrooms, systematically exploring actionable strategies to operationalize holistic education within foreign language curricula. By doing so, it aims to contribute substantively to institutional efforts in cultivating internationally competent, application-oriented talents.

3. The Construction of a Holistic Development-Oriented English Classroom Model in Private Universities

Amidst the profound transformation of higher education from "knowledge transmission" to "character cultivation and soul forging", English classrooms in private universities are undergoing a critical transition from instrumental language training to empowerment through holistic development. In the current globalized context, English learners are required to develop multidimensional competencies: not only consolidating linguistic foundations to address cross-cultural communication challenges but also achieving integrated personality development in dimensions such as critical thinking, cultural empathy, and value formation. However, the inertial practices of traditional classrooms—which prioritize technical proficiency over

humanistic cultivation and emphasize passive knowledge absorption over active knowledge generation—often trap students in developmental dilemmas characterized by “testing competence without practical application” and “rote learning without critical reflection”. Against this backdrop, constructing a holistic development-oriented English classroom model serves not only as a practical response to the fundamental mission of “cultivating morally grounded and intellectually capable individuals” outlined in the *College English Teaching Guidelines*, but also represents an essential pathway to awaken students’ latent potential through language education and nurture modern citizens with “symbiotic growth of linguistic competence and humanistic spirit”. This model reimagines English classrooms as arenas for intellectual exploration, crucibles for cognitive engagement, and fertile ground for personal growth, thereby transforming language acquisition into a vital nexus bridging individual development and societal needs.

Based on the primary research subjects and core research questions, this study employs a longitudinal observation spanning one academic semester to evaluate the effectiveness of the reformed college English classroom. The assessment framework integrates three dimensions: academic performance (including CET-4/CET-6 scores and final examination results), reflective journals, and project presentations. These metrics collectively capture holistic changes in participants’ knowledge acquisition, skill development, and value formation. Data were systematically collected across three phases: pre-class, in-class, and post-class stages. Through comparative analysis of quantitative and qualitative datasets from experimental and control groups, this research aims to determine whether the pedagogical innovations foster holistic enhancement in students’ cognitive, practical, and ethical dimensions. The practical implementation of the classroom model includes the following six steps:

3.1. Collecting Relevant Data and Diagnosing Classroom Pain Points

3.1.1. Literature Review

This study conducted systematic searches in the CNKI database using keywords including “holistic,” “holistic development,” “holistic education,” and “foreign language education,” retrieving CSSCI-indexed core journal articles published between 2008 and 2024. A comprehensive review was performed to synthesize research on the origins, core principles, pedagogical tenets of holistic education, as well as its global and domestic applications in foreign language education. Through a synthesis of relevant literature and analysis of institutional-specific learning contexts, this research identifies existing challenges in foreign language classrooms at private universities. The literature review methodology was employed to systematically examine the conceptual framework and educational propositions of holistic development, elucidating its theoretical foundations; investigate current practices in college English classrooms to diagnose pedagogical pain points; analyze action research on foreign language instructors’ practices to delineate evolving teacher roles; evaluate existing classroom assessment paradigms to categorize dimensions

and methodologies for measuring instructional effectiveness.

3.1.2. Questionnaire Survey

This study re-examined the current state of English classrooms in private universities through the lens of holistic development and analyzed the limitations of knowledge-centered instructional models. To comprehensively diagnose pedagogical challenges, a questionnaire survey was designed to investigate student satisfaction across multiple dimensions, thereby identifying systemic pain points in college English teaching practices.

Based on a systematic literature review, the questionnaire's structural dimensions were defined, followed by the identification of factors within each dimension. All dimensions (e.g., knowledge acquisition, skill cultivation, emotional engagement, classroom dynamics) were adequately represented. Validate the relevance of questions to the research objectives and alignment with Likert-scale or open-response formats for balanced quantitative-qualitative insights. The preliminary questionnaire underwent rigorous item analysis and psychometric evaluation (reliability and validity tests) to refine its design. Adjustments were made to enhance clarity, reduce ambiguity, and ensure alignment with the study's focus on cognitive-affective integration and value-based reflection. The questionnaire is presented as follows:

A questionnaire on the current situation of English classroom in private universities

I. Basic information

1. Your grade:

freshmen sophomore junior senior students

2. Professional category:

liberal arts science and engineering sports art other

3. Your current English level (self-assessment):

Didn't pass CET-4 pass CET-4 pass CET-6 study for IELTS/TOEFL

II. Course content and goal achievement

4. In your opinion, what is the most prominent feature of the current English classroom ():

systematic nature of knowledge strongly examination-oriented Rich Cultural Expansion insufficient skill training outdated content interdisciplinary integration other _____

5. How effective is the course in cultivating the following abilities? (1 - 5 分, 1 = worst, 5 = greatest)

Competency Dimension		1		2		3		4		5	
Language Application Ability											
Critical Thinking											
Intercultural Communication Competence											
Self-Directed Learning Ability											

III. Teaching Methods and Classroom Ecology

6. Most Commonly Used Teaching Methods by Teachers ():
- Traditional Lecture Group Discussion Role-Playing
 - Flipped Classroom Multimedia Teaching Task-Driven Other _____
7. Does the classroom interaction model meet expectations?
- Excessive teacher dominance, students passively accept
 - Equal dialogue between teachers and students
 - Form over substance, lack of in-depth communication
 - Form over substance, lack of in-depth communication
8. Frequency of using digital technologies (e.g., smart platforms, VR, etc.):
- Never used Occasionally used Frequently used
- If used, please explain the impact of technology on learning outcomes:
- _____

IV. Emotional Experience and Holistic Development

9. In English classes, you often feel ():
- Anxiety (e.g., fear of making mistakes when speaking)
 - Sense of achievement (e.g., joy after solving problems)
 - Enhanced cultural identity
 - Broadened thinking horizons
 - Lack of motivation to learn
10. Does the teacher pay attention to students' personalized development needs?
- Regular personalized guidance Occasionally inquires about needs
 - Standardized teaching
11. Do you think the course adequately cultivates the following elements of holistic education? (Rate 1 - 5)
- | Element | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Moral Responsibility | | | | | |
| Aesthetic Literacy | | | | | |
| Mental Health | | | | | |
| Social Adaptability | | | | | |

V. Diagnostic Feedback

12. The three most urgent areas for improvement in the current classroom ():
- Practicality of Teaching Content Diversity of Assessment Methods Depth of Technology Integration
 - Quality of Teacher-Student Interaction Depth of Cultural Integration
 - Support for Personalized Learning
 - Opportunities for Classroom Participation Integration of Ideological and Political Elements Other _____
13. Please describe your ideal English classroom in 1 - 2 sentences:
- _____
14. Your suggestions for the reform of English teaching in private universities:
- _____

3.2. Formulating Teaching Plans and Constructing Classroom Models

Through the review of relevant literature and analysis of specific learning contexts, this study identifies the issues prevalent in foreign language classrooms at private universities. Guided by the philosophy and essence of holistic development, it constructs a university English classroom model based on holistic development. The first step is to redesign the teaching plan. This model is grounded in the ASK framework, integrating knowledge transmission, skill cultivation, and value shaping into the teaching process.

Here, A stands for Awareness, which encompasses moral consciousness, humanistic and scientific literacy, social responsibility, global perspective, collaboration, and innovation. S represents Skill, including foreign language proficiency, cross-cultural communication, critical thinking, self-directed learning, research, and practical abilities. K denotes Knowledge, covering foreign language knowledge, foreign literature, regional and country-specific knowledge, and Chinese cultural knowledge.

The newly constructed model must effectively integrate the diverse elements of awareness, skills, and knowledge through specific teaching steps. Only by doing so can it focus on the comprehensive development of students' qualities and truly embody the philosophy of holistic development.

This section aims to organically integrate the concept of holistic development into English classrooms at private universities. By constructing a new classroom model, it seeks to address the issue of educational instrumentalization in traditional approaches, fostering the cultivation of "well-rounded individuals" who are "moral, knowledgeable, and capable" [7]. The construction encompasses four key aspects: educational philosophy, teachers' roles, classroom design, and evaluation systems.

3.2.1. Establishing an Educational Philosophy Based on Whole-Person Development

To transform the traditional teaching model in college foreign language classrooms that overemphasizes knowledge transmission and skill cultivation, it is imperative to first establish an educational philosophy of "whole-person development"—teaching foreign languages to cultivate well-rounded individuals, and teaching individual subjects to foster holistic development. The connotation of whole-person development encompasses three dimensions: first, education that cultivates essential human virtues (general moral education); second, education that imparts comprehensive knowledge (liberal education); and third, education that promotes harmonious intellectual development and cultivates sound personalities (holistic education). Under this conceptual framework, critical questions emerge regarding necessary transformations: how should teachers' roles evolve, how should instructional designs be modified, and what evaluation systems should be established to accurately assess students' holistic development—all of which constitute urgent issues to be addressed.

3.2.2. Transformation of Teachers' Roles

Guided by the whole-person development philosophy, college foreign language educators must reconceptualize their professional identity. Foreign language instructors should transcend their conventional role as mere knowledge transmitters and skill trainers, instead prioritizing talent cultivation with enhanced emphasis on fostering critical thinking and creative capacities in classroom settings. This necessitates systematic investigation into teaching behaviors of foreign language faculty in private universities, aiming to summarize required role transformations. Specifically, educators must achieve dual objectives: effectively organizing teaching procedures to ensure instructional coherence while simultaneously implementing student-centered educational principles [8]. This requires meticulous consideration of learners' needs in instructional design, coupled with strategic encouragement of autonomous learning and free inquiry. The research should particularly focus on resolving the inherent tension between maintaining teaching efficiency and actualizing developmental educational philosophies.

3.2.3. Classroom Design

Traditional classroom instruction is structured around three components: Knowledge, Skill, and Attitude (KSA). Conventional pedagogical practices often prioritize knowledge acquisition over skill development and skill development over attitude cultivation. However, real-world professional and personal contexts emphasize a reversed hierarchy: Attitude supersedes Skill, and Skill outweighs Knowledge (ASK). To reform English classrooms in private universities under the holistic development framework, this study proposes addressing three critical questions based on the ASK framework. The first is cultivating positive attitudes. Attributes such as responsibility, hope, confidence, and trust are pivotal for fostering fulfilling lives and meaningful careers. How can these attitudinal elements be systematically integrated into teaching practices, and how can students be guided to recognize their significance? For instance, embedding collaborative projects that simulate real-world ethical dilemmas could enhance social responsibility awareness. The second is skill transfer and Application. Proficiency in language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing, translation) and competencies like communication, collaboration, organization, and problem-solving are essential. How can classroom designs facilitate students' mastery of skill transfer across contexts? Approaches such as project-based learning (e.g., cross-cultural case analyses) and technology-enhanced simulations (e.g., AI-driven language platforms) may bridge theoretical knowledge and practical application. The third is knowledge system construction. For the post-00s generation of digital natives, fragmented knowledge from textbooks or the internet often lacks coherence. How can curricula be redesigned to help students connect prior knowledge with new information and struct their own knowledge frameworks? Strategies like thematic scaffolding (e.g., linking historical linguistic evolution to modern usage) and metacognitive training (e.g., guided reflection on knowledge integration) could address this challenge.

3.2.4. Evaluation Systems

Traditional classroom evaluation primarily relies on students' examination scores to determine academic success. This overemphasis on summative assessment at the expense of formative assessment hinders students' holistic development. In a university English classroom grounded in holistic development, evaluation must extend beyond academic performance to encompass practical language competencies, critical thinking, ethical and ideological literacy, and other multidimensional capabilities. This section investigates three critical aspects:

1) Dimensions of Evaluation:

- Cognitive Competencies: Mastery of linguistic knowledge (e.g., grammar, vocabulary) and subject-specific content (e.g., cross-cultural communication theories).
- Skill Application: Proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation, as well as problem-solving, collaboration, and adaptability in real-world contexts.
- Attitudinal Development: Cultivation of social responsibility, innovation, global perspectives, and ethical judgment.
- Meta-Cognitive Growth: Self-directed learning strategies, reflective practices, and lifelong learning habits.

2) Evaluative Factors Within Dimensions:

- Knowledge Integration: Ability to synthesize fragmented information into coherent knowledge frameworks (e.g., connecting historical linguistic trends with contemporary usage).
- Critical Engagement: Depth of analysis in debates, case studies, or ethical dilemmas (e.g., evaluating cultural biases in texts).
- Behavioral Indicators: Classroom participation, collaboration in group tasks, and initiative in self-assessment (e.g., reflective journals or peer feedback).

3) Assessment Methodologies:

- Dynamic Formative Tools: Portfolio assessments (e.g., learning logs, project artifacts), rubric-based peer evaluations, and technology-enhanced feedback systems (e.g., AI-driven analytics for real-time skill diagnostics).
- Contextualized Performance Tasks: Scenario-based simulations (e.g., cross-cultural negotiation exercises), thematic research projects (e.g., analyzing global issues through English media), and competency-focused presentations (e.g., TED-style talks on societal challenges).
- Multidimensional Metrics: Hybrid scoring systems that balance quantitative metrics (e.g., test scores) with qualitative descriptors (e.g., creativity, resilience).

To ensure comprehensive evaluation, the reformed system must adopt a triangulated approach, integrating teacher observations, student self-reflections, and peer reviews. For instance, learning analytics platforms can track incremental progress in language skills, while ideological literacy might be assessed through structured reflections on ethical dilemmas in course materials. By aligning evaluation with the ASK (Awareness-Skill-Knowledge) framework, this system will holistically

measure both academic outcomes and the cultivation of well-rounded individuals.

4. Classroom Data Collection and Analysis

4.1. Data Collection

The innovation of foreign language classrooms under Holistic education necessitates systematic data collection through multiple methodologies. **Table 1** outlines three primary data categories: 1) observational data; 2) self-report data; and 3) learning outcome data. All data collection was conducted by the researchers themselves to ensure authenticity and reliability.

Observational data capture students' externalized behaviors, such as attention levels and participation in instructional activities, obtained through video recordings and structured classroom observations. Self-report data, acquired via reflective journals, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews, provide insights into imperceptible moral-affective shifts and value transformations. Data analysis employed multiple methodologies, including longitudinal tracking comparisons and cross-sectional analyses within practical frameworks. Learning outcome data were operationalized through standardized language proficiency assessments, notably the College English Test (CET-4/CET-6) and final examination results.

Table 1. Data collection methods.

Data type	Data content	Collector	Means of collection
Observation	Student participation, student performance	Researcher	Video Recording of Teaching Process, Classroom Observation for Research Projects
Self-report	Students' evaluation of teaching effect, evaluation of self-worth improvement, teachers' self-evaluation of teaching, and teachers' evaluation of students' learning.	Researcher	Reflective journals, Questionnaires, interviews
Learning outcome	Language proficiency test, composition, etc.	Researcher	College English Test for Band 4 and Band 6, mid-term and final examinations, written exercises, etc.

4.2. Experimental Results Analysis and Effectiveness Evaluation

The three aforementioned data categories were analyzed through quantitative and qualitative approaches. As for quantitative analysis, factor correlations in questionnaire surveys, ANOVA, and t-tests were analyzed using SPSS software. Learning outcome data were operationalized through standardized language proficiency assessments, notably the College English Test (CET-4/CET-6) and final examination scores. Comparative analyses of pre-post score differentials were conducted to evaluate proficiency gains. In Qualitative Analysis, observational data underwent systematic qualitative processing, incorporating temporal metrics (total time spent in productive engagement), participation frequency (number of students responding

to instructor queries), and linguistic output metrics (lexical, phrasal, sentential, and discourse-level production). Self-report data analysis employed mixed methodologies, including longitudinal tracking comparisons and cross-sectional evaluations within practical frameworks. Analytical parameters focused on three developmental domains: knowledge acquisition, skill development, and value formation, with longitudinal comparisons conducted across each dimension.

To ensure the authenticity and reliability of the research data, this study selects two parallel classes (Logistic Management Class 2101/Hotel Management Class 2105 at Zhejiang Yuexiu University) taught by the author as research subjects. This methodological design serves three critical purposes: 1) enabling systematic monitoring of instructional progress and curriculum arrangements; 2) facilitating real-time observation and data collection during pedagogical implementation; and 3) ensuring effective execution and verification of classroom interventions. To minimize confounding variables between experimental and control groups, the selected classes maintain rigorous comparability in three dimensions: demographic equivalence (comparable in size and age distribution), educational homogeneity (similar learning backgrounds and proficiency levels), and instructional consistency (taught by the same instructor for College English courses). Such methodological rigor effectively controls extraneous variables while preserving ecological validity, thereby enhancing the internal and external validity of experimental outcomes.

This controlled comparative approach not only aligns with quasi-experimental research paradigms in educational studies but also addresses ethical considerations by maintaining natural learning environments without artificial intervention. The longitudinal data tracking mechanism (spanning 16 instructional weeks) further ensures comprehensive documentation of developmental trajectories in learners' linguistic competence and cross-cultural awareness.

This study adopted a quasi-experimental design to systematically examine the implementation efficacy of the holistic education model (experimental class, $n = 40$) versus traditional pedagogy (control class, $n = 40$) in private university English classrooms. Aligned with the data typology and collection methods outlined in **Table 1**, the research integrated quantitative metrics and qualitative evidence to assess both the operational feasibility of whole-person education principles and their pedagogical effectiveness. Over one academic semester, tripartite verification through observational records, self-report documentation, and learning outcome measurements revealed that the whole-person education paradigm significantly enhanced students' language learning ecosystems across multiple dimensions in **Table 2**.

Sample Design:

- Experimental Group (Holistic Education): 40 students (20 males, 20 females), with an initial CET-4 average score of 425.
- Control Group (Traditional Teaching): 40 students (20 males, 20 females), with an initial CET-4 average score of 423.

Table 2. Experimental data comparison.

Data type	Data content	Experimental class (mean \pm standard deviation)	Control class (mean \pm standard deviation)	Significance test (<i>p</i> value)
Observation data	Classroom Attention Span Ratio	82% \pm 8%	68% \pm 12%	<i>p</i> < 0.01
	Active Participation Frequency (times per class):	8.2 \pm 2.1	4.5 \pm 1.8	<i>p</i> < 0.001
Self-reported data	Reflection Journal Quality Score (1 - 5 points)	4.2 \pm 0.6	3.5 \pm 0.7	<i>p</i> < 0.05
	Self-Assessment of Learning Motivation Improvement (1 - 5 points)	4.0 \pm 0.5	3.1 \pm 0.9	<i>p</i> < 0.01
	Self-Assessment of Critical Thinking (1 - 5 points)	4.3 \pm 0.4	3.6 \pm 0.8	<i>p</i> < 0.05
Learning Outcomes Data	CET-4 Pass Rate	85%	70%	$\chi^2 = 4.12, p = 0.042$
	CET-46 Pass Rate	40%	25%	$\chi^2 = 3.88, p = 0.049$
	Final Exam Score (total score 100 points)	82.5 \pm 6.3	75.2 \pm 9.1	<i>p</i> < 0.01

Observational data were quantified using pedagogical video analysis tools, with student focused attention duration measured through eye-tracking technology. The experimental class, employing interactive modalities such as group discussions and scenario simulation, exhibited significantly prolonged attentional engagement. Proactive interaction frequency was tallied via classroom observation protocols, revealing heightened activity levels in task-driven activities within the experimental cohort. Quantitative results demonstrated that attention span duration in experimental class (82% \pm 8%) significantly surpassed the control group (68% \pm 12%, *p* < 0.01). Interaction frequency in experimental class (8.2 \pm 2.1 instances/session) showed an 82% increase over controls (4.5 \pm 1.8 instances/session, *p* < 0.001). Experimental students predominantly engaged in collaborative debates (e.g., cultural conflict resolution) and role-playing scenarios (e.g., cross-cultural negotiations) for knowledge internalization.

Reflective journals from self-report data underwent blind evaluation by researchers based on “reflective depth” and “value relevance” (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.83$). The experimental class exhibited heightened references to “intercultural understanding” and “self-growth” (e.g., “English debates taught me to respect diverse perspectives”). Questionnaire surveys utilizing a 5-point Likert scale revealed that the experimental class significantly outperformed the control group in “learning interest” and “critical thinking” dimensions. Quantitative analysis demonstrated statistically significant advantages for the experimental class in journal quality (4.2 \pm 0.6 vs. 3.5 \pm 0.7, $*p^* < 0.05$), learning motivation enhancement (4.0 \pm 0.5 vs. 3.1 \pm 0.9, $*p^* < 0.01$) and self-assessed critical thinking (4.3 \pm 0.4 vs. 3.6 \pm 0.8, $*p^* < 0.05$). Qualitative thematic analysis identified divergent lexical patterns. Experimental class journals emphasized “cultural empathy” (28.6%), “self-reflection” (22.1%), and “social responsibility” (15.4%), while control class entries predomi-

nantly referenced “exam anxiety” (34.2%) and “mechanical practice” (27.8%). This bifurcation suggests that the whole-person education model, through value-embedded interventions (e.g., cross-cultural topic discussions) and metacognitive training (e.g., reflective writing), facilitates a paradigm shift from instrumental learning to meaning construction [9].

The learning outcomes data revealed that the experimental class achieved significantly higher CET-4/6 pass rates and final exam scores compared to the control class, demonstrating that the holistic education model not only preserved language skill training but also enhanced efficiency through increased learning motivation. Specifically, the experimental class exhibited superior performance in CET-4 pass rates (85% vs. 70%, $\chi^2 = 4.12$, $p = 0.042$), CET-6 pass rates (40% vs. 25%, $\chi^2 = 3.88$, $p = 0.049$), and final exam scores (82.5 ± 6.3 vs. 75.2 ± 9.1 , $p < 0.01$). Further regression analysis demonstrated that self-assessed critical thinking ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.05$) and classroom interaction frequency ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.01$) significantly predicted academic improvement in the experimental class, whereas the control class showed a singular association with vocabulary size ($\beta = 0.52$, $p < 0.05$). These findings substantiate Kumaravadivelu’s “competency-literacy-performance chain enhancement hypothesis” in holistic education [10], positing that cultivating affective engagement and higher-order thinking can indirectly enhance the efficiency of language skill acquisition.

5. Conclusions

This study, through a one-semester quasi-experimental design, demonstrates that the holistic education model exhibits multidimensional pedagogical enhancement effects in English classrooms at private universities. Empirical data reveal that the experimental class significantly outperformed the control class in key metrics, including classroom attention span (82% vs. 68%, $p < 0.01$), active interaction frequency (8.2 vs. 4.5 times per session, $p < 0.001$), and CET-4 pass rates (85% vs. 70%, $p = 0.042$). These results indicate that holistic education effectively activates students’ cognitive engagement and intrinsic motivation through contextualized interactions and reflective practices. Qualitative analysis further highlights that high-frequency lexical items in experimental students’ reflection journals predominantly centered on “cultural empathy” (28.6%) and “social responsibility” (15.4%), whereas the control group remained trapped in a utilitarian learning cycle dominated by “examination anxiety” (34.2%). This contrast corroborates the pivotal role of holistic education in facilitating the paradigm shift from “instrumental learning” to “meaning construction”.

Theoretically, this study innovatively proposes the ASK Framework (Awareness-Skill-Knowledge), which integrates ethical awareness, intercultural competence, and linguistic knowledge to reconstruct the educational ecology of English classrooms in private universities. Practically, through blended instructional design and a multifaceted assessment system (e.g., task-driven activities on cloud platforms and peer evaluation mechanisms), it achieves synergistic development

of language skill training and humanistic literacy cultivation. This approach aligns with the overarching requirements of the *National Standards for Foreign Language and Literature Education Quality*, which emphasize “learning languages to cultivate holistic individuals”.

Future research should extend the experimental duration to track longitudinal impacts of holistic education on student development and explore adaptive pathways for teacher training mechanisms and curricular resources. Additionally, integrating “curricular ideological-political elements” organically into the holistic education framework to construct a Sinicized foreign language education model remains a critical research frontier. This study provides empirical evidence for addressing the chronic issue of “skill-over-humanity” in private university foreign language education and contributes practical exemplars for higher education’s transition from “knowledge transmission” to “value-oriented cultivation” [7].

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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