

Strategies for Integrating Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture into Senior High School English Reading Teaching

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Abstract: Excellent traditional Chinese culture represents the “soul” and “foundation” of the Chinese nation. Its profound cultural connotation plays a positive role in shaping students’ values, cultivating cross-cultural communication skills, and fostering cultural confidence. Integrating excellent traditional Chinese culture into senior high school English teaching is conducive to fully realizing its educational function. Based on specific case studies, this paper elaborates on strategies for integrating excellent traditional Chinese culture into English reading instruction. Teachers can effectively achieve this integration and promote students’ holistic development through strategies such as multimedia introductions, creating authentic contexts, comparing similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign cultures, and organizing practical activities.

Keywords: Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture, English Teaching, Teaching Strategies.

1. Introduction

The English Curriculum Standards for general Senior High Schools (2017 Edition, Revised in 2020) (Ministry of Education, 2020; hereafter referred to as the Standards) identify language competence, cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability as the core competencies for senior high school English. Cultural awareness encompasses not only learning about excellent foreign cultures but also understanding and identifying with Chinese culture, as well as possessing cross-cultural communication skills and the ability to disseminate Chinese culture within a globalized context [1]. Excellent traditional Chinese culture, as the “soul” and “foundation” of the Chinese nation, is a vital source for helping students establish cultural confidence and cultivate national pride. English teaching should encompass not only English language knowledge and cultures of English-speaking countries but also integrate knowledge of excellent traditional Chinese culture. This enables students to enhance their national identity and patriotic sentiment through comparative analysis of Chinese and Western cultures, solidify their cultural confidence, effectively tell Chinese stories in English, and disseminate the voice of China.

2. The Importance of Integrating Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture into Senior High School English Reading Teaching

Language and culture are inseparable; language serves as the carrier of culture. Reading is one of the most crucial cognitive activities for humans, a primary channel for inputting various information, knowledge, and linguistic material, and a key component of language teaching. English reading provides students with an important platform to understand the world, learn about outstanding cultural achievements both domestic and foreign, develop innovative thinking, and strengthen cultural confidence [2]. As reading lessons constitute a major component of senior high school English, integrating excellent traditional Chinese culture into

this instruction holds significant practical value in guiding students to establish cultural confidence and patriotic sentiment.

2.1. Facilitating the Construction of Correct Values

Excellent traditional Chinese culture, being time-honored and profound, embodies rich traditional virtues and core values, such as benevolence, righteousness, propriety, integrity, diligence, filial piety, etc. These are traditional virtues that contemporary Chinese youth need to inherit and promote. By introducing elements of excellent traditional Chinese culture into English reading teaching, students can encounter and comprehend the essence and importance of these virtues during the reading process. This plays a crucial role in helping students develop sound character and noble qualities. Integrating English reading teaching with traditional culture allows students, while learning language knowledge, to absorb its core values through reading English texts about excellent traditional Chinese culture, thereby constructing a correct worldview, outlook on life, and values. This fosters a positive life attitude and enriches their spiritual world.

2.2. Cultivating Cultural Confidence and Cross-Cultural Communication Skills

Excellent traditional Chinese culture embodies millennia of cultural accumulation and traditional values. Cultural confidence refers to the recognition and reverence individuals, nations, and states hold for their own cultural and ideological value systems. Integrating excellent traditional Chinese culture into English reading teaching allows students to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of their own nation’s cultural treasures while learning English. Teachers can select reading texts related to Chinese historical allusions, traditional festivals, customs, etc., enabling students to better understand China’s historical culture and social development, thereby strengthening their sense of national identity and cultural confidence. Simultaneously, cross-cultural communication skills are indispensable in the context of

globalization. Integrating excellent traditional Chinese culture into English reading teaching broadens students' international perspectives and helps them understand the differences and commonalities among cultures. Teachers should guide students to correctly perceive differences between Chinese and Western cultures, understand and respect the values and behavioral norms of other cultures, laying a solid foundation for students' future cross-cultural communication and dissemination of excellent traditional Chinese culture.

2.3. Enriching Teaching Content and Enhancing Student Interest

The appeal of classroom teaching is a vital prerequisite and guarantee for stimulating student interest and improving learning efficiency. Teachers can enrich English reading materials by incorporating elements of traditional Chinese culture, breaking the limitations of traditional textbooks, and providing students with more diverse and engaging learning resources. These cultural elements can include excerpts from classical Chinese literature, introductions to traditional festivals, videos of traditional music performances, etc., allowing students to gain an in-depth understanding of their own national cultural traditions and historical background during the reading process. Such teaching resonates with students' lived experiences, broadens their knowledge horizons, and is more likely to spark their learning interest and curiosity.

3. Strategies for Integrating Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture into Senior High School English Reading Teaching

3.1. Utilizing Multimodal Materials for Introduction to Activate Cultural Background Knowledge

Schema theory posits that people always connect new information to their existing knowledge when comprehending it. Therefore, the introduction phase is crucial in reading instruction. A well-designed introduction can quickly focus students' attention, spark their interest, and activate their prior knowledge and experiences. Generally, in the pre-reading phase, teachers can flexibly choose various introductory strategies based on the text genre and content. The use of multimodal teaching resources not only revolutionizes the dimensions of knowledge presentation but also constructs a vivid and dynamic context for students. Students' visual, auditory, and other senses are fully engaged, effectively awakening their cultural memory and background knowledge, laying the groundwork for subsequent learning.

Example: Taking the “Understanding ideas” section *WELCOME TO DUNHUANG* from Unit 3 of FLTRP's *Selective Compulsory Textbook 4* for Senior High School English, the teacher can play a tourism promotional video about Dunhuang during the introduction. The teacher can then ask questions like, “Have you ever been to Dunhuang? How much do you know about it?” As a nationally renowned tourist city, students likely have some knowledge of Dunhuang, and some may have personal travel experiences there. Through the video and teacher's questions, students can brainstorm and share ideas about Dunhuang. This method quickly activates students' fragmented

knowledge about Dunhuang. Simultaneously, the video presentation provides a direct visual impact and enjoyment, engaging students' multiple senses to perceive Dunhuang's charm and profound cultural heritage, thereby stimulating their learning interest.

3.2. Creating Authentic Contexts to Enrich Cultural Experience

Context creation that integrates authenticity, interest, and interactivity helps students understand, apply, and transfer learned knowledge, enabling them to creatively express personal viewpoints, emotions, and attitudes using acquired language and cultural knowledge in new contexts [1]. Creating appropriate authentic contexts during reading enhances students' sense of immersion, prompting them to analyze and solve problems using their knowledge and experience. This allows students to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the traditional Chinese cultural elements within the text and engage in profound thinking.

Example: Taking the “Developing ideas” section *Han Gan and His Horses* from Unit 4 of FLTRP's *Compulsory Textbook 3* for Senior High School English, the text is a biographical introduction to the famous Tang Dynasty painter Han Gan. After studying the text, the teacher can create a scenario: “Encountering Han Gan.” In this activity, one student role-plays Han Gan from ancient times, while another student acts as a modern reporter interviewing him. Questions might cover Han Gan's life, learning experiences, artistic style, paintings, etc. The dialogue should also incorporate students' own interpretations of the figure and his work. Within this authentic context created by the teacher, students not only consolidate and internalize the learned knowledge but also better appreciate, from Han Gan's perspective, the spirit of Chinese artists' pursuit of art and dedication to it, as well as the charm of traditional Chinese painting art.

3.3. Comparing Similarities and Differences Between Chinese and Foreign Cultures to Enhance Cross-Cultural Communication Skills

Cultural comparison is not only a concrete manifestation of cross-cultural communication skills, enabling students to recognize cultural differences and cultivate respect and tolerance for diverse cultures, but it also forms the basis for students' deep-level rational thinking, enhancing their cultural discernment and shaping their cultural stance [3]. Teachers should guide students to compare, learn from, and exchange ideas about excellent traditional Chinese culture with other cultures within a multicultural context. Teachers can compare similar phenomena in Chinese and Western cultures from different aspects or perspectives, guiding students to respect and understand the linguistic habits, beliefs, values, and customs of people from different cultural backgrounds during cross-cultural communication. Only then can students truly possess cross-cultural communication skills and become effective ambassadors for telling Chinese stories in the future, fostering international mutual understanding with an open and inclusive mindset. This ability is not only essential for students' personal adaptation to social development but also a powerful driving force for promoting the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

Example: Taking the “Understanding ideas” section *When HAMLET meets PEKING OPERA* from Unit 4 of FLTRP’s *Compulsory Textbook 2* for Senior High School English, the text describes the author’s first experience watching a Peking Opera adaptation of Hamlet. The teacher can introduce background knowledge about Peking Opera using videos and pictures, guiding students to compare and analyze the similarities and differences between traditional Chinese Peking Opera and Western drama from various aspects such as origin, stage movements, performance styles, costumes, and props. Through comparison, students learn to understand and appreciate the different expressive forms of both art forms, recognizing that Peking Opera is not merely a Chinese art form but has gone global, fostering a sense of cultural pride in students. Simultaneously, teachers should consciously guide students to articulate in English the charm of Peking Opera as a traditional Chinese art form, disseminating excellent traditional Chinese culture and strengthening cultural confidence.

3.4. Organizing Practical Activities to Inherit Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture

The development of the times and society requires excellent traditional Chinese culture to undergo inheritance, innovation, and transcendence in both form and meaning, integrating with modern civilization, absorbing its essence, and enabling students to critically inherit and innovate excellent traditional Chinese culture through diverse cultural experiences [4]. Traditional English reading teaching models often emphasize teacher-centered lecturing, leaving students in a passive state of knowledge reception. This approach can easily diminish student motivation and interest and may inadvertently overlook the stimulation and cultivation of students’ interest in exploring excellent traditional Chinese culture. Therefore, teachers should combine students’ personal experiences and societal needs to initiate practical activities driven by authentic problems or tasks, allowing students to inherit and innovate excellent traditional Chinese culture through concrete actions.

Example: Taking the “Developing ideas” section *Time for a Change?* from Unit 2 of FLTRP’s *Compulsory Textbook 2* for Senior High School English, the text presents two individuals of different ages and professions expressing divergent views on where to have the New Year’s Eve dinner. The differing perspectives reflect disagreements on whether traditions should change. Based on this divergence, the teacher can organize an English debate competition, asking students to argue for either “Traditional customs can be

changed and innovated” or “Traditional customs must be strictly preserved.” On the one hand, during the preparation process, students can learn more about excellent traditional Chinese culture and improve their oral expression skills. On the other hand, through the debate, students explore the cultural connotations behind traditional customs and contemplate whether and how to integrate Chinese traditional customs with modern civilization to adapt them to societal development.

4. Conclusion

Excellent traditional Chinese culture represents the cultural essence and spiritual lifeline of the Chinese nation. Integrating it into senior high school English reading teaching is conducive to cultivating students’ cultural confidence and patriotic sentiment, enhancing their cross-cultural communication skills, and strengthening their ability to disseminate excellent Chinese culture. To achieve this integration, teachers need to transform their teaching philosophies, develop a keen awareness of excellent traditional Chinese culture, and engage in dialectical thinking about the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western cultures. During the reading teaching process, teachers should fully embody the humanistic characteristics of the English subject, uncover elements of traditional Chinese culture within the teaching content, actively innovate reading teaching models, promote students’ holistic development, and nurture them into a new generation imbued with national confidence and patriotic spirit.

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