



# A Research on Integrating Chinese Traditional Culture into the Teaching of Comprehensive English Courses

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## Abstract

The English classroom serves as a crucial way to cultivate students' cultural perception. Through English learning, students can understand the similarities and differences between diverse cultures, achieving cross-cultural communication. Yet, a noticeable lack of integration of Chinese traditional culture exists in the current English teaching process, which has a negative effect on cultural communication, cultural inheritance and cultural confidence. As a main course for English majors, how to integrate Chinese traditional culture into the teaching of Comprehensive English courses—introducing Chinese traditional cultural vocabulary, stories, and their translated connotations into the classroom and enhancing students' cross-cultural communication skills—is a matter worth considering.

## Subject Areas

Culture

## Keywords

Chinese Traditional Culture, Comprehensive English, Course Teaching

## 1. Introduction

Languages are the most direct way to express cultures of different countries. Distinctive language enriches the cultural deposits of a nation, and therefore, cultures can be reflected in languages. Correspondingly, the formation of a language is also deeply influenced by a culture. In 1921, the American linguist Edward Sapir, in his work "Language," elucidated the inseparable relationship between language and culture, asserting that language carries culture and cannot exist independently

from it. [1] However, current English teaching for majors focuses mainly on introducing the target language culture represented by British and American cultures, while less involving the input of cultural background knowledge of the mother tongue as the communication subject. This directly leads to a lack of cultivation of native Chinese culture in Comprehensive English classrooms, resulting in the phenomenon of “Chinese culture aphasia” [2]. This kind of cultural teaching, which overlooks subjectivity, is very likely to lead to “dumb English”. After English learning, many students have acquired a certain level of English knowledge, but due to a lack of learning about cultural vocabulary, phrases, and translation of their mother tongue, they cannot use English to express their native culture or engage effectively in cultural communication. Moreover, the author has found that under this teaching model in English majors, generally students show an excessive preference for foreign cultures, which is unacceptable. This paper starts from Comprehensive English classrooms, analyzes problems in daily teaching, and specifically explores how to integrate Chinese traditional culture into Comprehensive English courses. The aim is to help students better establish cultural confidence, enhance their cross-cultural communication, and finally cultivate their comprehensive qualities.

## **2. Problems Encountered in Integrating Chinese Traditional Culture into Comprehensive English Courses**

Although many universities are carrying out teachings of Chinese traditional culture, the dissemination of them still has a long way to go. Clarifying the dissemination situation of Chinese traditional culture in foreign language teaching and identifying problems are vital for us to adopt effective countermeasures to spread Chinese traditional culture. In comprehensive English courses, we have found that many teachers are actively engaged in spreading Chinese traditional culture, but researches on Chinese traditional culture are not deep enough, since its essence has not been timely integrated into the teaching objectives. Mainly, the following issues exist:

### **2.1. Professionalism and Technical Issues in the Classroom**

In terms of the cognition foreign language teachers, more emphasis is placed on linguistic culture, instead of in-depth research on Chinese traditional culture. In addition, selecting suitable teaching materials from various Chinese traditional culture is quite difficult. Therefore, foreign language teachers need to strengthen their understanding of Chinese traditional culture and carefully select appropriate teaching materials to promote the communication of them. In recent years, with the increasing integration of the world economy, Chinese traditional culture has been greatly spread, and people have gradually realized the necessity and richness of our national culture. It has also enhanced foreign language teachers' cognition as well as understanding of Chinese traditional culture.

In English teaching, some teachers do integrate relevant contents of some Chi-

nese traditional culture into their teaching designs, but during lectures, they merely recite the original work without any novelty. For some well-known traditional culture, most students have already been familiar with it, but as to teachers repeatedly mentioning it, they are not interested. Teachers continue with clichés, without re-exploring the traditional cultures of the times, thus lacking classroom charm.

## **2.2. Teaching Models and Emotional Issues**

In English classrooms, some teachers use traditional teaching methods, primarily lecturing and students listening. The classroom atmosphere is not lively. They don't give attention to the teaching effectiveness or students' acceptance. The dissemination of Chinese traditional culture is also a main carrier of our national ideology. If students remain in a negative mood for a long time, they are prone to be rebellious, greatly affecting teaching effectiveness.

Chinese traditional culture has a long history and deep cultural heritage. In daily English teaching, when addressing serious issues such as national interests and dignity, some teachers often strictly preach, making Chinese stories lack sufficient emotional resonance, and students lack emotional identification with the national culture.

## **2.3. Issue of Classroom Engagement**

Some foreign language teachers employ traditional teaching methods, dominating the classroom while neglecting students' subjectivity. But university students, with their active thinking, are likely to resist passive acceptance. Their lateral and logical thinking abilities have no chance to be displayed, leading to a less lively classroom or a noticeable reduction in teacher-student interaction.

# **3. The Teaching Strategies for Integrating Chinese Traditional Culture into Comprehensive English Courses**

## **3.1. Optimizing Teaching Contents and Professionalism**

In terms of teaching contents, select themes that students are interested to foster their enthusiasm of Chinese traditional culture. For example, when studying important Western holidays such as Valentine's Day or American Independence Day, we'll introduce Chinese festivals like Qixi (Chinese Valentine's Day) and National Day. Guide students to find materials to learn about Chinese traditional culture, and regularly organize various English lectures, in which students can present in English the origins, development, and cultural significance of their favorite traditional Chinese festivals. In comparative studies between Chinese and Western cultures, students can gain a deeper understanding of Chinese traditional culture, thus enabling Chinese culture to be passed down. In English teaching, teachers focus on developing students' language skills while neglecting the teaching of Chinese culture and the interpretation of it in English. Due to a lack of

relevant materials in textbooks, many students lack knowledge of Chinese traditional culture and also the ability to convey it in English. Therefore, it is necessary to enrich the existing English textbooks by selecting appropriate English readings and audiovisual materials related to Chinese culture. While introducing Western culture, materials on Chinese culture should also be reasonably chosen. When it comes to reading materials, we can use English to describe Chinese culture, extract some excellent Chinese literary works, and introduce the works written in English about China. In addition, add the correct English translations of commonly used Chinese words to the textbook's vocabulary lists. For audiovisual materials, we can incorporate short videos of Chinese folk culture, broadcasts of Chinese news programs, and post-class exercises to enhance the English expression of Chinese traditional culture.

Chinese traditional culture is profound and rich, and classic lines from famous works not only reflect our national aesthetic tastes but also positively influence the younger generation's way in conducting themselves. Appropriately integrating traditional Chinese classics can fill English classrooms with rich cultural charm, making students spontaneously develop their confidence and pride in Chinese traditional culture. In comprehensive English classes, students can engage in translating Chinese classic poetry or outstanding literary works, discussing vocabulary expression and translation techniques, which not only enhances their English skills but also promotes their understanding of Chinese traditional culture.

Students from different disciplines have various interests and needs regarding Chinese traditional culture. In English teaching, teachers can select related or similar Chinese traditional culture based on students' English proficiency and disciplinary characteristics. For example, for students majoring in architectural design, teachers can appropriately introduce the tenon and mortise structure of ancient Chinese architecture into the teaching content, which not only increases students' interest in learning English but allows them to integrate it well with their major, enabling them to better appreciate the innovative and indomitable craftsmanship spirit of their ancestors. [3] Many aspects of Chinese traditional culture, like ancient architecture, have been filmed in series of documentaries, and English-dubbed versions have also gradually appeared in libraries and bookstores. Appropriately adding English videos or materials related to Chinese traditional culture in the classroom can enhance students' understanding of it and help spread Chinese excellent traditional culture to a wider audience.

### **3.2. Utilizing Modern Teaching Tools to Accurately Express National Sentiments**

Today's rapidly advancing network technology allows us to use multimedia ways to understand Western cultural backgrounds and classic stories. Likewise, in the digital era, multimedia can also be used to spread Chinese culture and classics, helping students better understand and improve their own cultural literacy. Teachers need to consider how to spread Chinese traditional culture in the internet age, how to tell Chinese stories in a better way, and how to show the diverse

and colorful new image of China. Teachers can also encourage students to introduce in English the Chinese traditional culture they are familiar with to their classmates, write English tweets and submit them to relevant public accounts, or create English speech shorts, English dramas, etc. These works can be posted on platforms such as Weibo, Xiaohongshu (Little Red Book) and Douyin (TikTok), and students can be rewarded based on the number of likes that they receive. This can not only stimulate students' enthusiasm in learning English but inspire them to have a deep understanding of Chinese traditional culture.

### **3.3. Shifting the Teaching Focus and Enhancing Teachers' Teaching Quality**

Classroom teaching is the main approach for university students to learn English. Teachers' responsibility is to teach students knowledge in the classroom while they also bear the dual mission of language and cultural dissemination. If a teacher cannot even express Chinese culture fluently in English, how can students be expected to do so? To better integrate knowledge of Chinese traditional culture into English teaching, teachers must continuously improve their own understanding of Chinese traditional culture and enhance their ability to communicate in both Chinese and English. They should continuously deepen their English foundation, possess good cultural literacy in both English and Chinese, have strong cross-cultural awareness, and be able to use English to convey Chinese culture. English teachers should fully study Chinese traditional culture and strike a balance between Chinese and Western cultures so that their influence in teaching can be more reasonable. Adding Chinese traditional culture in English classes is also an excellent way to help students deepen their understanding of it and improve their way of expressing in English. Therefore, English teachers must firstly enhance their Chinese cultural literacy as well as their ability to express Chinese culture in English. During daily teaching, emphasis should be placed on the comparison and explanation of the differences between Chinese and Western languages, and occasional arrangements of comparative activities between Chinese and Western cultures to better prepare students for future cross-cultural communication.

Enhancing the quality of Chinese traditional culture from the perspective of emotional cognition and experience. By researching traditional Chinese Culture, the author finds that students are deeply interested in traditional Confucianism, folk arts, traditional folk customs, etc. In English teaching, teachers try to stimulate students' interest, redesign and integrate these elements to keep them in pace with the times. By connecting the profound historical heritage of Chinese traditional culture with the vigorous vitality of modernization, and advancing with the times, students would develop a deep interest in Chinese traditional culture in the deep soul, and naturally become loyal supporters and inheritors of it. Teachers can also organize students to introduce Chinese excellent traditional culture in English to their family members and the public, while also infecting more people to spread Chinese traditional culture through English. Through such continuous accumulation, more people will join in telling China's stories well in English to

the outside world, contributing to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and enhancing its cultural soft power [4].

### **3.4. Improving Teaching Methods and Being Close to Students' Lives**

By deeply exploring local culture and integrating it with regional culture, college students may discover Chinese traditional culture in their own lives, thereby understanding the connotations, origins, historical background, historical development, and future prospects of these cultures. To some extent, this effectively enhances ethnic cultural identity and further promotes students' recognition of ethnic culture, achieving an intrinsic integration of language expression and cultural education. By organizing students to explain excellent ethnic culture in English to their classmates not only improves their English proficiency but introduces local outstanding ethnic culture to the outside world.

Cultivating the awareness of Chinese traditional culture in college students is by no means an overnight task. It is a long-term and systematic project that requires joint efforts at multiple levels, including national, provincial, municipal, county, and school levels. Carrying out some distinctive school-based activities on campus, such as organizing traditional culture knowledge competitions, classic poetry recitation contests, and ethnic art festivals, etc. Encouraging students to use English as the main language to describe and explain related activities or competitions can expand publicity, attract a large number of interested students to join in, and motivate students to enthusiastically engage in the inheritance of Chinese traditional culture, telling China's stories in English.

## **4. Conclusions**

Chinese Traditional culture has a long history and has not always remained stagnant. On the contrary, it constantly absorbs new elements, ensuring that Chinese traditional culture maintains its vigorous vitality. The profound connotations of Chinese traditional culture, through the continuous accumulation over time, have given rise to its extensive, profound, and dynamic charm. As Chinese people in the new era, we have the responsibility to continue developing our traditional Chinese culture. English teachers should adhere to their beliefs, integrate traditional Chinese culture into their teaching, and in this way enable the younger generation to learn the profound connotations and excellent qualities of Chinese traditional culture while absorbing English culture. The deep historical heritage endows Chinese traditional culture with a unique and natural charm, and students have a deep respect and strong curiosity toward it. [5] In English teaching, elements of Chinese traditional culture can attract students' attention, make the classroom atmosphere more relaxed, and thus achieve the goal of improving classroom efficiency. Therefore, the development of Chinese traditional culture can't be separated from its inheritance, which in turn requires the joint efforts of millions of young people.

Chinese Traditional culture is of great significance in the cultivation of the new

generation of college students. Some experts believe that because of a lack of Chinese traditional culture and the infiltration of Western liberal culture, many students have become confused about traditional moral concepts, leading to the emergence of “individualism” and “liberalism”. Some college students also can't distinguish right from wrong and lack basic virtues and social etiquette, which makes it even more necessary to strengthen the study and understanding of Chinese traditional culture, and to provide cultural and ideological education for the new generation of youth, so that college students are able to inherit and carry forward Chinese traditional culture. Therefore, integrating Chinese traditional culture into comprehensive English teaching is of great importance.

English teaching has been widely used in various universities, but some universities adopt language teaching methods which often do not ignite students' enthusiasm for learning. To master a language, one must first place it in its corresponding cultural context. Therefore, English education must create an English cultural environment. By using traditional culture and comparing it with practices in comprehensive English classrooms, an authentic cultural atmosphere for English can be created, which allows students to learn in such an environment that both their interest in English and their enthusiasm for learning will be enhanced.

In conclusion, in English teaching, if learning English will lead to a neglect of one's mother tongue or adopting foreign culture will lead to the abandonment of one's own national culture, the world would remain isolated without cultural exchange and interaction. In the new century, to cultivate high-quality talents, it is also necessary to place a high value on the study and understanding of Chinese traditional culture in English language teaching. If English teachers can deeply understand the cultural connotations and integrate their own traditional cultural concepts into their daily teaching while absorbing Western culture, they can better promote English teaching, enhance students' cultural appreciation, and serve the country. It is an issue that we educators should ponder.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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