

Integrating Chinese Culture Into English Teaching: A Case Study of *Oxford English* for Junior High Schools

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Abstract

The Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standard (2011 edition) pointed out that cultural awareness is one of five major curriculum objectives of the English subject. Learners of foreign language not only can decode the cultural connotation of the target language, but also can proficiently express the contents in their mother language using a foreign language. Textbooks as the major source for students to gain culture-related knowledge matter much for the cultivation of culture awareness. This paper selected *Oxford English* for Junior High Schools (Jiangsu Edition) as the research subject, using literature research method, and quantitative analysis method to tackle the following questions: What Chinese culture is involved in the unit topics and contents of *Oxford English* for Junior High Schools (Jiangsu Edition)? Which cultural teaching methods can be applied to classroom teaching? How to apply cultural teaching methods to English teaching? Research findings show that the Chinese culture in this textbook has a high frequency of appearance and is rich in topics, which has a certain role in cultivating students' cross-cultural identity and communication skills. However, there are inadequate complete passages about Chinese culture, and the presentation of Chinese culture is superficial. Thus, the author proposed three specific cultural teaching strategies: cultural introduction, cultural

integration and cultural contrast, so as to better integrate Chinese culture into the Junior High Schools English class.

Key words: Chinese culture; English teaching; *Oxford English* for Junior High Schools (Jiangsu Edition)

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language and culture are inextricably intertwined, with language being the carrier of culture and simultaneously being influenced by culture. It is through language that people from different countries in the world can conduct extensive cultural exchanges.

Nowadays, China's overall national strength is on the rise, winning the global recognition. but there are still some countries trying to discredit China due to the misunderstandings in the course of cross-cultural communication. Junior High Schools students shoulder the mission of showing the charm of Chinese culture to the world, establishing cultural confidence and further carrying forward our traditional culture. However, in the actual teaching process, teachers focus more on to students' mastery of language knowledge, ignoring the cultures carried by language, in particular traditional Chinese culture.

Moreover, Some teachers of English work under the disillusion that the education of traditional culture should be left to the teachers of Chinese subject. Thus, they suppose that Chinese culture should not take up much precious time in English class. Influenced by test-oriented education, the purpose of English learning for most

Junior High Schools students is directed at the college entrance examination results, so they are dismissive of Chinese culture. Teachers of English also take little heed of cultural teaching. If things go on like this—leaving Chinese culture aside to learn English, it will be to the detriment of cultivating students' patriotism and contributing to the development of our nation. In order to alleviate the problem, teachers should take the initiatives to integrate Chinese culture into their routine teaching so that students can be better furnished with sufficient knowledge of traditional culture and culturally confident by telling Chinese stories in English and letting the world know China better.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Key Terms

2.1.1 Chinese Culture Teaching

Culture is the general term for national civilization, customs and spirit. Chinese culture is based on the Chinese civilization and formed by fully integrating the cultural elements of various regions and ethnic groups across the country. The scope of Chinese traditional culture is wide in range, including language, calligraphy, music, martial arts, folk art, chess, festivals, folk customs, etc., all belonging to the category of traditional culture.

Culture nowadays has become more prominent in the competition of comprehensive national strength. Understanding Chinese classic literary works, traditional festivals, drama, architecture and other aspects of knowledge will help students deepen their understanding of traditional Chinese culture, thus cultivating a strong sense of cultural confidence in themselves.

According to Lessard-Clouston (1997) language teaching is culture teaching. Hendon (1980) claims that if language teaching is not centered around culture, students will not communicate to "the fullest extent". Thus, it is of utmost necessity to strengthen the learning and penetration of Chinese traditional culture in English teaching. Lack of introduction to Chinese culture, inadequacy of Chinese culture in textbooks and no emphasis on Chinese culture in English test in English classrooms give rise to Chinese cultural aphasia in students' language learning. Therefore, under the context of "Chinese culture going global", teachers should shift their teaching modes from over-emphasizing language skills to integrating Chinese cultural elements into their teaching.

2.1.2 *Oxford English* for Junior High Schools (Jiangsu Edition)

Published by Yilin Press, *Oxford English* for Junior High Schools (Jiangsu Edition) has been selected by many secondary schools in Jiangsu Province as English textbooks for compulsory education and has won nationwide recognition and unanimous praises. It is a set of

English textbooks on the basis of introducing foreign teaching materials, carefully adapted by domestic experts and approved by the state. The language is authentic, the writing concept is advanced and scientific, the topics are rich and interesting, and the illustrations are lively and exquisite. This paper selected *Oxford English* for Junior High Schools (Jiangsu Edition) as the research subject in order to figure out some suggestive strategies for integrating Chinese culture into English teaching.

2.2 Previous Studies on Integrating Chinese Culture into English Class

English teaching in Junior High Schools is mainly performed through English textbooks. Chinese cultural elements are an indispensable part of English textbooks, and the quantity and quality of Chinese culture elements affect the student's cultural awareness.

Some scholars, such as Yan Yilun (2002), Zhang Jinliang (2006), and Liu Changjiang (2003) assert that teaching Chinese culture in English classes is as important as teaching British and American culture. Other scholars (Ding Meng, 2020; Yu Qionqiong, 2019; Wang Xiaohui, 2011) all mentioned that extensive studies on the cultural contents involved in the textbook have been done by providing profound insights into the cultural teaching of English-speaking countries, but they rarely mention the teaching of Chinese culture, because English education in our country is more focused on how to teach students the culture of English-speaking countries in English classes so that students can learn more authentic English and overcome obstacles caused by different historical cultures, customs, and religious beliefs, in order to avoid misunderstandings when communicating with native English speakers.

In contrast, foreign literature concerning the integration of Chinese culture into English textbooks is scant. Foreign scholars pay more attention to both the culture of their motherland and the culture of English-speaking countries when studying English textbooks for Junior High Schools. For example, Professor Claire Kramsch (2000) from the University of California at Berkeley in the United States believes that it should be noted that there is no clear boundary between the culture of the home country and the culture of the target language. He claimed that the local culture should be introduced in a timely and appropriate manner, while paying attention to the culture of the target language.

It can be easily seen that the research on the integration of Chinese culture into Junior High Schools English teaching is mainly carried out in China, because Chinese people have realized the serious problem of Chinese culture missing in English teaching. Both front-line teachers and academicians have conducted substantial research on this topic. But on the whole, they are relatively too general by analyzing the current situation, hoping for the improvement of the teaching materials, instead of

launching in-depth research and putting forward specific measures. Actually, users of textbooks look forward to learning the native English with abundant cultural contents in the future. And most students and teachers have come to realize the importance of integrating Chinese culture into English teaching. However, it is impossible to update and revise the textbook frequently, and the lagging nature of its contents is an unfavorable factor for the teaching of Chinese culture in English classrooms. This requires teachers to keep track of the latest principles of cultural teaching, update their cultural teaching methods, and promptly supplement the important Chinese cultural contents missing in the textbooks in order to carry out reasonable and effective cultural teaching. In recent years, some researchers in our country have also proposed some specific teaching methods.

Ding Meng (2020) analyzed the Chinese cultural factors in English Textbook *Go for it*, and summarized two main ways for the integration of Chinese culture into English teaching materials. One is through the comparison of Chinese and foreign cultures, and the other is to directly add Chinese cultural elements. These two methods are far from enough, because they are too general and not new. Jiang Lanlan (2020) proposed that teachers should make good use of the time before class and let students stand on the podium in turn, telling Chinese stories in English. For the introduction of new courses, traditional cultural knowledge can also be used. In the English class, as Li Liping (2020) puts it, teachers should provide students with a good language environment, make use of Chinese excellent traditional culture, and combine the things that students come into contact with in their daily lives to guide students to use English correctly and accurately. Students are immersed in this language environment and gradually develop the habit of English thinking, which invisibly integrates Chinese culture into English teaching. Additionally, some techniques can also be used, such as the contrast method and comparative method of Chinese and Western culture recognized by many researchers. Wei Jing (2019) creatively proposed the magical use of traditional picture books in English classrooms. The teaching of English is not limited to the classroom, but also extends outside the classroom. Teachers can advise students to read more English news about China. It is also useful to check information through topics, and let students make posters or give lectures to promote the process of integrating Chinese culture into English teaching.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Research Questions

This paper intends to analyze the unit topics and textbook contents in *Oxford English* for Junior High Schools (Jiangsu Edition) from the perspective of integrating

Chinese culture into English textbooks in a bid to investigate whether *Oxford English* for Junior High Schools (Jiangsu Edition) contains sufficient Chinese culture. Then, according to the analysis and statistics, specific strategies for cultural teaching are put forward to give full play to the flexibility of teachers' classroom teaching. If these strategies are used appropriately, shortage of Chinese culture in the textbook can be greatly eased. This paper mainly discusses two questions:

- What Chinese culture is involved in the unit topics and content of *Oxford English* for Junior High Schools (Jiangsu Edition)?
- Which cultural teaching methods can be applied to classroom teaching? How to apply cultural teaching methods to English teaching?

3.2 Research Subject

In this research, *Oxford English* for Junior High Schools (Jiangsu Edition) was selected as the research subject. Among them, the textbook for seventh graders is approved by the Ministry of Education in 2012. The eighth and ninth grades are approved by the Ministry of Education in 2013. This set of textbooks has a wide range of applications and great influence in Jiangsu, and is representative. This set of textbooks has six volumes, including 7A, 7B, 8A, 8B, 9A, 9B. Except four units in the second book of Grade Nine, each textbook contains eight units. Each unit consists of several sections, namely Comic strip, Welcome to the unit, Reading, Grammar, Integrated skills, Study skills, Task, Self-assessment, and Project (after every four units' study). According to the actual use of the textbook, the project part is generally not within the scope of teachers' classroom teaching, so this paper does not include this section in the research.

3.3 Research Methods

This research mainly adopted literature research method and quantitative analysis method.

3.3.1 Literature Research Method

The literature research method mainly refers to the method of collecting, identifying, and organizing literature, and forming a scientific understanding of the facts and the basic understanding of the research subject through the research of the related literature. The author made full use of CNKI resources to collect and sort out a large amount of literature about the integration of Chinese culture into junior or senior high school English textbooks and cultural teaching methods, so as to determine the specific contents and framework of this research.

3.3.2 Quantitative Analysis Method

The author made a quantitative analysis of the contents of the entire set of *Oxford English* for Junior High Schools (Jiangsu Edition). Initially, make a descriptive analysis of the numbers of units that contain Chinese elements or Chinese culture, and the proportions of them; each textbook has several units that involve Chinese elements

or Chinese culture. Then, based on the 6 textbooks, calculate the numbers and distribution of units on various Chinese cultural topics in the complete set of textbooks.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The Distribution of Units Containing Chinese Culture

The author have carefully read through *Oxford English* for Junior High Schools (Jiangsu Edition) and conducted descriptive statistics. Among them, there are 27 units involving Chinese elements, accounting for about 61.4% of the total number of 44 units. Besides, the author also made statistics on the specific numbers of units involving Chinese elements in each volume of textbooks: 4 units in the first volume of the seventh grade; 3 units in the second volume of the seventh grade; 5 units in the first volume of the eighth grade; 7 units in the second volume of the eighth grade; 6 units in the first volume of the ninth grade; 2 units in the second volume of the ninth grade. Except for four units in the second volume of the ninth grade, there are eight units in each of the other five books. Therefore, in terms of quantity and ratio, the frequency of Chinese elements or Chinese culture in this set of textbooks averages high.

Table 1
Statistical map of the number of units containing Chinese culture

Textbook	The number of units containing Chinese culture	Total number of units	Percentage
7A	4	8	50.00%
7B	3	8	37.50%
8A	5	8	62.50%
8B	7	8	87.50%
9A	6	8	75.00%
9B	2	4	50.00%
Total	27	44	61.36%

But a problem exists that some contents about Chinese culture mentioned in the book failed to provide a detailed introduction. For example, in the second volume of the ninth grade, there is only a picture of Qian Xuesen in the Welcome to the Unit of the second unit, which does not give a detailed introduction to this great Chinese scientist and which needs the further exploration of the teachers in their actual teaching.

4.2 Statistics of Topic Categories

The topics related to Chinese culture in this set of textbooks are also rich and abundant. Among them, there are 2 units related to traditional festivals; 5 units related to Chinese scenic spots; 6 units related to Chinese folk culture; 5 units related to Chinese art and sports; 1 unit related to Chinese scientific and technological development; 5 units related to Chinese physical

geography and climate; 2 units related to Chinese literature; 2 units related to China's social development; 1 unit related to charitable organizations established in China.

5. STRATEGIES FOR INTEGRATING CHINESE CULTURE

5.1 Culture Introduction

Cultural introduction is to introduce and explain a specific aspect or several aspects of the differences between the culture of the target language and that of the mother tongue. (Zhou, 2019) Correspondingly, cultural introduction in the English classroom refers to the introduction and explanation of the differences between the culture of English-speaking countries and that of China. This paper discussed how to integrate Chinese culture into the Junior High Schools English classroom, so the cultural introduction mentioned in this paper mainly meant that how Chinese culture was directly introduced to the students in the class.

This is also reflected in *Oxford English* for Junior High Schools (Jiangsu Edition). For example, the Reading section of the second unit of the second book of the eighth grade uses two pages to describe the author's experience in HongKong Disneyland in details. The Reading section of the first unit of the second book of Grade 9 introduces the Forbidden City in Beijing, the Summer Palace and the landscape of Guilin. As we all know, Reading is the most important part of a unit. As the main reading material of a unit, it occupies substantial space and covers many language points. In the actual teaching process, students will spend a lot of time intensively reading the contents in the Reading section under the guidance of the teachers to understand the details and master the grammar points. Through the reading parts of the above two units, students will learn more about the expressions of Chinese culture.

But there are also shortcomings in this set of textbooks. For example, in Unit 5 of the seventh grade booklet "Celebrating the Holidays", the conversation between Eddie and Hobo in the comic strip part involves Halloween in the West, and the Reading part of this unit introduces Halloween, not a traditional Chinese holiday. Due to the Reading part occupying a major position, so there is a lack of introduction to Chinese culture. Although the Integrated skills part involves the Spring Festival with illustrations, and the Task part also revolves around the Spring Festival, these two parts are easily overlooked by teachers and students. Moreover, the introduction to the Spring Festival in these two sections is presented to students in the form of a few phrases, which is obviously not as detailed as the introduction to Halloween in the Reading section.

Thus, this requires teachers to supplement Chinese culture in their teaching. Teachers can provide additional

material suitable for Junior High Schools students in length and difficulty to read. In this way, teachers should introduce the Spring Festival or other Chinese traditional festivals, and explain them in greater detail in class, which can attract more attention from the students during English learning process, and students can fully understand the customs of traditional Chinese festivals through English, rather than only master some knowledge points.

Sometimes, the textbooks do not directly present Chinese culture, so teachers are required to exert their subjective initiatives to dig out relevant Chinese culture based on the contents of the textbooks, and introduce them to students. (Li & Li, 2020) Take *Oxford English* for Junior High Schools (Jiangsu Edition) as an example, unit 6 (7A) is about food and lifestyle, so teachers can stimulate students' interests by introducing the Chinese cuisine and teach them the English names of these delicacies, and then let the students introduce one kind of Chinese food which they like in English in groups to deepen their understanding of Chinese food culture. Likewise, Unit 8 (7A) is about fashion, which mainly introduces the English names of various clothes. Teachers can expand their extracurricular knowledge on this basis, introduce ancient Chinese costumes to students, and teach the corresponding English names. In particular, the Forbidden City has exhibited court costumes during the Ming and Qing dynasties with English explanations. This can be used as a good material through which students can have a deeper understanding of our country's traditional costume culture. What's more, unit1 (7B) introduces homes around the world, and teachers can introduce students some English expressions of the layouts of Chinese homes and typical furniture. The architectural style of Suzhou garden can be used a typical example as an illustration.

The method of directly introducing Chinese culture in English class is a good way to import Chinese culture in large quantities.

5.2 Culture Integration

Cultural integration refers to a teaching method that combines cultural contents and language materials. (Shu, 1988) Culture integration is to directly use English papers that present Chinese cultural contents as teaching materials, so that students can experience the charms of Chinese culture. Although the definition of culture integration looks very similar to that of culture introduction mentioned above, culture integration has a richer meaning.

First of all, this method no longer stops at literal knowledge, but requires students to learn national spirit through texts and perceive cultural attitudes or cultural values (Zhou, 2019). For example, the football player Li Hua introduced in the Reading section of the second unit of the seventh grade is a member of the Yellow River Football Club. Teachers can dig out the material behind the topic of football, such as the development of

football in China and its performance in the World Cup. Given that China does not currently have an advantage in men's football matches, the football players still have the confidence to win. They are united, hardworking and persevering. Recently, as reported by CHINADAILY, the Chinese women's football team has defeated the South Korean team by virtue of their strength, thus successfully qualifying for the Olympic Games. Teachers can use the authentic English papers in China-daily WeChat public account to convey the power of Chinese sportsmanship to students. Teachers can also supplement by using other sports in China. For example, table tennis is China's national ball. In 1959, table tennis player Rong Guotuan won the first world championship for China, which was inspiring and winning glory for the country. Table tennis diplomacy is an event that enhances Sino-US friendship. All this reflect our country's tolerant cultural attitudes and values—that is facing the world, and absorbing the best of others.

In addition, the use of culture integration in grammar is worthy of attention, emphasizing words and sentences in text teaching, especially grammar. Teachers can select sentences that contain cultural information amid presenting a certain grammatical point. (Zhou, 2019) Under normal circumstances, students consolidate their grammar learning achievements by completing the exercises assigned by teachers. In order to save time, teachers often choose existing exercises and use them directly, and print them on papers for students to finish. The cultural integration method requires teachers to make full use of Chinese culture to design original exercises, so that the exercises not only incorporate the grammar points that students need to learn, but also embody Chinese traditional culture that should be carried forward. The two are interdependent and complementary. In this way, students understand Chinese culture in the process of mastering the grammar rules. Of course, English teaching involves a wide range of areas. In addition to grammar teaching, the cultural integration method can also be used in the teaching of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Lastly, since it is cultural integration, apart from the integration of Chinese culture into English, English should also actively absorb the elements of Chinese culture, that is, the process of acculturation and localization in language contact. (Lu, 2013) To put it more vividly, it is when in Rome, do as Romans do. In fact, the development of English is never isolated, but to absorb foreign vocabulary in the process of communicating with other languages, enrich the expression of English, and make this language develop by leaps and bounds. Anyone who has studied French can find that the spelling of many French words is very similar to English words, but only the pronunciation is slightly different. In fact, English borrows many French words. Similarly, many vocabularies such as coffee, pudding, chocolate, sofa and so on that are familiar

to us also find their origins in English; and some English vocabulary were derived from Chinese, such as kung fu, tofu. It also inspires English teachers not to make learning authentic English the sole goal of their teaching, but to encourage students to use Chinese English properly so that in the future international arena, the English spoken by Chinese people will not only express Chinese views, but also embody Chinese characteristics.

5.3 Culture Contrast

Cultural contrast refers to the promotion of bilingual learning by comparing Chinese and English language structures and cultures. The main purpose is that students can better understand the bilingual characteristics and furthermore enhance their understanding of lingual cultures by comparing the differences between Chinese and English language structures.

On the one hand, from the perspective of sentence connection, English mostly uses subordinate structure, that is, syntactic form to connect sentences or clauses with conjunctions, while Chinese often uses parallel structure, relying on connection in meaning, not necessarily on connectives. (Wu, 1992) Junior High Schools students have the most direct experience of this when writing English, because teachers usually emphasize the use of conjunctions when tutoring students. For example, the order of the paper structure is: first of all, secondly, finally, in the end, and so on. There are phrases representing the parallel supplementary relationship: what's more, besides, and so on. In English writing, there is no shortage of conjunctions that express transitional contrast, causality, exemplification, and statement of facts, so as to make the paper well-structured and compact. In contrast, Chinese pays attention to the scattered form but not the scattered spirit, for example, "first" and "second" rarely appear even in argumentative statements. Teachers can guide students to compare the Chinese and English papers they are exposed to with the intention to experience the differences in the connection of sentences in the two languages.

On the other hand, different nationalities have different ideas and oftentimes have different language shells. Attributives in Chinese, whether long or short are mostly placed before nouns. This is closely related to the thinking way of the Han nationality. Attributives in English are often short prepositions and longer post-positions (including attributive clauses). This is due to their habit of thinking after reading. (Wu, 1992) In daily teaching, teachers often involve both Chinese and English when they explain new words and give examples. In addition, when commenting on reading comprehension exercises, teachers can pick out long and difficult sentences to explain, give Chinese translations, and ask students to write them down in notebooks and review them after class, asking students to realize the differences in thinking between two languages.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Major Findings

This paper first analyzed the complete set of *Oxford English* for Junior High Schools (Jiangsu Edition). Generally speaking, the textbooks cover a wealth of Chinese cultural topics, but the disadvantage is that the textbooks do not cover sufficient Chinese cultural topics in depth, which leads to students' lack of cross-cultural competence in English learning. Therefore, in order to make up for the shortcomings of deficiency of Chinese culture in the teaching materials, the author proposed three suggestive teaching strategies to promote the integration of Chinese culture into Junior High Schools English teaching--cultural introduction, cultural integration, and cultural contrast. These three strategies have rich connotations. Through various methods such as introducing Chinese culture directly to students, expanding more Chinese culture based on textbooks, combining Chinese culture and grammar knowledge, and comparing the differences between Chinese and English language structures, students will have a new understanding of Chinese culture and will not find the process of learning Chinese culture in English class a dreary experience. In actual teaching, teachers should use the three teaching strategies as the guidance, and make full use of the high-quality resources that appear in English newspapers, books, English learning WeChat public accounts or English learning websites. Striving to integrate Chinese culture into Junior High Schools English class will definitely help students understand and express Chinese culture in English better. If young people can tell Chinese stories well and promote Chinese culture in English, they can make our national rejuvenation and China dream a reality.

6.2 Limitations of the Study

Integrating Chinese culture into the Junior High Schools English classroom is a complex and vast project, and not all problems can be solved in one paper. Moreover, the three cultural teaching strategies proposed in the paper have not been put into practice, and it is necessary to examine their effects in the actual teaching process in the future and add more reasonable and useful cultural teaching strategies in time to come.

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