

# The Cultivation of Students' Cultural Awareness in Senior High School English Teaching

Linlin Liu\*, Shuyu Li, Ruiqi Liu

*School of Foreign Languages, Liaocheng University, Liaocheng, Shandong, China*

*\*Corresponding Author*

**Abstract:** Against the current educational context of globalization, the cultivation of students' cultural awareness in senior high school English teaching is particularly important. The National English Curriculum Standards for Senior High School (2017 Edition, 2020 Revision) clearly states that cultural awareness is one of the key elements of core competencies in the English discipline, which has a significant impact on enhancing students' national identity, cultural confidence, and the formation of positive cultural behavioral orientations. However, the cultivation of cultural awareness in senior high school English teaching faces multiple difficulties, such as limitations in teachers' cultural literacy and teaching beliefs, deficiencies in students' learning motivation and cultural knowledge, and a lack of campus cultural environment and activity resources. To address these issues, this paper proposes relevant suggestions from the three aspects of schools, teachers, and students, aiming to explore how to effectively cultivate students' cultural awareness in senior high school English teaching.

**Keywords:** English Teaching; Senior High School; Cultural Awareness; Core Competencies; Cultivation Strategies

## 1. Introduction

Culture is the soul of a nation and the carrier of its identity and value system. In the context of globalization, the importance of culture has become more prominent than ever before. The National English Curriculum Standards for Senior High School (2017 Edition, 2020 Revision) (hereinafter referred to as the Curriculum Standards) points out the need to "develop core competencies in the English discipline and implement the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education," and cultural awareness is one of the four major

elements of core competencies in the English discipline. "The cultivation of cultural awareness helps students strengthen their national identity and affection for their country and family, firm up their cultural confidence, foster a sense of community with a shared future for mankind, learn to conduct themselves and handle affairs, and grow into individuals with civilized literacy and a sense of social responsibility." However, in current senior high school English teaching, the practice of cultivating cultural awareness has not been emphasized [1], leading to various problems for students in cultural communication and cultural export. Therefore, cultivating students' cultural awareness in senior high school English teaching is of great significance.

## 2. The Connotation of Cultural Awareness

The Curriculum Standards propose that "cultural awareness refers to the understanding of Chinese and foreign cultures and the identification with excellent cultures, and is the cross-cultural cognition, attitude, and behavioral orientation that students demonstrate in the context of globalization. Cultural awareness reflects the value orientation of core competencies in the English discipline."

Zhang Cewen [2] divides cultural awareness into four parts: cultural knowledge, cultural emotion, cultural attitude, and cultural behavior. He believes that in the process of English teaching, increasing students' cultural knowledge, enriching their emotional experience, rectifying their cultural attitudes, forming correct value judgments, internalizing their cultural character, and optimizing their cultural behaviors are important contents for cultivating students' cultural awareness. Hao Junyong [3], at the level of cognitive level, divides the understanding of cultural awareness into four levels, of which the lowest level is "learners do not seek a thorough understanding of obvious cultural knowledge and cannot form cultural understanding," and the highest level is "learners form cultural

identification from the perspective of the target language culture, achieving internalization in mind and externalization in action.”

Cultural awareness refers to an individual's cognition, understanding, and respect for cultural phenomena. It involves not only understanding other cultures but also learning to appreciate and respect the uniqueness of these cultures. Cultural awareness involves a deep understanding of the historical, social, and philosophical roots behind different cultures, as well as how these factors influence cultural behaviors and communication styles. Cultural awareness emphasizes, on the basis of recognizing cultural differences, showing respect and tolerance for all cultures, and not judging other cultures by one's own cultural standards. This respect and tolerance are the foundation of cross-cultural communication and cooperation, helping to build a diverse and harmonious society. Cultural awareness also includes cultural adaptability, that is, the ability to adapt to different cultural environments in cross-cultural communication and adjust one's own behavior and communication styles to suit different cultural backgrounds, which is particularly important for those who work and live in the context of globalization.

### **3. Difficulties in Cultivating Cultural Awareness in Senior High School English Teaching**

This section will introduce the difficulties from three aspects: teachers, students, and schools.

#### **3.1 Limitations of Teachers' Cultural Literacy and Teaching Beliefs**

Teachers play a crucial role in senior high school English teaching, particularly in the cultivation of cultural awareness. However, some teachers, due to limitations in their own cultural literacy, may lack an in-depth understanding of cross-cultural knowledge and global perspectives, and lack a deep understanding of different cultures and effective teaching strategies. Teachers also face the challenge of balancing the language skills training required by the teaching syllabus with the integration of cross-cultural elements. This limits their ability to guide students in exploring and understanding cultural differences in the classroom. Furthermore, some teachers may still adhere to traditional teaching beliefs, focusing more on language forms and examination scores while neglecting the importance of cultural teaching.

This conceptual limitation makes it difficult for the cultivation of cultural awareness to receive sufficient attention and implementation in teaching practice. Teachers may lack the training and resources for innovative teaching methods, making it difficult for them to design and implement effective cross-cultural teaching activities, thereby limiting the development of students' cultural awareness.

#### **3.2 Deficiencies in Students' Learning Motivation and Cultural Knowledge**

Students are the direct beneficiaries of the cultivation of cultural awareness, but their learning motivation and level of cultural knowledge have a direct impact on teaching effectiveness. In senior high school, students may be more focused on the upcoming college entrance examination and the improvement of language skills, lacking sufficient interest and motivation in learning cultural knowledge. This examination-oriented learning motivation may lead to students' insufficient understanding of the importance of cultural learning. Some students have a relatively limited cognition of foreign cultures [4]. They may lack the necessary cultural background knowledge and find it difficult to establish cultural connections in language learning, which limits their understanding of the deeper cultural connotations behind the language. The lack of cultural knowledge not only affects students' understanding of the cultures of English-speaking countries but also affects their ability to deeply understand their own culture and engage in international dissemination.

#### **3.3 Lack of Campus Cultural Environment and Activity Resources**

The distribution of educational resources is uneven, and some schools may lack a diversified cultural learning environment as well as corresponding activity resources to support the teaching of cultural awareness. Although the classroom is the main place for cultural teaching, without rich cultural experiences and practical activities, it is difficult for students to transform theoretical knowledge into practical cross-cultural communication skills. International exchange programs, foreign teacher resources, or multicultural collections in libraries can all provide students with direct cultural experiences and learning opportunities. However, some schools face various difficulties

in organizing activities such as cultural festivals and International Days, which could serve as platforms for students to practice cross-cultural communication and experience different cultures. Without the support of these activities and resources, it is difficult for students to have opportunities to apply the cultural knowledge learned in the classroom to practical situations, thereby limiting the formation and development of their cultural awareness.

#### **4. Strategies for Cultivating Cultural Awareness in Senior High School English Teaching**

This section will introduce the strategies for cultivating cultural awareness from three aspects: teachers, students, and schools.

##### **4.1 School Aspects**

First, schools should strengthen professional development for teachers in cultural teaching. Some teachers may not have received specialized training in cultural teaching methodologies, which limits their ability to effectively convey cultural knowledge to students, thereby affecting the cultivation of students' cultural awareness. To address this issue, schools should regularly organize teaching seminars and training courses, explaining the importance of cultural teaching and implementation strategies to teachers from a theoretical level, aiming to help teachers attach importance to cultural teaching in their thinking and actively explore and innovate in teaching practice, thereby enhancing teachers' professional skills in cultural teaching. Furthermore, if resources permit, schools should consider sending teachers abroad for short-term study or cultural exchange programs. Such experiences allow teachers to experience cultural differences firsthand, enabling them to teach culture more effectively upon returning. Through such field experiences, teachers can not only gain valuable first-hand cultural knowledge but also learn how to integrate this knowledge into daily teaching, enhancing students' awareness and understanding of cultural diversity.

Second, schools can promote cultural immersion among students by organizing campus cultural festivals, holding cultural theme lectures, and setting up multicultural corners.

Schools should regularly hold campus cultural festivals, which can serve as an important

platform for students to experience and learn about different cultures. During the cultural festival, students can participate in various cultural displays organized by teachers and students, including but not limited to international food festivals, traditional costume exhibitions, and music and dance performances. These activities can not only increase students' knowledge of other cultures but also stimulate their respect and appreciation for cultural diversity.

Schools can invite experts and scholars in the field of cultural studies, or even individuals with international backgrounds, to the school to deliver cultural theme lectures. The content of the lectures can cover the history, art, religious beliefs, and social customs of specific countries. Through these lectures, students can gain deeper cultural knowledge while developing their cross-cultural understanding abilities.

A multicultural corner can be set up in the school library or public areas, providing rich cultural learning resources such as books, magazines, documentaries, and multimedia materials. These resources should cover cultural characteristics from around the world, encouraging students to explore and learn independently. The multicultural corner can serve as a small space for students to engage in cultural learning during their spare time, as well as an auxiliary tool for teachers to conduct cultural teaching.

##### **4.2 Teacher Aspects**

First, teachers can explore cultural elements in teaching materials and infiltrate cultural knowledge. There are 25 units in the five compulsory textbooks of the People's Education Press edition, each containing rich content on foreign cultures, covering various continents and common cultural topics. For example, the Project section of Unit 4, "Exploring literature," in Book 2 includes Pearl S. Buck's translation of *Water Margin*, one of the four great classical novels of China. Teachers can ask students whether they know other English translations of *Water Margin* and the English titles of the other three great classical novels, and set up related fun activities to stimulate students' learning interest.

Through these units, teachers can guide students to understand and learn about different cultural phenomena and values. In the teaching process, teachers should consciously infiltrate cultural

knowledge into language teaching. For instance, when teaching a new lesson, teachers can introduce relevant cultural background information from outside the textbook [5], helping students enhance their understanding and respect for cultural differences while learning the language. Teachers can also design culture-themed teaching activities, such as cultural displays, role-playing, and cultural comparison discussions, allowing students to learn cultural knowledge and improve cultural awareness through participation and experience. When addressing explicit cultural knowledge in texts, teachers bear the dual responsibility of transmission and deepening. They need to comprehensively introduce and thoroughly explain these cultural phenomena, not only elaborating on their historical evolution and stories passed down through generations but also revealing the social background and profound historical roots behind them. This process aims to construct a multidimensional cultural cognitive framework for students. For implicit cultural knowledge in texts, teachers should possess keen cultural insight, enabling them to perceive and explore the deeper meanings of cultural elements. Through carefully designed classroom teaching activities, teachers guide students to explore implicit cultural elements in the text, using teaching strategies such as discussion, debate, comparison, analysis, and synthesis to cultivate students' ability to make comprehensive and objective evaluations of cultural phenomena [6].

Second, teachers need to combine extracurricular reading to create authentic cultural situations for students [7]. In senior high school English teaching, the practice of extensive reading goes far beyond merely increasing language input. It serves as a bridge connecting students with in-depth thinking about the unit theme content, leading them toward a deep understanding and exploration of thematic meaning. This process should revolve around the two core concepts of "holisticity" and "depth". Reading materials should not only be closely related to the teaching theme but also be able to deeply explore the theme, while simultaneously taking into account students' age characteristics, life experiences, and reading preferences. When conducting in-depth discussions of extensive reading texts, teachers should have the ability to screen content, selecting parts that directly address the core of the theme. This could be a

subtle point within the text, a thematic thread running through the entire text, or a profound insight extracted from the overall content. Teachers can design a series of thought-provoking questions [8], providing students with ample space for exploration and guiding them to independently engage in learning and research. For example, when teaching the Reading section of Unit 3 in the compulsory third book of the People's Education Press senior high school English series, teachers can supplement other parts of the script of The Million Pound Note to allow students to further study its connotations.

Third, teachers need to establish a lifelong learning awareness, continuously learning cultural knowledge and improving teaching methods. Teachers should embrace the concept of lifelong learning, which means they need to continuously learn new cultural knowledge and improve their teaching methods according to the latest developments in the education field. By participating in professional development seminars, workshops, and courses, teachers can update and expand their cultural knowledge base, while adopting an interdisciplinary learning approach that integrates cultural learning into the teaching of different subjects, providing students with a comprehensive perspective on cultural learning. Teachers also need to explore and implement innovative teaching methods, such as project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and experiential learning, to enhance students' interest in and understanding of cultural knowledge. The integration of educational technology, reflective practice, collaboration with community members and experts, and encouraging students' autonomous learning are all indispensable parts of teachers' lifelong learning journey. Teachers should continuously improve their own cultural literacy [9] and set an example of lifelong learning for students, thereby more effectively cultivating students' cultural awareness in senior high school English teaching.

Fourth, teachers need to implement diverse teaching evaluations [10] and conduct timely teaching reflection and adjustment. In the teaching practice of English cultural awareness, teachers need to implement a diversified, dynamic, and comprehensive evaluation mechanism based on teaching objectives and students' developmental characteristics. Such

evaluation can not only provide immediate feedback on teaching effectiveness but also serve as a basis for adjusting teaching strategies to improve teaching outcomes. Teachers should take the principle of “integrating teaching, learning, and evaluation” as a guiding principle to construct an evaluation system covering the entire cycle of English cultural awareness teaching. Unit 5, “Working the Land,” in the selective compulsory first book of the People's Education Press senior high school English series focuses on Chinese agricultural culture. Students can not only learn knowledge related to farming but also appreciate the wonders of life and the hardships of farmers' labor, thereby cultivating good habits of cherishing food and deepening their respect for farmers. After the completion of teaching activities, teachers should carry out multi-subject, multi-method, and multi-dimensional teaching evaluation. The evaluation subjects should cover teacher evaluation, peer evaluation, and self-evaluation to ensure comprehensiveness. The evaluation methods should combine written and oral evaluation to suit the needs of different students. The evaluation dimensions should broadly cover various aspects such as language knowledge, language skills, emotional attitudes, and cultural awareness.

Through this comprehensive teaching evaluation, teachers can gain a deep understanding of students' learning situations, discover and address deficiencies in teaching, and promptly optimize teaching methods. At the same time, students can also recognize their own shortcomings and the strengths of others through the evaluation process, develop the habit of self-reflection and mutual learning, learn to draw on others' strengths to compensate for their own weaknesses, continuously improve themselves, and lay a solid foundation for their lifelong learning and the cultivation of cultural awareness.

Fifth, teachers can compare Chinese and foreign cultural differences and conduct in-depth exploration. The cultivation of cultural awareness is a complex and profound process. It typically results in the formation of new cultural concepts after an individual experiences cultural comparison, conflict, reflection, and cognitive reconstruction. Through the comparison of Chinese and foreign cultures, students can gain a deeper understanding and experience of how language, culture, and thinking achieve organic

integration and unity in specific contexts [11]. This comparison not only helps students reveal the historical origins and essence behind different cultural phenomena but also serves as an effective way to promote the development of higher-order thinking. It can deepen the exploration and understanding of the core of an issue, aligning with the goals of core competency cultivation in quality education.

Chinese, as a high-context language, reflects the subtlety and profundity of Chinese culture through its characteristic of “loose form but focused spirit.” In cultural customs, traditional festivals, and artistic expressions, metaphorical rhetorical devices are widely used, particularly in classical Chinese poetry, where this technique is especially prominent. Meanwhile, English, as a low-context language, has a more direct and explicit way of expression, but this does not mean it does not use metaphor. In fact, English poetry also contains rich metaphorical meanings and symbolism. For example, the Reading section of Unit 4, “Exploring poetry,” in the selective compulsory first book involves how to appreciate foreign poetry. Here, teachers can guide students to compare this with Chinese poetry and set related assignments. By consulting relevant books and browsing related websites, students can compare the use of metaphor in English poetry with the techniques of metaphor in Chinese poetry, thereby promoting in-depth exploration, seeking commonalities and differences, and finally drawing conclusions and forming reports.

### **4.3 Student Aspects**

First, students should actively expand their cultural knowledge reserve. Students can read culture-related books and choose English books related to culture, such as classic literary works, history books, and cultural studies materials, to improve their cultural understanding. Students can also actively participate in cultural courses and lectures offered by the school and use multimedia resources such as films, documentaries, podcasts, and online courses to explore and learn about cultural diversity. In addition, students can enhance their cultural awareness through observation and experience in daily life. For example, when traveling, students can pay attention to local architectural styles, cultural cuisines, and social customs, all of which are vivid teaching materials for cultural awareness education. Through these

experiences, students can not only learn cultural knowledge but also feel the charm of culture, thereby gradually forming an awareness and respect for cultural diversity.

Second, students need to increase their interest in cultural awareness. Students can cultivate their cultural awareness by participating in activities with authentic cultural situations. Through engaging activities, students can naturally develop an interest in culture, thereby participating more actively in the learning and practice of cultural awareness. Outside school, students can participate in cultural festivals, exhibitions, and cultural experience workshops organized by community organizations to experience different cultural practices firsthand. Inside school, students can participate in or establish clubs and associations that focus on cultural issues, discussing and learning cultural knowledge together with like-minded peers.

Third, students should actively participate in cultural discussions and projects. Students should actively take part in cultural discussions and projects both inside and outside the classroom, which helps improve their cultural awareness and critical thinking skills. In English class, students should actively participate in culture-related discussions, ask questions, share opinions, and communicate with classmates and teachers. Outside the classroom, students can participate in or initiate culture-related research projects, such as comparing living habits and festival celebrations across different cultural backgrounds. Students can also organize or participate in cultural presentation activities, showcasing their research and understanding of specific cultures to classmates and teachers.

## 5. Conclusion

Cultural awareness is not only an important component of core competencies in the English discipline but also an essential quality for students in the context of globalization. The cultivation of cultural awareness in senior high school English teaching is a comprehensive and far-reaching educational task that requires the joint efforts and participation of schools, teachers, and students. Schools need to build a diversified cultural learning environment, providing rich cultural resources and activities to support the teaching of cultural awareness. Teachers should continuously update their cultural knowledge, adopt innovative teaching methods, and guide students to deeply

understand and experience culture. Students should actively expand their cultural horizons, actively participate in cultural learning and practice, and enhance their personal cultural awareness. Through the implementation of these measures, students' cultural awareness will be effectively improved, helping them establish a sense of national identity, cultural confidence, and form positive cultural behavioral orientations.

## References

- [1] Nie Xinlin, Li Meng. Integrating Cultural Awareness Cultivation into High School English Reading Teaching Practice. *Foreign Language Teaching in Schools (Secondary Edition)*, 2025, 48(1): 60-65.
- [2] Zhang Cewen. The Core Competence of English Subject: Cultural Awareness: Essential Connotation and Practical Path. *Basic Education Curriculum*, 2019, (Z1): 49-53.
- [3] Hao Junyong. The Connotation, Value and Implementation Path of English Cultural Awareness Teaching. *Curriculum, Teaching Material and Method*, 2023, (6): 119-124.
- [4] Yuan Yonghua. Analysis of the Predicament and Development Path of Cultural Awareness Cultivation in High School English Teaching. *Examination Weekly*, 2021, (A1): 112-114.
- [5] Wu Xi. Cultivation Practice of Cultural Awareness and Intercultural Competence in High School English Subject: Taking Textbooks as the Starting Point. *English Teaching and Research in Primary and Secondary Schools*, 2020, (8): 20-24, 41.
- [6] Wang Hui, Cao Zongqing. Practical Exploration of High School English Culture Teaching. *Foreign Language Teaching in Schools (Secondary Edition)*, 2024, 47(2): 34-37.
- [7] Wang Yanpeng. Exploration of High School English Teaching Strategies Integrating Cultural Awareness Cultivation. *English Learning*, 2026, (2): 75-80.
- [8] Chang Zhiyong. Exploration of the Path of Integrating Traditional Chinese Culture into College English Translation Teaching from a Cross-Cultural Perspective. *Modern English*, 2025, (20): 118-120.
- [9] Wang Lei. From Acquiring Cultural Knowledge to Cultivating Cultural Awareness: A Discussion on Reading

- Teaching Strategies for Chinese Cultural Thematic Texts. *Data of Culture and Education*, 2026, (2): 145-148.
- [10] Song Chao. Research on High School English Teaching Practice Oriented Towards Cultural Awareness Cultivation: Taking Jiangsu Regional Culture as an Example. *Teaching Reference of Middle School*, 2026, (3): 81-84.
- [11] Wang Wenquan. The Application of Chinese Poetry Translation in High School English Teaching from the Perspective of Intertextuality. *English Teaching and Research in Primary and Secondary Schools*, 2022, (7): 29-32.