

A Study on Integrating Ethnic Culture into College English Teaching in Local University

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Abstract:

In the cultural symphony of diverse coexistence, the integration of local ethnic cultures has become an indispensable part of College English teaching. By implicitly integrating local ethnic cultures in College English teaching, students can not only enhance their cross-cultural communication abilities but also promote and inherit the essence of local ethnic cultures. Thus, it aims to achieve harmonious coexistence of various ethnic cultures by developing a team of teachers with national cultural literacy and English teaching ability, developing a series of English courses with local ethnic culture, and carrying out various forms of ethnic cultural activities.

Keywords:

Ethnic culture
College English teaching
Cross-cultural communication

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1. Introduction

In the report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, it is clearly stated that “Chinese excellent culture has a long history and is the wisdom crystallization of Chinese civilization. At the same time, it focuses on promoting cultural self-confidence and self-improvement, creating new cultural glory and proposing enhancing the influence of Chinese civilization communication power”^[1]. Meanwhile, the consciousness of the Chinese national community serves as the fundamental basis for national unity and the essence of spiritual resilience. Primarily, this community consciousness is rooted in national identity, which relies on and manifests through cultural identity. Chinese cultural

identity encompasses three dimensions: self-identification within individual ethnic groups, mutual recognition among ethnic groups, and the collective identity of the Chinese nation. It is imperative to cultivate a sense of community within the Chinese nation, deepen cultural identity, unite the strengths of all ethnic groups, and vigorously promote the rich traditional culture of the Chinese nation alongside the distinct cultures of its constituent ethnic groups. Only by comprehensively, systematically, and profoundly understanding and learning about Chinese culture, can we firmly establish cultural confidence^[2].

To foster integrated and harmonious development among ethnic cultures that respect diversity and embrace differences, it is necessary to forge a robust spiritual

bond that fosters national consensus, a shared destiny, and spiritual cohesion. The integration of local ethnic culture into College English teaching has become a crucial aspect of promoting multicultural coexistence, which is consistent with the views that “learning a foreign language without a mother tongue is like a tree without a root or a source of water”^[3]. Therefore, by seamlessly integrating local ethnic culture into College English curricula, students can enhance their intercultural communication skills while inheriting and propagating the essence of local ethnic culture, thus facilitating the harmonious coexistence of diverse ethnic cultures. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the ability to communicate effectively across cultures has become crucial. By embedding local ethnic cultures into the English language classroom, students are provided with a unique opportunity to gain insights into different cultural perspectives and to develop a deeper understanding of the rich diversity that exists within their own country.

In conclusion, the integration of local ethnic cultures into College English teaching is a crucial step toward fostering harmonious coexistence among diverse ethnic cultures. By enhancing students’ cross-cultural communication abilities and promoting the inheritance of local ethnic cultures, this approach contributes to the cultivation of a sense of community within the Chinese nation and the strengthening of its cultural identity. As we move forward in an increasingly interconnected world, we must continue to explore innovative ways to integrate local ethnic cultures into education systems, fostering a new generation of global citizens who are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate the complexities of a multicultural world.

2. The importance of integrating ethnic culture into College English teaching in local universities

In the backdrop of multicultural integration, local universities hold a crucial position in promoting social harmony and stability. To accomplish this objective, they must delve into and harness their distinctive ethnic and cultural resources to foster targeted talent development. By incorporating the essence of national culture into their curricula, these institutions cultivate students’ cultural identity

and confidence, ensuring that their education remains grounded in local realities. “Only when students have a deep understanding of the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, will they not be affected by them, and ideological and political education will play a subtle role in enhancing students’ understanding of Chinese traditional culture in an all-round way, establish good social values”^[4].

Furthermore, by bridging theory with practical applications through hands-on learning and industry collaborations, they equip students with the skills necessary to drive local economic and social progress. Thus, it will achieve the aim of “To foster patriotism among university students, to use their knowledge to promote Comprehensive National Power and to contribute to social harmony, stability and healthy development”^[5].

Moreover, with the escalating trend of globalization, cultural exchange and mutual learning have become indispensable for fostering international understanding. As ambassadors of local culture, local universities must proactively establish platforms for dialogue and integration between national and global cultures. By utilizing English and other internationally recognized languages, they can share Chinese narratives with the world, showcasing the rich tapestry of local culture and fostering greater recognition and appreciation of Chinese culture among the international community. In executing this mission, these institutions must prioritize the cultivation of cross-cultural communication skills. This can be achieved by offering comprehensive English language courses and organizing cultural exchange programs that empower students with the tools and confidence to engage meaningfully in international exchanges and collaborations, thereby broadening their perspectives and enhancing their competitiveness on the global stage.

3. The research status of integrating ethnic culture into College English teaching in local universities

With the development of society and the need for external communication, more English teachers in China are paying attention to and starting to research the teaching of ideological and political education in the curriculum. Since 2018, there has been a significant increase in research papers on how to apply ideological and political

education to College English teaching. More ideological and political educators and college English teachers have published articles in journals, proposing many constructive suggestions for the reform of ideological and political education in College English teaching. They have also put forward the views that implementing ideological and political education urgently needs to integrate traditional Chinese culture and ethnic culture into College English teaching.

He, in 2015, believes that “the neglect of ideological and political education by college English teachers and the deviation from the direction of English textbook writing has led to the weakening of ideological and political education in English classroom teaching” [6]. Good ideological and political education is the key and foundation for students’ growth and success, which cannot be separated from the guidance of teachers, textbook writing, and the subtle guidance and cultivation of students through teaching media. Yang believes that “language itself belongs to the field of ideology, and foreign languages reflect foreign culture, which can be said to be the carrier of foreign ideology” [7]. Students spend a significant portion of their time in universities learning and interacting with foreign cultures, influenced by foreign ideologies. Therefore, in the process of cultivating English courses, universities need to consolidate, strengthen and deepen the propaganda and education of socialist ideology, widely carry out research, publicity and education of Marxism, and vigorously promote the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics into textbooks, classrooms, and minds.

Gao and Li believe that “due to the infiltration of Western ideology, incomplete curriculum, and textbook systems, and the need to improve teacher cultural literacy, there have been some phenomena that need to be solved, such as blind admiration of British and American culture, and aphasia of excellent traditional Chinese culture. Therefore, it is necessary to start by improving the cultural literacy of English teachers, optimizing curriculum and textbook selection, enhancing students’ cross-cultural communication awareness, and carrying out excellent traditional culture theme education activities” [8]. Cui believes that “the construction of ideological and political education in foreign language courses helps to defend ideological positions. University foreign language is not

only the study of language skills and basic abilities, but also an important way for students to contact Western culture, values, and ideology” [9].

Chen believed that “language is the carrier of culture, and the English subject has the characteristics of being instrumental and humanistic. The cultural information and ideological connotations carried by English are the core content of English learning. It is not only necessary to know and understand the language expression content, but also to strengthen cultural appreciation thinking, temper cultural character and thinking quality through the identification of language and cultural connotations” [10]. Shi believes that “the organic combination of language teaching and ideological and political education is an effective way to implement the reform of ideological and political education in public English courses” [11]. We need to continuously refine the content of ideological and political education in English courses, and implicitly integrate ideological and political education into College English teaching, ultimately achieving the integration of knowledge transmission, ability improvement, ideological cultivation, and value guidance.

4. Countermeasures of integrating ethnic culture into College English teaching in local universities

To effectively integrate local ethnic culture into College English teaching, local universities need to take some reasonable measures. The first thing is to develop a team of teachers with national cultural literacy and English teaching ability. These teachers not only need to have solid English teaching ability, but also need to deeply understand and adore Chinese culture and local ethnic culture to have the capacity to integrate the essence of Chinese culture and local ethnic culture into English teaching and provide students with English learning experience with national characteristics. To this end, local universities can improve teachers’ national cultural literacy and English teaching ability through regular teacher training and cultural exchange activities.

Secondly, local universities can develop a series of English courses with local ethnic culture. “An important principle for the effectiveness of political implementation is targeted design of teaching content,

selection of teaching methods, and establishment of evaluation standards, which are essential to ensure the quality of the curriculum^[12]. These courses can cover the history, culture, customs and other aspects of local ethnic. Byram holds that there are two ways to integrate Chinese culture into English teaching. The first approach is to incorporate cultural education into the classroom^[13]. Through studying in class, students can have a deeper understanding of the connotation and characteristics of local ethnic culture. Simultaneously, these courses can also help students improve their English language skills and enhance their cross-cultural communication skills. For example, English courses with local ethnic legends and historical stories can be offered, so that students can understand the profound heritage of national culture while learning English, which is the same as the views that one of the important ways to learn culture is to set up independent cultural courses^[14]. Moreover, combining empirical studies, such as investigating students' interests and needs in ethnic culture, could provide a more precise direction for curriculum design.

Thirdly, local universities can carry out various forms of ethnic cultural activities, such as ethnic cultural festivals, ethnic cultural exhibitions, etc., to provide students with opportunities to experience and learn local ethnic culture. These activities can not only enrich the campus cultural life, but also enhance the students' national cultural identity and pride. Concurrently, through practical teaching, such as organizing students to participate in social practice and volunteer services related to national culture, students can have a deeper understanding of the practical application value and social significance of national culture.

Finally, local universities need to strengthen the cooperation with domestic and foreign universities and institutions to jointly promote the international dissemination of local ethnic culture. Through the cooperation with international educational institutions, local universities can promote the English teaching experience of local ethnic culture to the world, and make greater contribution to the promotion of Chinese culture and local ethnic culture. At the same time, through the cooperation and exchanges between domestic universities, teaching resources can be shared to improve the teaching effect, and further promote the integration of local ethnic culture

in College English teaching. For example, online English courses can be offered in cooperation with international educational institutions to introduce the unique charm of local ethnic cultures to students from all over the world and enhance the international community's recognition of Chinese culture.

5. Challenges of integrating ethnic culture into College English teaching in local universities

Although it is of great significance to integrate the local ethnic culture into College English teaching, it will also face some challenges in the practical process. Among them, there are urgent problems to be solved such as how to balance the relationship between English teaching and ethnic culture education, how to ensure the quality and depth of teaching content, and how to stimulate students' learning interest and participation.

Firstly, it is crucial to balance the relationship between English teaching and national culture and education. English teaching itself has its own unique teaching objectives and requirements, while national culture education pays more attention to the inheritance and promotion of culture. Therefore, when combining the two, it is necessary to find a balance to ensure that both the English teaching tasks can be completed and the national culture can be effectively transmitted. This requires teachers to fully consider students' English level and cultural background in teaching design, and arrange teaching content and methods reasonably so that the two can promote each other and complement each other.

Secondly, the quality and depth of the teaching content are also big challenges. There are many kinds of local ethnic cultures with rich connotations. Selecting representative content for teaching and digging into the connotations and characteristics of ethnic culture are all problems that need to be seriously considered. To this end, local universities can organize experts and scholars to conduct in-depth research and develop English teaching materials and teaching resources with local characteristics to provide strong support for teaching. At the same time, teachers should continue to learn and improve their professional quality, to ensure the quality and depth of the teaching content.

Finally, it is also important to stimulate students' interest and participation in learning. As the main subject of learning, students' enthusiasm and participation directly affect the teaching impact. Therefore, teachers should pay attention to students' interests and needs when designing teaching activities, and adopt various forms of teaching methods such as group discussion, role play, etc., to stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm in learning. Teachers should also pay attention to evaluation and feedback to help them solve difficulties and improve the learning effect.

6. Prospective evolution of integrating ethnic local culture into the College English teaching

With the development of globalization and the continuous strengthening of cultural exchanges, the future trend of local ethnic culture in College English teaching will be more obvious. In the future, some of the characteristics are as follows.

Firstly, the teaching content will be more diverse and personalized. With the deepening of educational reform and the continuous change of students' needs, the teaching content will pay more attention to diversity and individualization. This means that future English teaching will pay more attention to cultivating students' cross-cultural communication ability and multicultural cognition and understanding ability. Simultaneously, the teaching content will also be more close to the students' actual life and interests, to meet their personalized needs.

Secondly, the teaching methods will be more modern and digital. With the rapid development of information technology and the continuous innovation of educational technology, teaching methods will be more modern and digital. In the future, we can foresee more

applications of modern online courses, virtual reality technology, artificial intelligence, and other educational technologies, to provide more convenient and efficient ways and means for English teaching. By doing so, it will realize the aims of "deeply integrating language learning with the guidance of online media, forming a unique new media sports model that leads young students' growth, and building an online education ecosystem"^[15].

Last but not least, the teaching evaluation will be more comprehensive and scientific. The future English teaching evaluation will pay more attention to comprehensiveness and scientific rigor. In addition to the traditional written tests and oral tests, more attention will also be paid to the evaluation of students' comprehensive quality and ability, such as teamwork ability, innovation ability, and cross-cultural communication ability. Concurrently, the evaluation method will be more scientific and objective, using a variety of evaluation methods and tools to ensure the accuracy and fairness of the evaluation.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the integration of local ethnic culture into College English teaching holds immense significance and value. By persevering in exploration and practice, we can overcome the challenges and issues encountered, fostering a harmonious blend of English teaching with Chinese and local cultures. This integrated approach holds great promise in fostering talents endowed with an international perspective and cultural literacy. Additionally, it is imperative to anticipate the evolving trends and prospects, continuously innovating and enhancing teaching methods, thereby making substantial contributions to local economic and social development, cultural exchanges, and mutual learning.

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