

Exploration of Pathways for Integrating Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture into College English Teaching

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Article Detail:	Abstract
<p>Received: 23 Sep 2025; Received in revised form: 19 Oct 2025; Accepted: 23 Oct 2025; Available online: 28 Oct 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords – Excellent traditional Chinese culture, integration, College English, Pathways</p>	<p><i>This paper, in the context of globalization and guided by the College English Teaching Guide (2020 Edition) and the spirit of the 20th CPC National Congress, demonstrates the necessity and feasibility of systematically integrating excellent traditional Chinese culture into the college English curriculum, which is of great significance including boosting students' culture confidence, correcting the cognitive bias resulting from one-dimensional cultural input, enhancing intercultural communication ability and enabling students to calibrate their "cultural coordinate system" through language switching. Meanwhile, it will also help to enrich teaching content and stimulate students' motivation and initiative. As to the implementation, this paper constructs a comprehensive pathway encompassing setting three-dimensional goals, redesigning textbook content and innovating teaching pedagogy. In terms of goal setting, a three-tier framework is established consisting of language knowledge, language skills and culture literacy. In terms of textbook, it redesigns the teaching content by increasing the proportion of Chinese cultural elements, developing digital micro-lectures, and creating a school-based case library of "China Stories". In terms of teaching methods, it constructs a a closed loop of "pre-class preparation – in-class internalization – task-based output" based on flipped classroom and task-based teaching, with the purpose of enabling students to simultaneously acquire language skills, deepen cultural identity, and enhance communication abilities while completing communicative tasks. The research aims to solve the problem of "possessing language proficiency without cultural communication competence" and provides a replicable, propagable model for cultivating foreign language talents capable of "communicating China's stories well".</i></p>

I. INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization and multi-culture integration, English has become the major tool for communication. English education shoulders more responsibilities than language skills training, including transmitting Chinese value, building good national image and strengthening cultural soft power. Culture is the soul and source for national development and national rejuvenation. The Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China and General Secretary Xi Jinping have repeatedly emphasized the need to adhere to the stance of Chinese culture, extract the spiritual symbols of Chinese civilization, accelerate the construction of a Chinese discourse system, and enhance international discourse power with "credible, lovely, and respectable" Chinese stories. The 2020 Edition of *The College English Teaching Guidelines* also clearly incorporates core socialist values and excellent traditional Chinese culture into the curriculum, implementing the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education. Just as Professor He Qishen once said, foreign language teaching in the 21st century should enable students to not only acquire a deeper understanding of Chinese culture and present rich content about it, but also convey the profound ideas behind it. Therefore, systematically integrating the long-standing, profound, and extensive Chinese traditional culture into college English classrooms—through textbook restructuring, teaching training, extracurricular activities, and digital methods—to achieve the simultaneous enhancement of language acquisition, cultural identity, and international communication skills, is not only an urgent need for cultivating well-rounded talents with both global perspectives and national sentiment, but also a timely responsibility for higher education practitioners to fulfill cultural consciousness and facilitate the global reach of Chinese civilization.

II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INTEGRATING CHINESE TRADITIONAL CULTURE INTO COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING

2.1 Boosting cultural confidence

Language is not only the communication tools; rather, it is the living carrier of culture genes. In the past decades, however, in the college English classes guided by communicative approach and task-based methods, the selected texts in the English textbooks are almost all dominated by themes related to Western features like Christmas, Easter, Hollywood, and Silicon Valley. While students could remember clearly the specific plots in the TV drama "Friends", they couldn't find English equivalents to explain what led to the inclusion of the 24 solar terms in the UNESCO intangible cultural heritage list, let alone distinguish the value difference between the Confucian ideal of an "exemplary person who seeks harmony without uniformity" and Western pluralism. This kind of one-dimensional cultural input directly leads to the the systematic distortion in cognitive mapping. Another example is that many students are familiar with the history of New York's Central Park yet stammer when asked to explain the aesthetic logic of "a scene with every step" in Suzhou gardens. When one's native culture remains largely "mute" in the process of second language acquisition, collective memory is compressed into simplistic symbols for consumption.

University students, as future leaders, must carry the torch of cultural transmission. They must develop a deep understanding of history and culture to strengthen their cultural identity and confidence, thereby contributing to the preservation and global promotion of Chinese culture. Integrating Chinese culture into college English teaching, and presenting its finest traditions through diverse pedagogical models, can guide students toward a profound appreciation of its richness and unique value. This approach ignites a sense of national pride from within, solidifying cultural confidence and reinforcing a shared identity.

2.2 Fostering the development of intercultural competence

The College English Teaching Guidelines (2020) explicitly state that a key mission of college English courses is to provide intercultural education. This involves deepening students' understanding of the similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign cultures and cultivating their cross-cultural communication skills. Integrating "intercultural education" into the core of the curriculum aims for far more than merely having students know that China and the West have different festivals and etiquette. The deeper intent is to enable them to recalibrate their "cultural coordinate system" in the instant they switch languages. When encountering the same concept, they should be able to explain the Chinese perspective in English while also decoding the underlying assumptions of their counterpart in Chinese, thereby avoiding talking past each other or forcing a square peg into a round hole.

Cultural exchange is an essential component of international cooperation. As the world's largest developing country, China is actively engaged in international collaboration, particularly in economic and trade activities. Infusing English teaching with the finest elements of traditional Chinese culture and enhancing students' knowledge of their native culture equips them to communicate more accurately and confidently in these international settings. University students are at a critical stage of values formation. It will help to reinforce students' value guidance to integrate native cultural learning into English study, thereby continuously strengthen their grasp of Sino-Western cultural differences. This empowers students to discern and adopt the essence while rejecting the dross of Western culture, thereby establishing sound values. The accurate transmission of cultural connotations enhances students' cultural adaptability and communicative expressiveness in international exchanges.

In the future, whether they find themselves in international conferences, multinational corporations, or global volunteer programs, this "cultural bilingualism" will allow them to avoid being either

arrogant "value exporters" or silent "rule-takers". Instead, they can become true interpreters of civilization—those who can "narrate their own stories as part of the world's story, and bring the world's story back to China." Steering with confidence and poise, they will navigate the tides of globalization.

2.3 Enriching teaching content

In traditional college English teaching, there always exists the problem of stagnation in textbook content. The long cycle of updating makes the cases, topics and language expressions fail to catch up with the pace of development, thus being unable to reflect the evolving trends in our diverse global society and language. The one-sided selection of materials also results in students being exposed almost exclusively to Western cultural content over the long term. This leads them to view the English language primarily through a Western lens, resulting in a learning experience that is narrow and limited in perspective. Chinese traditional culture covers a wide scope ranging from literature, arts to philosophy and technology, providing countless sources for English teaching. In the field of literature, from the exquisite verses of the Classic of Poetry to the timeless masterpieces of Tang and Song poetry, and from the classic narratives of Ming and Qing dynasty novels to the brilliant works of modern and contemporary Chinese literature—all can be transformed into high-quality content for English language teaching. This allows students to appreciate the charm of Chinese literature while mastering the English language. In the realm of arts, beyond Peking Opera and calligraphy, diverse forms such as paper-cutting, embroidery, traditional Chinese painting, and folk music can serve as dynamic teaching materials. These help students learn to describe the unique styles and aesthetic values of Chinese art in English.

For students, the profound traditional Chinese culture is something they have been immersed in since childhood, evoking a natural sense of familiarity and affinity. This inherent connection makes such content especially engaging and meaningful in their language learning journey. When

those familiar elements are presented in English learning class, their curiosity and initiative can be effectively sparked. In the previous traditional English class, students make lack passion and engagement for short of knowledge in Western culture. If topics about Chinese culture are infused, probably they will be more willing to participate in various discussions, share their ideas and even make objective comparisons between difference cultures. Such integration serves not only to advance students' practical command of the English language but also to impart a more profound and coherent comprehension of Chinese cultural heritage, thereby unlocking their potential for both cultural creativity and dissemination. Most significantly, the incorporation of traditional Chinese culture within the English curriculum equips students to develop a judicious approach to cultural differences via Sino-Western comparative study, thereby embodying the principle of "appreciating the beauty in all cultures".

III. INTEGRATION PATHWAYS FOR CHINESE CULTURE INTO COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING

3.1 Defining learning objectives

In defining the humanistic purpose of college English courses, *The College English Teaching Guidelines (2020)*, explicitly incorporates "fostering students' ability to understand and interpret Chinese culture" and "serving the external dissemination of Chinese culture" as core objectives. This requirement not only aligns with the strategic need to enhance national cultural soft power in the new era but also redresses a long-standing imbalance in foreign language education that has prioritized the intake of Western culture over the output of local culture. As the most widely taught compulsory public course in higher education, college English is offered to all the non-English majors in a university. Its teaching objectives have long been affected by the traditional teaching mode, which overly stress the basic language skills based on culture of English-speaking

countries and the one-dimensional intercultural competence of "understanding the West", resulting in the fact that many students with basic English communicative abilities feel hard to explain the essence of traditional Chinese culture in English, let alone to effectively communicate China's voice and tell China's stories, leading to a dilemma of "with language proficiency, but lacking culture transmission abilities". Teaching objectives are the core of teaching design, which decides teaching content, teaching methods and assessment mode. Therefore, in order to overcome the present absence of Chinese culture in college English education and achieve the coordinated development of "language proficiency" and "cultural transmission capability", it is essential to systematically reconstruct and redefine teaching objectives from multi dimensions.

3.1.1 Language cognition

In terms of language cognition, students should be required to have a good command of English vocabulary and expressions related to Chinese traditional culture, master the fundamental knowledge in the field and construct a systematic stock of vocabulary of Chinese traditional culture. On the one hand, students should be skilled in using the theme-related core vocabulary and expressions, such as the specialized vocabulary and commonly used expressions related to themes like Confucianism, traditional festivals (e.g., the Spring Festival, the Mid-Autumn Festival), traditional literary and artistic forms (e.g., calligraphy, paper-cutting, Peking Opera), and historical sites (e.g., the Great Wall, the Forbidden City). On the other hand, students should be guided to gain deeper cultural connotations behind those words and expressions, and differentiate the different connotations of the same word under different cultural backgrounds. For instance, the concept of "li" (礼) cannot be simply reduced to the literal meaning of "ritual"; it embodies a value system encompassing respect, order, and harmony. Similarly, translating "long" as "long" is more conceptually accurate than using the misleading term "dragon". By embedding cultural interpretation directly into vocabulary teaching, students not only

acquire language proficiency but also build a solid foundation for understanding Chinese culture.

3.1.2 Language skills

In the field of language skills, students should be required to acquire the relevant knowledge in all the aspects of Chinese culture through listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating. During the input phase of listening and reading, students can learn English materials that incorporate Chinese cultural elements, such as Western documentary clips on traditional Chinese medicine or academic articles by overseas scholars on Chinese culture and development. This allows them to acquire language skills while learning to interpret Chinese culture from an international perspective. In the output phase of speaking and writing, practical tasks can be designed—such as debates or speeches on topics like "The Widespread Application of Traditional Chinese Medicine Worldwide"—to cultivate students' ability to articulate their ideas. They can also practice writing in various genres. For the translation phase, texts related to Chinese culture, economic, and technological development can be selected to train students in E-C translation techniques, thereby enhancing their capacity to express Chinese culture fluently and accurately in English. Based on this and surrounding the topic of "cultural transmission", students should be encouraged to participate in various intercultural activities, transform their language skills into intercultural transmission competence, communicate China's stories in an effective way and enhance their reciprocal intercultural competence.

3.1.3 Culture literacy

In terms of culture literacy, the cultivation of cultural confidence and national identity should be always set as an indispensable part of English education. When encountering the combination of Chinese and Western culture, students should be instructed to treat various culture objectively and dialectically through making fair comparison between different cultures. They should be taught to avoid both blind admiration of Western culture and a retreat into

cultural insularity. Through theme debate and extracurricular activities, students could understand more profoundly the unique charm and value of Chinese culture and strengthen their pride and sense of identity for national culture, thereby creating a virtuous cycle where cultural confidence underpins linguistic expression, and linguistic expression, in turn, conveys cultural confidence.

3.2 Reconstructing textbook content

Textbook construction is the core foundation and crucial carrier for integrating Chinese traditional culture into college English class, the quality of which directly determines the depth, width and effectiveness of the integration. The College English course, which integrates instrumental aims with humanistic concerns as a vital component of higher education, addresses a broad range of subjects including human geography, historical culture, and life philosophy. It is thereby distinguished by its pertinent, instructive, and inspiring qualities. However, in the present college English textbooks which are widely used, there exist obvious weaknesses as far as Chinese traditional culture is concerned. First of all, its proportion in the textbooks is relatively small, which makes the students unable to come into contact with adequate local culture in English study, resulting in "native culture aphasia" in cross-cultural communication. Moreover, the Chinese culture presented in the textbooks are not profound, since it is mostly the superficial introduction, which prevents students to gain the rich connotations and essence of it. Last but not least, the Chinese culture elements are not systematic due to lack of logic and coherence, which makes it hard to form a complete Chinese culture system and greatly affects the effective transmission and inheritance of Chinese excellent traditional culture. In order to overcome these problems and enhance the multiculturalism and multi perspectives of the teaching content, the textbook content can be adjusted through the following methods.

3.2.1. Optimizing content structure by increasing the weight of traditional Chinese culture

College English textbooks are typically organized thematically, a feature teachers can leverage by proactively sourcing and integrating representative Chinese cultural texts, audio, and video materials relevant to each theme. For instance, when covering a unit like "The Pursuit of Dreams," which often focuses exclusively on Western examples, instructors can introduce the inspiring stories of eminent Chinese scientists such as Qian Xuesen, Yuan Longping, and Tu Youyou. These figures tirelessly pursued their dreams to advance national prosperity and public well-being. This should be coupled with an in-depth exploration of the "Chinese Dream," examining its profound connotations, contemporary significance, and pathways to realization within its historical and modern context.

Furthermore, comparative analyses of dream-pursuit narratives across cultures can be organized through group discussions or themed speeches. These activities guide students to identify the shared spirit and cultural nuances in the pursuit of dreams. This approach not only allows students to glean wisdom from diverse global narratives and broaden their international perspective but also hones their critical, dialectical thinking. More importantly, it enables a deep appreciation of the unique power and resonance of the Chinese pursuit of dreams, thereby strengthening national pride and cultural confidence.

Similarly, for a theme like "Water Problem," teachers can assign inquiry-based tasks where students work in groups to research China's current water resources situation, the challenges it faces, and effective governance measures implemented in recent years (e.g., the South-to-North Water Diversion Project, water-saving technologies, pollution prevention). Through independent research, field investigations, and data analysis, students gain a deeper understanding of China's water context while developing crucial skills in information processing, teamwork, and problem-solving.

Simultaneously, learning about China's significant achievements in water governance allows students to tangibly appreciate the nation's commitment and efforts to ensuring public welfare and driving

sustainable development. This process concretely fosters a stronger sense of national confidence, responsibility, and pride.

3.2.2. Developing diverse digital resources to support the integration of traditional Chinese culture

Teachers should create high-quality instructional resources tailored to textbook themes, student needs, and cognitive characteristics, focusing on representative aspects of Chinese culture. Specifically, two main approaches can be adopted:

First, develop series of micro-lectures that vividly and accessibly present specialized content—such as the historical evolution, craftsmanship, artistic features, and role in cultural exchange of porcelain; the genesis, technical principles, and global impact of the Four Great Inventions; or the rhythmic elegance, imaginative depth, and philosophical wisdom in classical Chinese poetry. These micro-lectures can be flexibly embedded into appropriate teaching stages, building a convenient platform for fragmented learning and helping students accumulate knowledge of Chinese culture in their spare time.

Second, design systematic MOOCs structured around the thematic framework of the College English curriculum. These should establish a comprehensive knowledge system covering various fields of Chinese culture, effectively integrating traditional heritage with English language learning to create online courses that are informative, engaging, and practical. The MOOC design can include diverse tasks and interactive elements—such as online quizzes, group discussions, and case studies—to stimulate motivation and initiative in learning.

Furthermore, incorporating MOOC completion into the final teaching assessment—by evaluating participation, task quality, and quiz results—can comprehensively and objectively reflect student achievement. More importantly, it stimulates students to attach greater importance to learning traditional Chinese culture, thereby promoting its consistent and systematic integration into the College English classroom.

3.2.3. Constructing a school-based “China stories” case library under new era education

Building a school-based "China Stories" case library in the new era serves not only as a vital measure to inherit and promote outstanding traditional Chinese culture, revolutionary culture, and advanced socialist culture, but also as a key pathway to fulfill the fundamental task of fostering virtue and nurturing talents while enhancing students' core competencies. By leveraging the university's distinctive disciplines, regional culture, and museum resources, this case library can provide rich and contextually relevant teaching materials, enabling students to strengthen their cultural confidence and national identity through engaging “China Stories”.

From a thematic perspective, the case library can be organized into four categories based on the university's academic strengths and regional characteristics: “Chinese Historical Civilization”, “Red Revolutionary Heritage”, “Intangible Cultural Treasures”, and “Contemporary Development Achievements”." In terms of media type, materials will be systematically classified as text-based, audio, or video. Textual materials form the foundation, audio resources enrich students' auditory experience, and video materials offer greater immediacy and appeal, allowing students to better appreciate the essence of “China Stories”.

The collected cases can be published on widely accessible platforms such as the Cloud Class. With precise categorization, teachers can assign relevant case learning tasks via the Cloud Class according to teaching schedules and objectives. Students can then utilize fragmented time to access the platform for learning, unrestricted by time and space.

By establishing such a well-structured, clearly classified, and easily accessible school-based “China Stories” case library, we can effectively enrich teaching resources and innovate instructional methods. This will empower students to continuously enhance their cultural literacy and comprehensive abilities through in-depth engagement with “China Stories”.

3.3 Innovating teaching methods

Teaching methods are the essential bridge converting teaching objectives into practical fruits, so its scientific soundness and appropriateness directly decides the teaching quality. When integrating excellent Chinese culture into college English teaching, teachers should apply methods according to the teaching content and students' cognitive level, so as to construct a systematic teaching pathway consisting of “practicing language skills, deepening culture cognition, and cultivating national confidence”, with the ultimate goal of enhancing both the comprehensive language competence and cultural literacy.

3.3.1. Building an instructional model of “preparation + internalization” based on the flipped classroom

The flipped classroom model, centered on “restructuring the teaching process”, overturns the traditional “in-class lecture + after-class practice” format. It extends the “knowledge transfer” phase outside the classroom and focuses in-class time on “knowledge internalization” through interaction, thereby creating ample space for integrating outstanding traditional Chinese culture.

Considering that existing College English textbooks predominantly feature Western cultural contexts such as European/American history, literature and social customs, instructors can release customized learning resources—such as bilingual videos like “The History of the Silk Road” or illustrated PowerPoints on “The Art of Peking Opera Facial Makeup”—on learning platforms (e.g., Rain Classroom, Cloud Class) one week in advance. Students independently study these materials and complete related tasks such as quizzes, writing assignments, or translation exercises.

The in-class session is primarily dedicated to knowledge internalization. The instructor integrates key points of Chinese culture into text analysis and organizes activities like group discussions and project-based learning. By leveraging multimedia tools to stimulate interaction, this approach helps students deepen their understanding of cultural

knowledge through communication while simultaneously improving the accuracy and fluency of their English expressions.

3.3.2. Leveraging task-based language teaching with authentic scenario tasks to facilitate cultural comparison and language practice

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), oriented toward "completing specific communicative tasks," creates realistic scenarios that enable students to simultaneously enhance their English proficiency and cultural awareness through problem-solving. This approach is particularly suitable for comparative teaching of traditional Chinese and Western cultures.

Teachers could design targeted tasks based on course types. Taking an Audio-Visual-Speaking course as an example: if the textbook unit theme is "Famous Foreign Landmarks" (e.g., introducing the Eiffel Tower in Paris or the Statue of Liberty in New York), the instructor can design a "Cross-Cultural Tour Guide Simulation" task.

Task Preparation Phase: Guide students in groups to collect bilingual materials on Chinese historical sites (e.g., the Great Wall in Beijing, the Terracotta Army in Xi'an, Mount Huangshan in Anhui), including English introductions to their historical background, architectural features, and cultural value.

Task Implementation Phase: Have students role-play as "Chinese tour guides" to explain Chinese sites in English and "foreign tourists." Simultaneously, require the "Chinese guides" to adapt the explanatory logic from the textbook's Western landmarks which usually follows the mode of "location – historical background – key highlights", and transfer expression techniques from the listening materials to their presentation of Chinese sites, completing the rewriting of tour commentary and on-site simulation.

Task Summary Phase: The teacher organizes class presentations, guiding students to compare the cultural connotations of Chinese and Western landmarks. For example, Western sites often emphasize "individual heroism" and

"commemoration of historical events," while Chinese sites focus on "harmony between humanity and nature" and "historical continuity". Students summarize the value differences underlying these cultural distinctions.

Through this process, students practice listening (comprehending introductions to Western landmarks in the textbook) and speaking (simulating tour guide explanations) while clearly recognizing the essence, similarities, and differences between Chinese and Western cultures, thereby enhancing their intercultural communication awareness.

IV. CONCLUSION

The college English classroom is not merely the "practice arena" for grammar and vocabulary; rather, it should become the "transmission hub" for civilization dialogue. When students could use skilled English to explain the order of "Li(ritual)", the symbolic meaning of "Long" and the wisdom of "Harmony between human and nature", they then possess the powerful new voice to make China's voice heard in the global court of public opinion. It is an inevitable trend to integrate excellent traditional Chinese culture into college English class, which plays an irreplaceable role in cultivating versatile talents with a global outlook and deep national attachment. Through a series of measures like defining teaching objectives, reconstructing teaching content and innovating teaching methods, the instruction in the college English class would be able to effectively boost students' cultural confidence, intercultural competence and holistic literacy. Higher education practitioners should undertake the responsibilities of the era, keep on exploring and practicing, and let the finest traditional Chinese culture shine vibrantly within the college English classroom, propelling Chinese civilization onto the world stage to showcase its distinctive wisdom and strength in global cultural exchange and dialogue.

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