Exploring the Path of Integrating Local Culture into University English Teaching in the Context of Global English

Zhiyi Zhu

Guangdong Ocean University, Zhanjiang, Guangdong, 529500, China

Abstract: In the context of the global prevalence of English, integrating local culture into university English teaching is crucial to enhance students' intercultural communication skills and cultural identity. This paper analyzes the current challenges in integrating local culture, such as imbalanced textbook content, monotonous teaching methods, inadequate teacher qualifications, one-dimensional evaluation systems, and insufficient cross-cultural practice. It proposes targeted strategies across five dimensions: textbook optimization, teaching method innovation, teacher capacity building, evaluation system refinement, and enhanced cross-cultural practice. These strategies aim to facilitate the effective integration of local culture in university English education, enabling students to master English while promoting the inheritance and dissemination of local culture.

1. Introduction

The global proliferation of English has significantly influenced university English curricula, which serve as a critical medium for developing students' English proficiency and fostering global citizenship. Local culture integration into language teaching helps students better understand and articulate their cultural identity, thereby equipping them to engage effectively and confidently in intercultural dialogues on global platforms. However, current practices excessively emphasize Western culture while neglecting local cultural integration, resulting in students' limited ability to express their own culture and weak cultural identity. Addressing these gaps, this study explores existing problems and proposes effective integration strategies.

2. Current situation of local culture integration in university English teaching

2.1 Unclear positioning of local cultural objectives

Many universities prioritize English linguistic competencies, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, translation and other language skills, without paying enough attention to cultural teaching, especially in the lack of clear and specific goals in the integration of local culture. Although some syllabuses mention the cultivation of cross-cultural communication skills, they do not include the inheritance and transmission of local culture, resulting in the unclear orientation of Chinese teaching in the teaching process [1].

2.2 Limited penetration of local culture in practice teaching practices

In actual teaching activities, a small number of teachers introduce some local cultural content into the classroom, but most of these are scattered case introductions, which lack systematization and depth. In the process of learning English, students are exposed to a few words, expressions and texts related to local culture, and it is difficult for them to accurately and fluently explain the connotation of local culture in English. At the same time, students are more inclined to use the expression of Western cultural background in cross-cultural communication scenarios, and have a weaker ability to express local culture[2].

3. Problems in integrating local culture into university English teaching

3.1 Imbalance in textbook content

As the core resource of teaching, the content setting of textbooks directly affects students' exposure to different cultures. At present, most college English textbooks on the market are mainly based on Western cultural content, and the topics involved mostly revolve around Western history, geography, customs, values, etc. The content of local culture accounts for a very low proportion of textbooks, and most of them appear in the form of isolated words or short sentences, and there is a lack of systematic introduction. According to statistics, among the 10 randomly selected college English textbooks, the content related to Western culture accounted for an average of 68%, while the content of local culture accounted for only 12%, and the remaining 20% was neutral topic content (see Table 1). This imbalance in the content setting makes it difficult for students to gain an in-depth understanding of the English expression of the local culture during the learning process.

Table 1: The proportion of different cultural content in college English textbooks

Type of textbook	Proportion of Western cultural content	Proportion of local cultural content	Percentage of content on neutral topics
Comprehensive tutorials	72%	10%	18%
Listen to the tutorials	65%	13%	22%
Read the tutorial	67%	11%	22%
Writing tutorials	70%	14%	16%
Average percentage	68%	12%	20%

3.2 Monotonous teaching methods

Currently, the teaching methods employed in college English classrooms are relatively simplistic. Most classes remain dominated by teacher-centered instruction focused primarily on language knowledge, with students largely in a state of passive reception. When it comes to cultural content, teachers often rely on didactic explanations, resulting in a lack of interaction and communication with students. In particular, the teaching of local culture suffers from an absence of diversified activities that are tailored to the actual life experiences and cognitive characteristics of students. This leads to low levels of interest and participation in learning about local culture. For instance, when introducing traditional Chinese festivals, teachers typically provide only brief information about the name and date of the festival, without guiding students to engage in deeper discussions about the customs and significance of these festivals in English. As a result, students find it difficult to genuinely understand and internalize the relevant cultural content[3].

3.3 Inadequate teacher cultural literacy

Teachers serve as the primary facilitators of cultural instruction, making their own cultural literacy

and ability to integrate local culture into teaching critically important. However, some university English teachers lack a deep and systematic understanding of local culture, which impedes their capacity to accurately and vividly convey cultural content during instruction. Furthermore, many teachers lack the skills necessary to organically integrate local culture with English language teaching, making it difficult to design effective instructional programs aligned with learning objectives and content. Consequently, the integration of local culture into language teaching remains superficial, with few opportunities to incorporate representative local cultural cases that could help students appreciate the cultural differences underlying language use[4].

3.4 One-dimensional evaluation systems

The current evaluation system for college English primarily emphasizes the assessment of students' language knowledge and skills, such as vocabulary acquisition, grammatical accuracy, reading speed, and listening comprehension. There is a noticeable lack of effective evaluation criteria and assessment methods for measuring students' ability to express local culture in English or to apply local cultural knowledge in cross-cultural communication. For instance, in final examinations, less than 5% of the items pertain to local culture, and even these are usually limited to simple vocabulary analysis. This narrow approach makes it difficult to comprehensively assess students' mastery of local culture and their ability to articulate it. As a result, students tend to overlook the importance of learning and accumulating knowledge about local culture throughout their studies.

3.5 Insufficient cross-cultural activities

Cross-cultural practice activities are essential for enabling students to use English to express aspects of local culture and to develop intercultural communication skills. However, at present, most universities focus on simulating Western cultural scenarios, such as celebrating Western holidays or organizing English speech competitions, while seldom incorporating elements of local culture. When local cultural activities do occur, they are often limited to static forms, such as exhibitions of traditional Chinese culture, and lack meaningful interaction between students and international faculty. This deficiency in interactive cross-cultural experiences restricts students' opportunities to actively disseminate local culture and limits the development of their cross-cultural communicative competence[5].

4. Effective strategies for integrating local culture into university English teaching

4.1 Optimizing textbook content to achieve cultural balance

Textbook compilation institutions should establish dedicated teams comprising linguists, cultural scholars, and frontline educators to systematically optimize college English textbooks. The proportion of local cultural content should be increased, achieving a balanced integration with Western cultural materials. Content organization should adopt a dual-track structure encompassing both "traditional" and "modern" themes: the traditional section covers key topics such as selections from the Analects, Peking Opera masks, and the 24 solar terms, each supported by multiple genres of English texts; the modern section highlights contemporary achievements in China, including high-speed rail, rural revitalization, and digital payment systems, utilizing authentic materials such as news reports and academic abstracts.

Modules on cross-cultural comparison should implement a "thematic anchoring" approach. For instance, under the theme of "Family Concepts," the textbook could juxtapose content from Four Generations Under One Roof with that of Little Women, accompanied by analytical charts to compare

intergenerational cohabitation and kinship terminology. The "Holiday Customs" theme should provide detailed accounts of both Chinese and Western festivities, encouraging students to explore underlying cultural logics through textual comparison.

A "dual review system" should be adopted for translation quality assurance. Chinese cultural experts are responsible for ensuring the accurate conveyance of cultural connotations, while native English speakers review translations for naturalness and idiomatic expression, with cultural keywords—such as filial piety and red envelope —carefully annotated. Each unit should conclude with a section on "Cultural Terminology Analysis," providing etymological explanations and cross-linguistic comparisons of key concepts.

4.2 Innovate teaching methods for enhanced student engagement

Teachers should design step-by-step project-based learning tasks around specific themes, such as "the inheritance and development of traditional festivals in the contemporary era." For example, in the case of the Dragon Boat Festival, students may conduct interviews with artisans in English to learn about the process of making dragon boats, analyze sales data for products related to the Dragon Boat Festival and Christmas, and present their findings in English. The final output of the project could be an English short play that showcases how young people disseminate the skill of making zongzi. Teachers should provide regular, targeted language instruction to address the challenges of cultural expression.

Case-based teaching can focus on differences in cultural concepts. For instance, teachers can guide students to compare the differing approaches to marriage decisions in *Dream of the Red Chamber* and *Pride and Prejudice*, analyzing the roles of parental authority and individual will. Alternatively, students can compare the artistic philosophies embodied in *Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains* and the *Mona Lisa*, and be encouraged to discuss, in English, the differences between "xieyi" (freehand brushwork) and "realism." After each case, students are required to write an English reflection to summarize their understanding and insights regarding local culture.

4.3 Enhancing teaching training and cultural integration competencies

Universities should establish a "tiered and progressive" teacher training system, designing targeted training programs based on teachers' varying levels of teaching experience. For newly recruited teachers, an intensive training camp can be organized to guide them in articulating the connotations of Chinese culture in English. For experienced teachers, participation in "Cultural Teaching Workshops" should be encouraged, focusing on topics such as "How to Explain the Practice of 'Harmony in Diversity' in International Relations in English." These workshops should require teachers to design comprehensive classroom teaching plans, including case discussions and role-plays, and receive in-depth, on-site guidance and refinement from educational experts.

4.4 Refining evaluation systems for cultural competency assessment

The evaluation system should be enhanced through the inclusion of explicit assessment indicators targeting students' competence in expressing local culture. Education authorities should collaborate with university teaching and research teams to develop guidelines for the assessment of local cultural competence in college English, explicitly incorporating local cultural expression into the comprehensive quality evaluation framework for students [6]. In final examinations, the proportion of marks allocated to questions related to local culture should be appropriately increased. In regular classroom assessment, a collaborative process-based portfolio should be established to help students clearly understand their progress in expressing local culture. Teachers should regularly document

students' absorption of local cultural knowledge during lessons, while students should periodically complete an "English Local Culture Learning Journal" in which they reflect on three cultural knowledge points they have mastered.

4.5 Diversifying cross-cultural practice activities

Universities should establish a tiered and progressive cross-cultural practice system to enhance students' ability to communicate Chinese culture in English. An "English Telling China's Stories" competition can be organized, consisting of three sections: fable narration, cultural interpretation, and bilingual debate, with international judges invited to participate. Outstanding works should be compiled after the competition into a collection of exemplary English expressions. Monthly "Cultural Experience Workshops" can be held, where students teach international students traditional skills such as paper-cutting in English, and explain the underlying aesthetics and cultural significance. The implementation of "Chinese and Foreign Family Pairing" initiatives can be encouraged, enabling students to use English to introduce Spring Festival customs and the cultural meanings behind traditional foods to the families of foreign teachers.

Intercollegiate exchanges may be organized around a "Cultural Exchange Task List," such as collaborating with overseas universities to produce short videos on intangible cultural heritage, hosting themed lectures and exhibitions, and writing English reports comparing different cultural practices. University media platforms can establish regular columns such as "Daily Cultural Vocabulary" and "Chinese Culture Feature," periodically publishing student-produced articles and short videos in English. All content should be reviewed by faculty to ensure both cultural accuracy and linguistic appropriateness.

5. Conclusion

In the context of global English, integrating local culture into university English teaching is complex and requires sustained efforts. By addressing textbook content imbalances, enhancing teaching methods, strengthening teacher training, refining evaluation systems, and enriching cross-cultural activities, universities can effectively integrate local culture into language education. This integration fosters students' intercultural communication skills and cultural pride, ultimately supporting the international dissemination of Chinese culture. Future research should continue to address emerging challenges and refine integration approaches.

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