

# Overview on Approaches to Integrate Chinese Culture into English Teaching

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**Abstract:** Given the current situation where English textbooks used in the joint training program of higher vocational colleges lack sufficient representation of Chinese culture, it becomes imperative to incorporate elements of Chinese culture into English teaching. This integration is not just a matter of filling a void but a strategic move towards fostering a more comprehensive and balanced understanding of cross-cultural communication. By leveraging China Daily, the most preeminent and influential English-language multimedia platform in China, students can better appreciate the depth and richness of their own cultural heritage, fostering a sense of pride and cultural identity. This paper proposes four principles to effectively integrate China daily into English class. This paper also suggests make full use of extracurricular activities and new multimedia platforms to help students better understanding their own culture and avoiding misunderstandings and misinterpretations during cross-cultural exchanges. A teaching team specialized in China English studies is also helpful. By adopting these strategies, students are empowered to master the language skills required for cross-cultural communication and they apply their knowledge confidently in real-world contexts. They will be better equipped to introduce China's stories to the world, promoting cultural exchange and understanding with greater cultural confidence and competence.

**Keywords:** Higher Vocational College; English Teaching; Chinese Culture; China Story; China Daily

## 1. Introduction

Deeply rooted in cultural exchange, English language teaching has a solid cultural exchange background. <sup>[1]</sup> Language is not only

a carrier of culture but also a transmitter of ideological perspectives. <sup>[2]</sup> In the educational context, English goes beyond mere grammar and vocabulary. Language teaching contains rich educational resources for guiding students' thinking. It becomes a platform for guiding students in their understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures. <sup>[3]</sup> Unfortunately, in many current higher education English classes, teachers focus on teaching knowledge and improving students' English application ability, and not teaching enough English that disseminates China's traditional culture. This imbalance is indeed something worth reflecting on.

By adding Chinese culture in English classes, English education can be full of Chinese characteristics and Chinese style. Integrating more Chinese cultural elements into English teaching would not only endow English education with a distinct Chinese flavor and style but also assist students in better understanding and promoting Chinese traditional culture globally <sup>[4]</sup>. By adopting ideological and political education methods, English teachers should guide students' thinking in a subtle way through rich English teaching resources by adding Chinese elements in teaching materials thus achieve the comprehensive goal of English classes.

## 2. Joint Training Requires Higher Standard of English Teaching

The joint training of higher vocational schools and universities has become an important supplement to the vocational education system, but due to its short time of development and limited participatory parties, relevant researches are far from enough. Suzhou Vocational Health College and Xuzhou Medical University have been working together and jointly trained nursing and pharmaceutical undergraduates. Students are cultivated in Suzhou Vocational Health College with Xuzhou

Medical university's teaching standards and will be granted a bachelor's degree from Xuzhou Medical University instead of an associate degree from Suzhou Vocational Health College. Therefore, these students are cultivated with higher standards. English teaching is no exception.

The English textbooks used for these undergraduates are New Horizon College English (third edition). In this edition, textbooks are packed with literary works from English speaking countries. The texts are mostly sourced from modern newspapers and literary works of Britain and America. The audio and video materials of the texts are mostly English and American accents, and the narrators in the texts are also British and American characters, reflecting the life and mainstream values of English speaking countries. This is certainly beneficial for students to immerse themselves in English language and cultural context dominated by British and American culture. However, it has caused the aphasia of Chinese culture.<sup>[5]</sup> The obvious lack of Chinese people as narrators or main characters to tell China's stories requires English teachers to add Chinese elements in teaching. Otherwise students may find it hard to learn Chinese culture and telling China's stories well because they lack related trainings.

### 3. Aim of this Paper

After conducting interviews with numerous English teachers, it emerged that they had become increasingly aware of the prolonged neglect of Chinese culture in English teaching practices. Despite their strong recognition of the significance of ideological and political education within the curriculum, they admitted to facing challenges in implementing systematic approaches, sourcing suitable teaching materials, and establishing unified platforms for cultural integration. Similarly, interviews with students from the 2020 Pharmacy class revealed a shared understanding among them that English learning served not only as a tool for communication but also as a means to uphold and propagate China's rich cultural heritage. However, they expressed difficulties in effectively communicating China's stories due to their unfamiliarity with the English

expressions of Chinese cultural elements. This impediment often led to communication breakdowns in cross-cultural settings.<sup>[6]</sup>

In light of these observations, this paper aims to delve deeper into finding effective strategies for incorporating Chinese culture into English teaching. One proposed solution lies in the integration of China English materials. As defined by Chinese linguist LI Wenzhong, China English refers to an English variant that retains the core of Normative English while uniquely expressing China's social and cultural nuances. It avoids any interference or influence from Chinese and enters the English language through methods such as transliteration, loan translation, and semantic regeneration. This variant reflects Chinese characteristics at the lexical, syntactical, and discourse levels.<sup>[7]</sup>

By incorporating such materials into English teaching, it is hoped to foster students' proficiency in promoting Chinese culture both domestically and internationally. This approach aims to build their cultural confidence and sensitivity, equipping them with the necessary skills to engage effectively in cross-cultural communication.<sup>[8]</sup> In doing so, one would hope students can bridge the gap between China's rich cultural heritage and English-speaking community, promote mutual understanding and respect, build cultural confidence and finally succeed in cross-cultural communication.

### 4. Four Ways to Integrate Chinese Culture into Undergraduate English Teaching

English textbooks undergo a lengthy and intricate compilation process, typically spanning two to three years, which naturally precludes the inclusion of timely news and updates.<sup>[9]</sup> Generation Z, consisting of today's undergraduate students, possesses a keen interest in staying abreast of the rapid changes in the world and excels at utilizing various applications to stay informed.

Since its inception in 1981, China Daily has emerged as the preeminent and most influential English-language multimedia platform in China. Boasting a combined readership across print, online, and mobile platforms exceeding 200 million, it plays a pivotal role in presenting a global perspective on China, offering profound insights into the world's second-largest economy. By

leveraging the China Daily app, teachers can access high-quality English content that tells China's stories and disseminates Chinese voices from a Chinese perspective. This content is not just informative but also culturally enriching, providing an authentic window into Chinese society and culture.

As a news source, China Daily exhibits the hallmarks of cross-cultural communication, offering a unique blend of local and global perspectives. Unlike textbooks, which often lag behind current events, the China Daily website is updated promptly, reflecting the latest social trends and hot topics. This not only fosters a sense of moral responsibility and encourages students to stay engaged with current affairs, but also equips them with the ability to articulate the principles and practices of socialism with Chinese characteristics in English. Additionally, it prompts students to critically evaluate western values, expanding the scope of classroom learning and enhancing their understanding of culturally loaded vocabulary, ultimately fostering a sense of cultural pride and confidence.

When selecting news articles from China Daily as supplementary reading material, teachers can adhere to four guiding principles:

#### **4.1 Choose Recent News that Matches the Topics of Textbooks.**

It's an excellent approach to bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world applications. Textbooks often provide a solid foundation of information and concepts, but they can sometimes lack the immediacy and relevance of current events. Newspaper news, on the other hand, offers a window into the latest developments and discussions happening in the world. By incorporating newspaper news into textbook topics, students are able to make connections between the abstract ideas they are learning about in class and the actual events and issues that are shaping society. This not only makes learning more engaging and relevant but also helps students develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

#### **4.2 Hot Social Events and other News that Students are Highly Concerned About.**

This approach is particularly effective in today's interconnected world, where social media and the internet have made it easier for students to stay up-to-date on the latest news

and developments. By selecting news topics that resonate with students, teachers can capture their attention and pique their interest in the subject matter. Students are more likely to engage actively with the material when it involves topics they care about and can relate to. Moreover, heated social news often involves complex issues that require critical thinking and analysis. By discussing these news stories in class, teachers can guide students in exploring different perspectives, evaluating evidence, and formulating their own opinions. This process not only helps students apply the theoretical concepts they have learned in textbooks but also fosters the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Additionally, using heated social news in the classroom can also serve as a bridge to broader discussions about values, ethics, and social responsibility. Through these discussions, students can reflect on the impact of their actions and decisions on others and consider how they can contribute positively to society.

It's important to note that when selecting news stories, teachers should ensure that the content is appropriate for the age and maturity level of their students. They should also strive to present a balanced and objective view of the news, encouraging students to form their own opinions based on facts and evidence.

#### **4.3 Choose News that Celebrate Seasonal Chinese Festivals and Occasions.**

This not only provides students with a cultural context but also fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of their own heritage. This approach is particularly valuable in a globalized world where cultural diversity is increasingly recognized and celebrated. By introducing news stories related to Chinese festivals, teachers can create a sense of excitement and anticipation among students. For instance, during the Spring Festival, which is the most important traditional holiday in China, teachers can share news articles about the various customs and traditions associated with the celebration, such as family reunions, giving red envelopes, and setting off fireworks. This not only helps students understand the significance of the festival but also encourages them to participate in the celebrations at home. Similarly, for other festivals like the Mid-Autumn Festival, teachers can share news

stories about the moon-gazing custom, the making and sharing of mooncakes, and the legends surrounding the festival. These stories not only provide students with a window into Chinese culture but also inspire them to explore their own cultural traditions and values. By incorporating seasonal news into the classroom, teachers can also encourage students to become more aware of their surroundings and the events happening around them. For example, during the Dragon Boat Festival, teachers can discuss the history and origins of the festival, as well as the significance of dragon boats and rice dumplings. This not only educates students about Chinese culture but also prompts them to observe and participate in the local celebrations.

Moreover, using seasonal news as a teaching tool helps students develop critical thinking skills. They can learn to analyze the news stories, identify patterns and trends, and draw connections between the events and the cultural values they represent. This process not only enhances their understanding of the news but also prepares them to become informed and responsible citizens.

By leveraging the power of current events and cultural traditions, teachers can create a dynamic and engaging learning environment that fosters a deeper appreciation of Chinese culture and heritage.

#### **4.4 Choose News that are Related to Students' Majors and Related Industrial Development.**

By staying up-to-date with industry news, students can gain a deeper understanding of their field of study, its current trends, and future prospects. These news provide them with real-world examples and case studies that they can relate to their academic studies. For instance, pharmacy student can learn from related news articles about the latest pharmaceutical advancements, techniques and procedures used in pharmacology, drug formulation, dosage determination, administration routes, and the evaluation of drug effects and safety. They can also learn about the challenges faced by the industry. These articles not only illustrate the practical applications of theoretical concepts but also inspire students to think critically and creatively about potential solutions.

Following news related to industrial development allows students to stay informed about the latest trends and changes in their chosen field. This is particularly important in fast-paced industries such as pharmacy. By keeping up with industry news, students can gain insights into emerging technologies, market demands, and potential job opportunities. This information can help them make informed decisions about their career paths and prepare them for the job market.

Staying informed about news related to students' majors and industrial development can foster a culture of lifelong learning. As industries evolve and technologies advance, it is crucial for individuals to continuously update their knowledge and skills. By cultivating a habit of following industry news, students can develop the ability to adapt to changes and stay relevant in their chosen field. By adhering to these four principals, teachers can ensure that the supplementary reading material not only complements the textbook content but also caters to the interests and needs of the students, enhancing their learning experience and broadening their cultural horizons.

#### **5. Make Full use of Extracurricular Activities and Establish a Teaching Team**

Make full use of the flexibility of extracurricular activities or second classroom. Students are encouraged to participate in various forms of supplementary extracurricular activities such as China Story Telling Competition organized by the English Corner and other students' associations, lectures by Chinese and foreign teachers on cultural exchanges, series of activities during the Campus Culture Week in order to improve students' ability to apply China English and intercultural communication skills in a more flexible and vivid way.

Oral competitions, speech contests, and storytelling competitions can be held. Ideological and political elements such as socialist ideology in the new era, critical examination of English culture, and social hotspots are incorporated into these contests. These competitions not only serves as a stage for students to showcase their English proficiency and abilities, but also serves as a platform for enhancing their political awareness, improving their ability to think

critically, and cultivating their humanistic knowledge and literacy.

Teaching materials may contain multimodal forms such as different combinations of text, images, audio, and other modes, rather than a single modality of text, images, or audio.<sup>[10]</sup> A WeChat account can be created and be used to post the video materials related to Chinese cultures, Chinese way of living, discussion on current affairs, politics and social news, and students are encouraged to subscribe and participate by commenting. In this way, students can enjoy learning Chinese culture in English in their preferred ways and absorb the moral energy contained within while improving their listening and speaking skills and become more interested in English curriculum. Other New media propaganda methods can also be used such as Tiktok and Sina weibo. The utilization of new media cater to students' changing learning taste and build cultural confidence and improve their ability to tell China's stories well in English. It also serves as a showcase of China's long and splendid national culture to the world.

Besides, establishing a team of foreign language teachers for ideological and political education to promote Chinese culture of foreign language teachers also holds importance.

To effectively integrate China English into undergraduate English teaching, teachers must change their teaching concepts, shifting from traditional teaching aimed at disseminating knowledge and mastering grammar to ability-oriented teaching aimed at integrating ideological and cultural education into teaching. In order to achieve this transformation, teachers need to continuously improve their own ideological and cultural cultivation, strengthen their sense of responsibility in ideological guidance, and actively engage themselves in ideological and cultural education.

This project used online platforms such as QQ group and Enterprise WeChat to build China English teaching team for undergraduate English teachers, expanding their China English reservation and cultural cultivation. On the one hand, teachers will be organized on a regular basis to gather together and exchange recent teaching experience and learn news on the China Daily website to familiarize themselves with standardized expressions of

Chinese culture-loaded words. This will also help English teachers establish cultural confidence and improve their ideological and political cultivation. On the other hand, on the e-learning platform, themed China English reading and listening materials that serve as supplement to textbooks will be regularly uploaded according to the teaching plan. Teachers can also organize online and offline discussions on these themed supplementary materials and explore Chinese culture on related topics.

## 6. Conclusion

The absence of Chinese cultural content in current English textbooks utilized in joint training programs at higher vocational colleges poses a significant challenge. This gap is crucial to address as it hinders students' ability to fully embrace their cultural identity while also mastering the language of global communication. Incorporating Chinese cultural elements into English instruction is not just a matter of cultural preservation but also a strategic move towards fostering a generation of globally competent individuals who are proficient in both language and cultural understanding.

This study underscores the vital importance of integrating Chinese culture into English classes. It recognizes that language and culture are intricately linked, and without a solid foundation in one's own cultural heritage, effective cross-cultural communication becomes a daunting task. The integration of Chinese cultural elements not only enhances students' linguistic skills but also equips them with the tools to navigate complex cultural landscapes confidently.

To facilitate this integration, the study suggests three practical methods. Firstly, incorporating Chinese folklore, history, and traditions into lesson plans can provide students with authentic cultural examples that they can relate to and learn from. Secondly, utilizing Chinese-themed literature and media resources in class can further enrich students' cultural understanding while also enhancing their language proficiency. Finally, encouraging students to participate in cultural exchange activities such as festivals, workshops, and conferences can provide them with hands-on experience in sharing and communicating Chinese culture with a global audience.

By adopting these approaches, students are not only able to improve their understanding and application of cross-cultural communication skills but also gain a deeper appreciation of their own cultural heritage. This empowers them to confidently share Chinese stories with the world, bridging cultural divides and fostering mutual understanding and respect. In conclusion, the integration of Chinese cultural elements into English instruction is a crucial step towards cultivating globally competent and culturally aware individuals.

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