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Paths and Practices of Integrating Fine Traditional Chinese Culture into Senior High School English Reading Teaching — A Case Study of Let's Celebrate! in Unit 2, Compulsory Book 2 of FLTRP Senior High English Textbook

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Abstract

Fine Traditional Chinese Culture constitutes the spiritual lifeline and cultural foundation of the Chinese nation. Integrating Fine Traditional Chinese Culture into senior high school English reading teaching serves as a vital approach to fulfilling the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education and cultivating students' cultural awareness, one of the core competencies of the English subject. Based on an analysis of prominent problems existing in the integration of traditional culture into current senior high school English reading teaching, this paper puts forward four practical pathways: identifying cultural symbols, excavating cultural connotations, speculating on cultural inheritance, and integrating multimedia resources. Taking the reading passage Time for a Change? from Unit 2 Let's Celebrate! in FLTRP Senior High English Compulsory Book 2 as a research case, this paper elaborates detailed teaching designs corresponding to each pathway, aiming to provide references for the effective integration of traditional culture into senior high school English reading instruction.

Keywords

Fine Traditional Chinese Culture; Senior High School English; Reading Teaching; Cultural Awareness

1. Introduction

The General High School English Curriculum Standard (2017 Edition, Revised in 2020) explicitly defines cultural awareness as one of the core components of English subject core competencies. It clarifies that cultural awareness refers to "the understanding of Chinese and foreign cultures and the recognition of their fine

qualities, as well as students' intercultural cognition, attitudes and behavioral orientations developed in the context of globalization" (Ministry of Education, 2020). Cultivating cultural awareness is intended to help students "strengthen their national identity and patriotism, consolidate cultural confidence, and grow into citizens with civilized literacy and a strong sense of social responsibility".

Since the implementation of the new round of curriculum reform, the proportion of content related to Fine Traditional Chinese Culture in both college entrance examination English papers and senior high school English textbooks has been gradually increasing. The selected reading passages cover a wide spectrum of themes, ranging from traditional festivals, culinary culture and historical scenic sites to traditional Chinese virtues. As pointed out by Wang Qiang (2015), deeply integrating Fine Traditional Chinese Culture into senior high school English teaching marks a fundamental shift from the isolated cultivation of linguistic competence to the holistic development of core competencies. Against this background, how to effectively embed Fine Traditional Chinese Culture into English reading instruction has emerged as a prominent research focus among front-line senior high school English teachers.

Drawing on the aforementioned context, this paper analyzes the practical obstacles currently existing in such integration, and further explores feasible implementation pathways through a specific teaching case study of the text Time for a Change? from Unit 2 Let's Celebrate! in the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press (FLTRP) Compulsory English Book 2.

2. Connotation and Educational Value of Fine Traditional Chinese Culture

Formed and developed over thousands of years of Chinese history, Fine Traditional Chinese Culture represents the essence of traditional civilization. It encompasses rich ideological concepts, moral norms, artistic forms, scientific technologies and other cultural dimensions (Ministry of Education, 2014). As a culturally valuable heritage created and accumulated by the Chinese nation over long-term historical development, it constitutes a core part of the Chinese national spirit and exerts a profound and lasting influence on the formation and evolution of the Chinese nation. Integrating Fine Traditional Chinese Culture into senior high school English reading teaching bears far-reaching educational value. Firstly, it enables students to gain in-depth insight into cultural connotations and enhance their cultural identity and sense of pride. By engaging with diversified cultural content such as traditional festivals, historical tales and folk arts, students can enrich their cultural knowledge and establish sound values imperceptibly. Secondly, it improves students' cross-cultural communication competence. In the process of learning and introducing Fine Traditional Chinese Culture in English, students accumulate standardized cultural expressions and lay a solid foundation for spreading Chinese

culture in international exchanges. Thirdly, it consolidates students' cultural confidence, equipping them with a firm cultural stance when confronted with impacts from diverse foreign cultures.

3. Existing Problems in Integrating Fine Traditional Chinese Culture into Senior High School English Reading Teaching

Despite wide recognition of the significance of embedding traditional culture into English teaching, prominent challenges persist in current senior high school English reading teaching practice.

3.1. Limited Reading Materials about Traditional Culture in Textbooks

Textbooks serve as core reference resources for effective senior high school English reading instruction. Although mainstream textbooks including PEP and FLTRP series have increased passages related to traditional culture, texts dedicated exclusively to Fine Traditional Chinese Culture remain scarce, with even fewer full units centered on Chinese cultural themes. Taking FLTRP senior high school compulsory textbooks as an example, only Unit 2 Let's Celebrate! in Compulsory Book 2 touches upon discussions of the Spring Festival under the festival-themed unit, while other units rarely feature reading passages focusing on core Chinese cultural topics. Narrative, expository and argumentative texts in textbooks predominantly depict foreign humanities, geography and outstanding figures, failing to equip students with systematic cognition of Fine Traditional Chinese Culture.

Chen Zehang, Lin Yimin & Feng Zhixin (2024) analyze the cultural content layout of English textbooks and confirm that passages accessible to students mostly involve foreign humanities, an issue prevalent across textbooks for all learning stages. In addition, Chinese cultural topics are scattered without systematic, in-depth integration spanning multiple units and volumes.

3.2. Classroom Activities Prioritize Language Learning over Cultural Exploration

Many teachers prioritize the instruction of vocabulary, grammar and reading skills in reading lessons, failing to dig deep into the cultural knowledge embedded in texts. Some teachers treat reading passages merely as carriers for linguistic drills and ignore cultural content entirely. Others briefly introduce cultural facts in Chinese, only enabling students to acquire basic cultural information without cultivating their ability to interpret and express culture in English, resulting in a common dilemma: "language without culture" or "culture without linguistic output" (Wang Qiang & Ge Xiaopei, 2022). The tendency to prioritize language over culture hinders the cultivation of students' cultural awareness and indirectly restrains the development of their thinking capacity.

3.3. Lack of In-depth Exploration of Underlying Cultural Meanings in Teaching Design

While most teachers have begun to incorporate Fine Traditional Chinese Culture into English reading classes, their text interpretation remains superficial, limited to literal explanation of text content. They rarely guide students to excavate embedded traditional cultural elements and profound cultural connotations through in-depth critical thinking. For instance, in teaching Time for a Change?, numerous teachers only organize classroom activities around the surface topic "where to have the Spring Festival family dinner". They stop teaching after asking students to identify the two authors' viewpoints and supporting reasons, without raising follow-up questions such as "Why do two generations hold different preferences?" and "What is the essential cultural meaning of family reunion during the Spring Festival?". As a result, students lose opportunities to understand the text from a profound cultural perspective.

Cultivating cultural awareness requires a complete cognitive chain: perceiving culture, identifying with culture, understanding culture and practicing culture. Restricted by limited class time, students seldom obtain sufficient cultural nourishment in such superficial teaching arrangements.

4. Paths and Practices of Integrating Fine Traditional Chinese Culture into Senior High School English Reading Teaching—A Case Study of Time for a Change

In Unit 2, Compulsory Book 2 of FLTRP Textbook This paper takes Time for a Change?, the reading text in the Developing Ideas section of Unit 2 Let's Celebrate!, FLTRP Senior High English Compulsory Book 2, as a case to explore specific integration pathways of Fine Traditional Chinese Culture into senior high school English reading teaching. Centered on the theme of changing customs of Spring Festival family dinners, this lesson guides students to conduct layered exploration through three dimensions: identifying cultural symbols, excavating cultural connotations and speculating on cultural inheritance. Multimedia resources are adopted to diversify cultural perception channels and realize the advancement from cultural cognition to cultural identity.

4.1. Text Analysis

Time for a Change? is a column article concerning customs of Spring Festival family dinners, consisting of two readers' letters. It falls under the thematic context of "Human and Society" and adopts an argumentative genre.

4.1.1. What the text covers

Centered on the question "where to hold the Spring Festival family dinner", the text presents contrasting viewpoints from two readers of distinct ages and occupations:

Wang Peng, a software engineer, and Liu Yonghui, a retired teacher. Wang Peng advocates dining out for the family reunion dinner, arguing that preparing homemade feasts is labor-intensive and time-consuming; eating in restaurants allows families to spend more relaxed quality time together. In contrast, Liu Yonghui insists on home-cooked reunion dinners, holding that the shared process of preparing food constitutes the most precious family memory, and the significance of the Spring Festival dinner lies not merely in the meal itself but the experience of family reunion. By presenting contrasting facts and viewpoints, the text illustrates generational discrepancies in understanding the essence of family reunion.

4.1.2. Why the text is compiled

Rather than simply introducing Spring Festival customs, the text takes evolving reunion dinner traditions as an entry point to prompt students to reflect on the relationship between tradition and modernity, inheritance and transformation. Its underlying educational intention is to enlighten students to understand that while forms of Spring Festival celebrations may evolve, the core themes of familial love, care and reunion remain unchanged. This theme points to the core connotations of Fine Traditional Chinese Culture: family reunion, respect for elders and attachment to kinship, enabling students to deepen their comprehension of the spiritual essence of the Spring Festival through reading and group discussion.

4.1.3. How the text is structured and expressed

Organized as two personal letters, the text boasts a clear argumentative framework: raising a core question, presenting contrasting standpoints and elaborating personal attitudes. The first letter, narrated from the perspective of young engineer Wang Peng, justifies dining out by analyzing burdensome preparation work, time costs and improved quality of family interaction. The second letter, written by retired teacher Liu Yonghui, defends homemade dinners from perspectives of traditional festive atmosphere, precious shared memories and the intrinsic value of the preparation process.

Written in first-person narration with distinct emotional tones, the text employs rhetorical devices such as rhetorical questions and concessive clauses to strengthen persuasion, including sentences like "Can’t they admit that..." and "It just won’t feel like...", providing abundant linguistic models for students’ output practice.

4.2. Cultural Integration Pathways and Corresponding Teaching Designs

4.2.1. Pathway 1: Identify Cultural Symbols and Activate Cultural Schemas (Pre-reading & While-reading)

Cultural symbols represent the superficial carriers of culture and serve as entry points for students to access cultural understanding. Teachers guide students to

recognize cultural elements via pictures and text scanning, activate prior cultural background knowledge, and establish preliminary connections between the text and traditional culture. Activating cultural schemas sharpens students' sensitivity to cultural information during reading and lays a cognitive foundation for subsequent in-depth interpretation.

- Pre-reading Stage: Picture Recognition to Activate Prior Knowledge

The teacher displays PPT slides featuring Spring Festival cultural symbols including Spring Festival couplets, red lanterns, red envelopes, dumplings and New Year paintings, and organizes a brainstorming activity requiring students to name these symbols in English and briefly interpret their cultural meanings.

Q1: What do you see in these pictures ?

Q2: What do these items symbolize in Chinese culture ?

Q3: Which of these traditions can you find in your family's Spring Festival celebrations ?

The teacher categorizes and records students' responses on the blackboard into two columns: "Customs" and "Symbolic Meanings", guiding students to shift focus from tangible cultural objects to their implied cultural significance. Key vocabulary of this unit including reunion, tradition, generation, preparation are written on the blackboard in a timely manner to remove linguistic barriers for subsequent reading.

Design Explanation: By presenting visual images of Spring Festival cultural symbols, the activity invites students to recall and share personal life experience, converting abstract cultural concepts into tangible visual materials. It facilitates students' cognitive transition from perceiving cultural symbols to establishing complete cultural schemas, constructing a cultural cognitive framework before text reading. Meanwhile, requiring students to interpret cultural symbols in English accumulates target vocabulary and builds cognitive preparation for later text comprehension and linguistic output.

- While-reading Stage: Text Scanning to Extract Cultural Information

The teacher instructs students to skim the passage and underline words and phrases related to Spring Festival customs, completing the following task:

Task: Scan the passage and underline the words and expressions related to Spring Festival customs.

Students identify key cultural expressions including Spring Festival family dinner, reunion, preparations, traditional dishes, the dinner on the eve. The teacher compiles these terms on one side of the blackboard to form a dedicated cultural vocabulary bank for this lesson.

Design Explanation: Building on activated prior cultural schemas, this activity directs students to identify and extract cultural symbols embedded in the text, linking existing knowledge with new textual information. The scanning task not only helps students accumulate English expressions describing Spring Festival culture, but also enables them to perceive distinct linguistic strategies adopted by the two

authors when depicting the same cultural phenomenon: Wang Peng emphasizes factual descriptions of tedious preparation work, while Liu Yonghui focuses on emotional narration of precious memories. This discovery lays groundwork for subsequent in-depth exploration of underlying cultural connotations.

4.2.2. Pathway 2: Excavate Cultural Connotations and Comprehend Spiritual Essence (While-reading)

Behind every cultural symbol lie core values and spiritual connotations. The teacher designs a progressive question chain to guide students to move beyond superficial descriptions of customs and explore the essential cultural logic beneath cultural phenomena. The question chain advances through three hierarchical layers: sorting factual information, analyzing underlying causes and exploring intrinsic values, elevating students' thinking from basic information extraction to profound cultural interpretation.

Question Chain for Layered In-depth Exploration

The teacher designs the following progressive questions to guide students to dig into Spring Festival cultural connotations through reading and group discussion:

1) Layer 1: Fact sorting

Q1: What main Spring Festival activities are mentioned in the passage?

Q2: Where do the two writers recommend holding the family dinner? What are their supporting reasons?

2) Layer 2: Cause analysis

Q3: Why do Wang Peng and Liu Yonghui hold conflicting opinions about the venue of the reunion dinner?

Q4: What does "the change" in the title refer to? Does it merely mean the location of the dinner?

3) Layer 3: Value exploration

Q5: Despite their contrasting standpoints, what consistent core value do they share?

Q6: What does the concept of "family" represent in Chinese culture?

Students discuss the questions in groups before presenting their collective viewpoints to the whole class.

Design Explanation: The question chain is designed to progress from surface-level text information to profound cultural connotations. The first two questions help students sort explicit cultural facts from the text; the middle two prompt analysis of root causes behind cultural discrepancies; the final two guide students to understand and recognize core cultural values. Through layered questioning, students discover that although Wang Peng and Liu Yonghui disagree on dining venues, they equally cherish the value of family reunion: young generations pursue relaxed forms of togetherness, while elders value the shared preparatory process, yet both choices revolve around the core attachment to family. This insight reveals the spiritual core of the Spring Festival: while celebration forms may evolve, the essence of kinship and reunion remains constant. The teacher further guides

students to grasp the dialectical wisdom of "harmony amid diversity" embedded in Fine Traditional Chinese Culture.

4.2.3. Pathway 3: Speculate on Cultural Inheritance and Broaden Cross-cultural Communication Vision (Post-reading)

The ultimate goal of integrating Fine Traditional Chinese Culture into English reading teaching extends beyond cognitive comprehension, covering value identification and practical linguistic output. This pathway unfolds along two dimensions: internal cultural reflection and external cross-cultural communication. Internally, students are guided to dialectically evaluate evolving traditional customs in modern society, consolidate their cultural stance through critical thinking, and strengthen their sense of mission for cultural inheritance. Externally, foreign perspectives on Chinese culture are introduced to foster students' awareness of telling authentic Chinese stories in English.

1) Thematic Group Discussion: Critical Thinking on Cultural Inheritance

The teacher organizes whole-class discussion centered on the topic "Should Spring Festival traditions change with the times", prompting students to reflect dialectically on cultural inheritance from perspectives of generational gaps and social development.

Q1: Do you think Spring Festival traditions should evolve alongside social changes? State your reasons.

Q2: Is it possible to preserve the authentic "Spring Festival atmosphere" while dining in restaurants? How can this be realized?

Q3: Which traditional customs do you believe deserve full preservation, and which can be appropriately adjusted?

Students conduct group discussion and elect representatives to share group viewpoints. During discussion, the teacher guides students to distinguish between cultural forms and spiritual connotations: while external forms of Spring Festival customs may naturally evolve with social progress, spiritual values including family reunion, bidding farewell to the old and welcoming the new, and respect for elders should be permanently inherited.

Design Explanation: This activity encourages students to dialectically evaluate the evolution of traditional customs after grasping the spiritual essence of Spring Festival culture. By debating which cultural elements should be retained or adjusted, students recognize that cultural forms can advance with the times, yet core cultural values require intergenerational preservation. This cognitive process enables students' cultural identity to develop from emotional perception to rational recognition.

2) Perceive Cross-cultural Influence and Establish Cultural Communication Awareness

The teacher plays an English short video themed "Foreigners' impressions of the Chinese Spring Festival" or "Global popularity of the Spring Festival". Before viewing,

the teacher raises guiding questions: Do you know any foreigners who celebrate the Spring Festival? Why are they fascinated by this Chinese tradition? Students take notes on Spring Festival activities favored by foreigners while watching the video, then discuss the following questions in groups:

Q1: Why do foreigners show great interest in the Chinese Spring Festival?

Q2: Which aspects of the Spring Festival are most attractive to overseas audiences?

Q3: If you were to introduce the Spring Festival to a foreign friend, what content would you present?

During group sharing, the teacher guides students to realize that the global popularity of the Spring Festival proves the universal appeal of Fine Traditional Chinese Culture that transcends national boundaries. As Chinese learners of English, students ought to maintain solid cultural confidence and master appropriate, accurate English expressions to spread Chinese culture to the world.

Design Explanation: Cultivating cross-cultural communication awareness constitutes a core objective of cultural integrated teaching. By watching videos recording foreigners' perceptions of the Spring Festival, students perceive the charm and international influence of Fine Traditional Chinese Culture from an external perspective, strengthening their cultural pride and sense of mission for cultural dissemination. The final question regarding introducing the Spring Festival to foreign friends lays preparation for follow-up written output assignments.

4.2.4. Pathway 4: Integrate Multimedia Resources to Diversify Cultural Perception Channels (Running through All Teaching Stages)

Multimedia resources break the textual limitations of textbooks and present cultural content through multimodal forms including images, videos and audio, rendering abstract cultural connotations tangible and vivid. Serving as a continuous auxiliary teaching tool, this pathway is embedded into all preceding teaching segments.

Multimodal Input for Multi-sensory Cultural Experience

Multimedia resources are applied throughout the lesson in the following arrangements:

① Opening lead-in stage: High-definition pictures of Spring Festival cultural symbols (Spring Festival couplets, red lanterns, red envelopes, dumplings, New Year paintings) are displayed via PPT to activate students' cultural schemas (corresponding to Pathway 1).

② Post-reading expansion stage: English short videos about foreigners' Spring Festival experiences are played to help students perceive the international influence of Chinese traditional culture through audio-visual integration (corresponding to Pathway 3).

③ Homework extension stage: English documentary series Hello, China and Festive China are recommended as after-school self-study materials for students to accumulate standardized English

Expressions For Introducing Chinese Culture.

Design Explanation: Multimedia resources provide diversified multimodal cultural input channels and enrich students' intuitive cultural perception. Visual pictures adopted in the lead-in stage rapidly arouse students' life experience and cultural memory within limited class time. Post-class video resources transcend textbook boundaries and encourage students to re-examine native culture from foreign observers' viewpoints. All multimedia materials closely serve the teaching objectives of each segment instead of being irrelevant decorative content, transforming single textual cultural perception into comprehensive multi-sensory cultural experience.

5. Conclusion

Integrating Fine Traditional Chinese Culture into senior high school English reading teaching bears profound significance. It not only enriches English teaching content and enhances students' linguistic competence, but also imperceptibly consolidates students' cultural confidence and cultivates their sense of responsibility to inherit and disseminate Fine Traditional Chinese Culture. Based on an analysis of current practical obstacles to cultural integration in senior high school English reading classes, this paper proposes four actionable pathways: identifying cultural symbols, excavating cultural connotations, speculating on cultural inheritance, and integrating multimedia resources. Detailed teaching activities for each pathway are illustrated through the case of Time for a Change? in FLTRP Compulsory Book 2 Unit 2.

Through organic combinations of cultural symbol identification, layered question chains, dialectical group discussion and multimedia-assisted teaching, students progress sequentially from cultural perception to cultural comprehension and rational cultural identity. They strengthen cultural recognition via critical thinking and develop the ability to spread native culture in authentic English output. Frontline English teachers should continuously explore integrated strategies linking Fine Traditional Chinese Culture with English reading teaching. Guided by thematic meanings, supported by discourse texts and oriented by exploratory questions, teachers can integrate linguistic knowledge acquisition, cultural connotation interpretation, thinking quality development and cross-cultural communication competence cultivation into a unified whole, turning senior high school English reading classrooms into powerful platforms for disseminating Fine Traditional Chinese Culture.

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