

Strategies For Cultivating Cultural Consciousness in English Reading Teaching

Sun He

Luoyang No.1 Senior High School, Luoyang, Henan ,China

Abstract: This article discusses the importance of cultivating cultural awareness in English reading instruction, the challenges faced, and corresponding teaching strategies. The development of cultural awareness is crucial for enhancing students' cross-cultural communication skills, broadening their global perspectives, and fostering understanding and respect for diverse cultures. However, the insufficiency of teachers' cultural literacy, the limitations of textbook content, and the long-term and complex nature of students' cultural awareness development constitute the main challenges. To address these, strategies such as improving teachers' cultural teaching literacy, enriching cultural content in textbooks, and designing and implementing long-term cultural awareness development plans have been proposed. Through specific cases, such as the "Introduction to Chinese Culture" course at the School of Chinese Studies at Beijing Foreign Studies University and the multicultural teaching system at East China Jiaotong University, the article demonstrates the application and effectiveness of these strategies in practice, emphasizing the responsibility and role of educators in cultivating students' cultural awareness.

Keywords: Reading Teaching; Cultural Awareness; Teaching Strategies

1. The Necessity of Cultivating Cultural Awareness in English Reading Instruction

The cultivation of cultural awareness in English reading instruction is crucial for students' growth. It significantly enhances their ability to communicate across cultures. In the context of globalization, mastering a language is not just about learning grammar and vocabulary; more importantly, it involves understanding and applying the culture behind the language. By reading texts from various

cultural backgrounds, students can learn about different communication styles, values, and behavioral norms, thus becoming more comfortable and appropriate in future international exchanges.

Reading is a window to understanding the world. Through reading, students can be exposed to the history, culture, and social phenomena from all over the globe. This cross-cultural reading experience allows students to step out of their cultural comfort zones to explore and comprehend different lifestyles and ways of thinking, thereby developing a more open and tolerant worldview.

Promoting students' understanding and respect for multiculturalism is essential. During the reading process, students are exposed to characters and stories from various cultural backgrounds, which often contain rich cultural elements and profound meanings. By deeply analyzing and discussing these texts, students can learn to appreciate and respect cultural differences, establishing a correct understanding and a positive attitude towards multiculturalism. This kind of understanding and respect forms an important foundation for building a harmonious society and promoting international peace.

2. Challenges in Cultivating Cultural Awareness in English Reading Instruction

2.1 Lack of Teachers' Understanding and Practical Abilities in Cultural Teaching

In English reading instruction, the cultivation of cultural awareness faces a series of challenges, one of which is the insufficiency of teachers' understanding and practical abilities in cultural teaching. Teachers are the guides in the teaching process, and their cultural literacy directly affects students' understanding and absorption of cultural knowledge. If teachers themselves do not have a deep understanding of cross-cultural communication and

multiculturalism, or lack effective methods to integrate cultural elements into teaching, it becomes difficult for students to gain rich cultural experiences and profound cultural understanding in the classroom. Therefore, enhancing teachers' cultural teaching capabilities and increasing their awareness of cultural diversity are key to improving the effectiveness of English reading instruction.

2.2 The Singularity of Cultural Elements in Textbooks and the Slow Pace of Updates

The monotony of cultural elements in textbooks and the slow pace of updates also pose a challenge in cultivating cultural awareness. Textbooks are the primary vehicle for teaching content and should reflect the true face of multiculturalism, providing students with a comprehensive window to understand the world. However, if the content of textbooks is too singular and lacks diversity, or if it is not updated in a timely manner to reflect the latest cultural developments and social changes, students will not be able to learn rich and vivid cultural knowledge through reading. This requires textbook compilers to continuously update and enrich the content of textbooks, making them more diverse and contemporary, to meet students' thirst for cultural knowledge.

2.3 The Long-Term and Complex Nature of Students' Cultural Awareness Cultivation

Cultivating students' cultural awareness is a long-term and complex process. The development of cultural awareness does not happen overnight; it requires students to continuously accumulate and experience over a long period of learning and living. This process involves not only the acquisition of knowledge but also the shaping of values and the development of behavioral habits. Since each student's background and personal experiences are different, they will encounter various difficulties and challenges in the formation of their cultural awareness. Therefore, educators need to patiently and carefully guide students, design targeted teaching activities, and help them gradually establish a correct cultural awareness through continuous exploration and practice.

3. Strategies for Cultivating Cultural Awareness in English Reading Instruction

3.1 Enhancing Teachers' Cultural Teaching Literacy and Intercultural Communication Skills

The primary task of education is to cultivate individuals, and teachers play a crucial role in this process. To enhance teachers' cultural teaching literacy and intercultural communication skills, regular cultural teaching seminars can be organized for teachers to participate in. These seminars can invite cultural research experts, experienced teachers, and practitioners of cross-cultural communication to discuss how to integrate cultural elements into English reading instruction and share experiences and strategies in teaching across cultures. Through such exchanges, teachers can not only gain new teaching inspiration but also improve their cultural sensitivity and adaptability in practical operations.

Additionally, encouraging teachers to learn and practice cross-cultural teaching methods is an effective way to enhance their cultural teaching literacy. Teachers can gain an in-depth understanding of teaching methods and strategies in different cultural contexts by reading relevant books, attending workshops, and even engaging in overseas exchanges. In practice, teachers can attempt to apply these cross-cultural teaching methods in their classrooms, such as through group discussions and role-playing, which are interactive ways for students to experience different cultures and thereby improve the teachers' own intercultural communication skills.

At the School of Chinese Studies at Beijing Foreign Studies University, the "Introduction to Chinese Culture" course has inspired students' deep understanding of Chinese culture and enthusiasm for cross-cultural communication through its unique teaching methods. Teachers employ cross-cultural comparative teaching methods, juxtaposing Chinese and Western cultural differences for side-by-side comparison, allowing students to appreciate the unique charm of Chinese culture through in-depth discussions. This approach not only enhances students' awareness of cultural diversity but also hones their critical thinking skills. At the same time, the introduction of ethnographic methods provides students with the opportunity to experience Chinese culture firsthand, enabling a more

vivid understanding of cultural phenomena through direct perception and participatory observation. The use of multimedia teaching aids makes the learning process more vivid and interesting, increasing students' interest and efficiency in learning.

The outcomes of the course are reflected in the enhancement of students' multifaceted abilities. Through case analysis and group discussions, students' critical thinking, communication, and collaboration skills have been significantly improved. Their sense of identity and pride in Chinese culture has also been strengthened, igniting their passion for spreading Chinese culture. This teaching practice not only imparts knowledge to students but also teaches them how to apply this knowledge in real cross-cultural communication, laying a solid foundation for them to promote Chinese culture on the international stage in the future. These achievements demonstrate the power of education, which not only imparts knowledge but also cultivates students' cultural confidence and international perspective.(2)Enriching the cultural content in textbooks and introducing a multicultural perspective.

Textbooks are an essential resource for student learning. Enriching the cultural content in textbooks and introducing a multicultural perspective are crucial for cultivating students' cultural awareness. Selecting reading materials that include multicultural backgrounds is an effective way to achieve this goal. These materials can include literary works, news reports, and historical stories from different countries and cultural backgrounds, which allow students to encounter various lifestyles, ways of thinking, and values during their reading. This, in turn, broadens their cultural horizons.

Additionally, updating textbook content to reflect the latest cultural development trends is essential. This means that textbooks should not only include traditional cultural elements but also keep pace with the times by introducing current cultural phenomena and social issues. For instance, incorporating reading materials on topics such as globalization, environmental protection, and coexistence of multiculturalism can enable students to gain an understanding and reflect on these global issues while learning English.

East China Jiaotong University has a concrete and vivid case in enriching cultural content in

textbooks and introducing a multicultural perspective. The university has integrated the excellent traditional Chinese culture into its teaching through the offering of "Interpretation of the Analects" and other university-wide elective courses. This initiative not only allows students to directly engage with the classics of Chinese traditional culture but also enables them to experience and inherit the culture through activities such as morning reading, morning exercises, ceremonial practices, and volunteer services. In the teaching process, the university has adopted an educational system known as "one body, two integrations, three systems, and four integrations," which systematizes the construction, making cultural teaching not just an extension of the classroom but permeating every level of the university and the daily activities of students.。

The outcomes of this teaching model are remarkable. East China Jiaotong University's educational model was approved as the "Respecting the Excellence of Chinese Traditional Culture" demonstration project by the national education department in the fifth National College selection in 2019, and it received the Jiangxi University Reform and Innovation Award in 2023. As an important part of this system, Kongmuhlu Academy was rated as the "Outstanding Organization Unit" in the fourth China Bookstore Chinese Traditional Culture Education Annual Awards, became the 2133rd Confucius Institute by the Confucius Foundation, and was designated as one of the first batch of extracurricular practice education bases for the Young Pioneers in Jiangxi Province. These achievements not only prove the effectiveness of the teaching model but also demonstrate the substantial progress the university has made in cultivating students' cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication skills. Through such teaching practices, East China Jiaotong University has successfully integrated a multicultural perspective into the teaching of Chinese-major courses, enriching students' cultural horizons and enhancing their cultural literacy.

3.2 Designing and Implementing Long-Term Cultural Awareness Development Plans

Cultivating cultural awareness is a long-term process that needs to be carried out in a

planned and step-by-step manner. Establishing a teaching syllabus that includes the cultivation of cultural awareness is fundamental to achieving this goal. This syllabus should specify the cultural teaching objectives for each educational stage and how to achieve these objectives through reading instruction. In the initial stages, the focus can be on helping students understand basic cultural differences; while in the higher grades, students can be guided to delve into more complex issues such as cultural conflicts and cultural integration.

Creating simulated cross-cultural teaching activities is also an effective strategy for cultivating cultural awareness. Through activities such as Model United Nations conferences and International Cultural Festivals, students can practice their language skills in a simulated cross-cultural environment while experiencing communication and interaction between different cultures. These activities not only improve students' English proficiency but also enhance their understanding and respect for cultural differences, laying a solid foundation for future cross-cultural communication.

In the high school English textbook by Beijing Normal University, there is a unit called "Culture Corner," designed to cultivate students' cultural awareness. In this case, teachers analyze the connotations of cultural awareness and the issues existing in classroom teaching, specifically exploring how to effectively cultivate students' cultural awareness in the pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading stages of teaching. The teaching methods include:

1. Pre-reading activities: Teachers stimulate students' interest and curiosity in the upcoming cultural topics by introducing multimedia materials such as videos and pictures related to culture.
2. During-reading activities: Throughout the reading process, teachers guide students to delve into cultural differences through interactive methods such as group discussions and role-playing, and encourage students to express their own opinions and feelings.
3. Post-reading activities: Teachers organize reflections and summaries with students, encouraging them to connect the cultural knowledge they have learned with their real-life experiences, thereby deepening their

understanding of and respect for cultural diversity.

This teaching practice reflects cutting-edge educational theories, particularly experiential cultural teaching methods, the grasp of cultural teaching content, and perspectives on the outcomes and processes of teaching different cultures, which holds significant reference value for cultural teaching in China's foreign language education. Through such teaching activities, students are not only able to learn language knowledge but also experience and understand cultural differences in actual language use, thereby becoming more confident and appropriate in cross-cultural communication.

4. Conclusion

The cultivation of cultural awareness in English reading instruction has profound implications for the comprehensive development of students. By implementing the aforementioned strategies, we can effectively enhance students' cultural awareness, enabling them to better understand and respect different cultures in the context of globalization, thereby promoting cross-cultural communication and international cooperation. The implementation of these strategies not only improves students' English language skills but also cultivates their cultural sensitivity and global competitiveness. In summary, the development of cultural awareness is a long-term and complex process that requires the joint efforts of educators, textbook writers, and policymakers. With continuous effort and innovation, we can provide students with a richer and more diverse cultural learning environment, laying a solid foundation for their future success.

References:

- [1] Xu Guohong The cultivation of cultural awareness in middle school English reading teaching [J] Academic Weekly, 2024, (35): 94-96
- [2] Luo Shaoqian, Zhang Yumei Theory and Practice of a New Model for English Reading Teaching: Promoting Students' Autonomous Reading through Continuous Silent Reading Basic Education Research, 2016, (07): 50-53
- [3] Wu Min The Promotion of High School English Reading Teaching from the

- Perspective of Cultural Awareness Cultivation [J] *English Teacher*, 2024, 24 (17): 154-156
- [4] Wei Xiaoyu Practice and Reflection on Cultivating Cultural Awareness in English Teaching [J] *Primary School Teaching Reference*, 2024, (24): 35-37
- [5] Chen Y . Study of Existing Problems and Improvement Strategies of Cultural Awareness Cultivation in English Teaching in Senior High School[C]// Wuhan Zhicheng Times Cultural Development Co., Ltd.. Proceedings of 3rd International Symposium on Education, Culture and Social Sciences (ECSS 2021). College of Foreign Languages,Hainan Normal University,, 2021: 7.
- [6] Liu A . A Study on Cultivation of Student's Cross-cultural Awareness in Reading Teaching for Non-English Majors[C]// Singapore Management and Sports Science Institute(Singapore),American Applied Sciences Research Institute(USA),Information Engineering Research Institute(USA). Proceedings of 2018 6th ICPEM International Conference on Educational Research,Leisure,Sport and Tourism(EIST 2018)(Lecture Notes in Management Science,VOL.106). Wuhan Donghu University,, 2018: 5.