Study on the Symbiotic Mechanism of Integrating British and American Literature into College English Teaching under the Belt and Road Initiative

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Abstract

The deepening of the Belt and Road has promoted the need for cross-cultural communication, and college English teaching needs to break through the limitations of traditional language skills training. This paper proposes the symbiotic mechanism and discusses how British and American literature can form a two-way empowering relationship with college English teaching through cultural exchange, teaching method innovation, and value guidance, providing a new path for cultivating talents with cross-cultural literacy.

Keywords

The Belt and Road; Symbiosis; British and American Literature.

1. Introduction

Under the background of deepening the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), cross-cultural communication has been upgraded from the subsidiary demand of economic cooperation to the core capability of global governance. According to the *China International Talent Blue Book* data, the demand for talents with cross-cultural literacy in countries along the Belt and Road in 2023 increased by 37% year-on-year. However, traditional college English teaching is still at the level of grammar-vocabulary-reading skills training, which is difficult to meet the goal of cultivating compound talents with understanding language, understanding culture, and good communication. In this context, as an important carrier of Western cultural genes, the study of the symbiotic mechanism between British and American literature and college English teaching has become a key path to break through the teaching bottleneck and cultivate cross-cultural talents needed for BRI. The symbiotic nature of British and American literature and college English teaching is essentially the two-way empowerment of culture and language: literature provides a cultural context for language learning, and language provides an expression tool for literary interpretation. This can not only help students understand cultural differences in language practice, but also deepen their understanding of the BRI's co-construction and sharing concept through cross-cultural comparison. However, there are two major pain points in current teaching: one is that literary teaching is marginalized and reduced to a collection of language practice materials; Second, language teaching is disconnected from culture, leading to students who can speak English but don't understand culture. Based on this, this paper proposes the symbiotic mechanism framework, which is carried out from three dimensions: cultural exchange, teaching innovation, and value guidance. The innovation of this paper lies in: for the first time, it deeply binds the needs of the Belt and Road Initiative with the cultural value of British and American literature, breaks through the traditional teaching mode of language-literature duality, and provides a three-dimensional training path of language + culture + practice for college English teaching. Through the construction of symbiotic mechanism, students can not only improve their

language ability, but also become bridge talents for cross-cultural communication in Belt and Road Initiative. They can understand Western culture and disseminate Chinese voices, ultimately achieving a virtuous circle of language empowering culture and culture nourishing language. At present, with the Belt and Road Initiative promoting the construction of a community of shared future for mankind, exploring the symbiotic mechanism of British and American literature and college English teaching is not only a necessary choice to respond to the needs of the times, but also an inherent requirement to cultivate talents with global vision.

2. Cultural Symbiosis: British and American Literature as a Carrier of Cross-Cultural Dialogue

The multicultural elements contained in British and American literature provide a natural dialogue bridge for cross-cultural exchanges of the Belt and Road. For example, the Chinese business philosophy of harmony is precious and the Jewish businessman Shylock's insistence on the spirit of contract in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* can guide students to think: how can the commercial ethics of different civilizations coexist under the background of the Belt and Road Initiative? In fact, the Chinese business philosophy of harmony is precious and Sherlock's spirit of contract are not in opposition, but can achieve win-win results through seeking common ground while reserving differences. Through the integration of contract as the foundation and harmony as the soul, the contract is the bottom line of business cooperation, and harmony is the lubricant to promote long-term win-win, both of which jointly constitute the dual guarantee of cross-cultural business exchanges.

Common ground: a common pursuit of fairness. Sherlock's spirit of contract emphasizes equivalent exchange, which is essentially the adherence to fair trade; the Chinese business philosophy of harmony is precious also takes win-win cooperation as its core, and opposes forceful buying and selling. Both of them agree that commercial activities should be based on fairness. The project cooperation in the Belt and Road Initiative requires not only the signing of strict contracts (spirit of contract), but also the emphasis on joint consultation, joint construction and sharing (harmony is precious), which embodies the unity of the principle of fairness.

Differences: emphasis on rules and human relations. Sherlock represents the Western spirit of contract, which emphasizes the rigid enforcement of rules, believing that once a contract is signed, it must be strictly adhered to without personal emotions; the Chinese business philosophy of harmony is precious emphasizes the elastic adjustment of human emotions, and within the framework of rules, disputes are resolved through negotiation to avoid the escalation of contradictions. In Western business negotiations, contract terms are often the core, while in Chinese business culture, non-contract factors such as drinking culture and relationship maintenance will also affect cooperation, reflecting the importance of human relations.

The path of integration: contract as the foundation, harmony as the objective. On the basis of contract, in cross-cultural business cooperation, it is necessary to clarify the rights and obligations of both parties first, and sign a clear contract (Sherlock's spirit of contract); With harmony as a supplement, in the process of implementation, when there are differences, they should be resolved through communication and negotiation to avoid rigidity (China's harmony is precious). When Chinese enterprises invest in countries along the Belt and Road, they not only abide by local laws (contract), but also respect local cultural customs (harmony is precious), achieving the integration of two business philosophies.

3. Teaching Symbiosis: The Practical Path of Task-Driven Teaching

To integrate British and American literature into college English teaching, task-driven teaching methods should be adopted.[1] For example, through the discussion of identity in literature, students are guided to extend the female consciousness in *Jane Eyre* to the role of women in cross-cultural communication under the background of the Belt and Road Initiative.

The female consciousness of *Jane Eyre*: from self-salvation to cultural consciousness. Jane Eyre's independence of refusing to rely on man is essentially the pursuit of equal identity. Her iconic declaration to Rochester, "Our souls are equal,"[2] encapsulates a core principle that equality is not just a personal demand but a foundation for intercultural respect. This awareness can guide students to think: how can women maintain their own cultural identity while respecting other cultures in cross-cultural communication? Jane Eyre said to Rochester our souls are equal, which corresponds to women in cross-cultural cooperation in the Belt and Road Initiative, neither subservient nor condescending.

Cross-cultural roles of women in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative. Cultural envoy: Women transmit their own culture through exchanges in education, art, public welfare and other fields. Chinese female teachers teach Chinese in the Belt and Road countries, or female artists display Chinese culture through traditional handicrafts. Communication bridge: Women are better at subtle emotional communication and play a unique role in cross-cultural negotiations and conflict mediation. In the Belt and Road project, female entrepreneurs use flexible communication to resolve conflicts caused by cultural differences. Development Enabler: Women drive the growth of local women through career development. Chinese female engineers in the Belt and Road infrastructure project train local women to master technology and achieve a win-win situation between gender equality and economic development.

The connection between literature and reality: from individual to group. Guide students to compare Jane Eyre's personal struggle with the collective contribution of women in the Belt and Road Initiative, and understand the sublimation of women's consciousness from striving for personal rights to promoting social progress. Topic of discussion: How would Jane Eyre participate in cross-cultural exchanges if she lived in the Belt and Road era? How does her spirit of independence help her become a cultural ambassador?

This teaching mode combines language learning with cultural inquiry, realizing the trinity of language-literature-culture.

4. Value Symbiosis: Resonance between Humanistic Spirit and The Needs of the Times

The humanistic spirit embedded in British and American literature shares a profound compatibility with the core values of the Belt and Road Initiative, particularly in their shared emphasis on resilience, cooperation, and win-win outcomes. A striking example is the resilient quality of Santiago in Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*—his iconic declaration, "A man can be destroyed but not defeated,"[3] mirrors the essence of BRI's cooperation spirit. Santiago's not defeated is the sublimation of individual spirit, while the cooperation spirit of Belt and Road is the condensation of collective strength.

Perseverance in a difficult situation: Santiago fought with the marlin in the sea for three days and three nights, even though he eventually only brought back the skeleton of the fish, he still adhered to the belief that he could not be defeated. This spirit corresponds to the challenges faced in the construction of the Belt and Road. Such as the technical difficulties in infrastructure construction and misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication, participants need to overcome difficulties with perseverance like Santiago. In the construction

of the China-Laos Railway, engineers overcame geological disasters in the tropical rainforest and built the railway in five years,[4] which is the practical embodiment of the spirit of not being defeated.

Win-win cooperation: Although Santiago went out to sea alone, his interaction with the little boy Manolin (Manolin prepared food for him and listened to his stories) embodied implicit cooperation. This kind of individual + collective force echoes the spirit of cooperation of the Belt and Road. Although countries have different demands, they can achieve win-win results by complementing each other's advantages. The lonely struggle of Santiago is individual resilience, while the joint construction of the Belt and Road is collective resilience, both of which point to the core of overcoming difficulties and achieving goals.

Spiritual inheritance: Santiago's story has inspired countless people, and the spirit of cooperation of the Belt and Road is also developing in the inheritance.[5] The transmission of this spirit has elevated tenacity from a personal quality to a common value pursuit of mankind. Through exchange programs, young people from countries along the Belt and Road learn about Santiago's tenacity and integrate their own cultural spirit into cooperation, realizing mutual learning at the spiritual level.

Through the teaching of literature, students can not only improve their language ability, but also establish an open and inclusive cultural attitude, and become cultural envoys for the construction of the Belt and Road.

5. Conclusion

Under the Belt and Road initiative, the symbiotic mechanism of British and American literature and college English teaching is essentially the deep integration of cultural exchange and language practice. In the future, we need to further explore the combination of literary teaching and the Belt and Road theme, and build a more dynamic cross-cultural education system.

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