



A Comparative Study of National Identity Education in High School English Textbooks Based on the Corpus

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Abstract

The "National English Curriculum Standards for Ordinary High Schools" (2020) explicitly states that the cultivation of cultural awareness is a key aspect of the core literacy of the English subject. As a compulsory course in middle schools, it is of significant research importance to explore how to integrate excellent Chinese traditional culture into English teaching to enhance students' national cultural identity and promote Chinese culture to the world. This study selects the 2003 and 2017 editions of the Jiangsu Education Edition high school English textbooks as the main research objects and conducts a comparative analysis from three major aspects: the content, setting, and educational function of Chinese culture. The study aims to address the following three questions: First, what are the differences in national identity cultural content between the two editions of textbooks? Second, what are the differences in the presentation characteristics of national identity culture between the two editions? Third, what are the differences in the educational functions of national identity culture between the two editions?

Through comparative analysis, we found that the cultural content ratio in the 2017 edition has increased compared to the 2003 edition. Additionally, the types of culture covered are more comprehensive, extending beyond material culture to include more aspects of spiritual culture. This better meets the requirements of the new curriculum standards for the types of cultural training for students and helps to bridge the psychological distance between students and textbooks, thereby fostering cultural identity from a psychological perspective. In terms of the time span, the 2017 edition includes not only excellent traditional Chinese culture but also contemporary culture, such as volleyball and music. This represents a significant advancement in the cultural span, allowing students to realize that Chinese culture is a continuously evolving culture, encompassing both outstanding traditional culture and equally splendid modern culture.

Keywords: English Textbooks; Chinese Culture; National Identity; Teaching Strategies

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

National identity education is an essential and urgent educational goal in the new era. First, with the advancement of national education system reforms, changes in student evaluation mechanisms, and increased demands for talent cultivation, primary and secondary education schools have entered a deep transformation period. This poses new challenges and requirements for the national identity education model for middle school students. Secondly, in the current network era, emerging technologies, educational models, and changes in students' learning habits have significantly impacted the content, methods, and scope of student learning, affecting the environment for national identity education for middle school students. Most importantly, with the continuous enhancement of comprehensive national strength, there is a strong desire to build a culturally strong nation and promote excellent traditional Chinese culture to the world.

The key is to instill and cultivate a love for and promote Chinese traditional culture among young people. The fundamental approach to achieving this goal is to integrate national identity education into curriculum teaching. As a universal language, English plays a more important role in international communication. However, for Chinese learners, although we have mastered English learning methods and achieved some good results, we are not very good at linking English language learning with excellent traditional Chinese culture.

1.2. Research Significance

This study aims to review and summarize previous research achievements in related fields to enrich the theoretical research on cultural awareness cultivation in foreign language teaching, improve the current situation of integrating traditional Chinese culture into high school English teaching, and provide new directions and strategies for high school English teaching. Through this research, we hope to deepen the significance of English textbooks. English textbooks are not only for teaching English learning methods and Western culture but also for promoting the dissemination of excellent traditional Chinese culture on this basis. Increasing the proportion of cultural identity content in textbooks can help us understand the current state of national identity education for high school students, clarify future development directions, and better evaluate its social significance through comparative studies with historical stages. It has practical and far-reaching significance for enhancing high school students' national identity, maintaining national unity, promoting national cohesion, and improving national cultural soft power.

2. Literature Review

Textbooks are the most direct source of knowledge, culture, and moral values for students, and the main tool for teachers in their educational role, underscoring their importance. Therefore, it is crucial to increase the proportion of national identity culture in English textbooks. Observing the research directions of textbooks in various countries, we find that the trend is increasingly focused on the proportion of national culture in textbooks. Many years ago, Western educators already linked moral teaching with subject teaching. The German scholar Hegel proposed that, firstly, the basic standpoint of moral education is guided by the "absolute spirit"; secondly, language teaching and subject teaching are rich in moral education content; thirdly, moral behavior habits are cultivated through training, transitioning from discipline to self-cultivation; and fourthly, art, religion, and philosophy are rich in moral education content. He actively promoted the integration of subject teaching with moral education.

Although research in this area started relatively late in China, as early as 1993, scholars discovered the lack of emphasis on national identity culture in Chinese textbooks, with its proportion being low. Subsequently, as more scholars recognized the importance of national culture in improving national quality, Chinese textbooks gradually improved, and the proportion of traditional national culture in English textbooks gradually increased. This improvement addressed a common issue among Chinese students: while they could proficiently master grammar rules and achieve satisfactory results in various English exams, they struggled to communicate fluently in real-life oral interactions, often

stuttering and failing to express themselves clearly.

3. Research Design

3.1. Research Questions

The new curriculum standards explicitly state that the development of students' core literacy in English subjects should emphasize the cultivation of cultural awareness, requiring students to absorb the essence of Chinese culture and inherit Chinese culture. Compared to multimedia and internet tools, textbooks are undoubtedly the most convenient way for students to learn English and the most important medium for teachers to implement the new curriculum standards. With the changes in the new curriculum standards, there are significant differences in content and layout between the 2003 and 2017 editions of textbooks. This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the similarities and differences in Chinese cultural content between the two editions of textbooks?
2. What are the similarities and differences in the presentation characteristics of Chinese culture between the two editions of textbooks?
3. What are the similarities and differences in the educational functions of Chinese culture between the two editions of textbooks?

By researching these questions, we can better understand the presentation methods, content coverage, and educational significance of Chinese culture in different editions of textbooks. This will help evaluate the quality and effectiveness of textbooks and guide the future compilation of textbooks and the handling of Chinese culture in teaching practice.

3.2. Research Process

During the data collection and analysis process, we set standards for collecting Chinese cultural data. In the statistics of the proportion of Chinese culture, any term related to China, such as "Chinese" or "China," was counted as Chinese cultural content. In the statistical analysis of the types of Chinese culture, based on the previous statistics of the proportion of Chinese culture in the two textbooks and Niu Xincheng's cultural classification theory, we categorized the Chinese cultural content in the two textbooks. Additionally, we analyzed the presentation methods of Chinese culture, including text, tables, images, and text + video. We also statistically analyzed the era of Chinese culture, dividing it into two stages: before and after 1840. The period before 1840 is considered traditional culture, while the period after 1840 is mainly considered contemporary culture. If contemporary culture has obvious revolutionary cultural characteristics, it is classified as revolutionary culture.

This study conducts an in-depth investigation and analysis of Chinese culture in the two editions of high school English textbooks through literature review and comparative analysis methods. By collecting and analyzing data, we will explore the differences in the presentation of Chinese culture in the two editions of textbooks and propose corresponding suggestions and improvement measures based on this.

4. Comparative Analysis of Chinese Culture in the Two Editions of Textbooks

Based on the requirements for Chinese cultural content in the new curriculum standards, we analyze and compare the characteristics of Chinese culture in different editions of high

school English textbooks in China. By statistically analyzing the reading and extended reading sections of the five volumes of the 2007 and 2019 editions of the Jiangsu Education

Edition high school English textbooks, the specific results are as follows:

Table 1: 2003 Jiangsu Edition High School English Textbooks

Volume	Unit	Theme	Chinese Culture Content Section	Chinese Culture Content
Compulsory 1	Unit1	Unexplained Stories	Extended Reading	Shengnongjia
Compulsory 2	Unit2	Wish You Were Here	Extended Reading	Shangri-La
Compulsory 2	Unit3	Amazing People	Extended Reading	Yang Liwei
Compulsory 3	Unit2	The Development of Chinese Characters	Extended Reading	Chinese Characters
Compulsory 4	Unit3	Greek Statue Found in Xinjiang	Extended Reading	A Small Statue Found in Xinjiang
Compulsory 5	Unit2	Environment	Extended Reading	Yangtze River

Table 2: 2017 Jiangsu Edition High School English Textbooks

Volume	Unit	Theme	Chinese Culture Content Section	Chinese Culture Content
Compulsory 1	Unit2	Exercise and Health	Extended Reading	Tai Chi
Compulsory 3	Unit3	Festivals and Clothing	Extended Reading	New Year's Eve
Compulsory 3	Unit4	Scientists Who Changed the World	Extended Reading	Tu Youyou
Selective Elective 1	Unit2	Food Issues	Reading	Chinese Food
Selective Elective 1	Unit2	Universal Language	Reading	Chinese Music
Selective Elective 1	Unit3	Art of Painting	Extended Reading	Qingming Scroll
Selective Elective 1	Unit4	Exploring Poetry	Extended Reading	Li Bai and His Romantic Poems
Selective Elective 2	Unit2	Sports Culture	Extended Reading	Chinese Volleyball

From the above table, we can see the comparison between the 2003 and 2017 editions. Compared to the 2003 edition, the proportion of cultural content in the 2017 edition has increased. Moreover, the types of culture covered are more comprehensive, extending beyond material culture to include spiritual culture. This better meets the requirements of the new curriculum standards for the types of cultural training for students and Helps Bridge the psychological distance between students and textbooks, thereby fostering cultural identity from a psychological perspective. In terms of the time span, the 2017 edition includes not only excellent traditional Chinese culture but also contemporary culture, such as volleyball and music. This represents a significant advancement in the cultural span, allowing students to realize that Chinese culture is a continuously evolving culture, encompassing both outstanding traditional culture and equally splendid modern culture.

5. Conclusion and enlightenment

5.1. The Chinese Cultural Content of the 2017 Edition of the Jiangsu Edition Textbook is More Comprehensive

From the overall situation of the Chinese cultural content in the two editions of textbooks, both editions involve a certain amount of Chinese cultural content, avoiding the absence of mother tongue culture in the textbooks. However, the scope of cultural content in the 2003 edition is somewhat limited, mainly focusing on Chinese celebrities and landmarks, primarily introducing material culture, with little involvement in spiritual culture. The goal was mainly for students to master the content, which could not meet the requirements of cultivating students' cultural thinking and identity. The 2017 edition covers a broader range and has increased importance, with more content placed in the main reading section rather than extended reading. The content includes not only material culture but also spiritual culture, such as introducing the scientist Tu Youyou to enhance students' patriotism and dedication spirit, and introducing Li Bai to enhance students' appreciation of traditional Chinese poetry culture. This is more conducive to cultivating students' national cultural identity, in line with the new curriculum

standards. However, it is regrettable that both editions lack content on Chinese revolutionary culture, which is a treasure of our country's history, such as the Anti-Japanese War and revolutionary leaders. Learning about these revolutionary cultures helps inspire students' patriotism and form correct cultural values.

5.2. The Educational Function of the 2017 Edition Textbook is More Prominent

With the changes in the new curriculum standards, the goal of English teaching is no longer limited to mastering a certain amount of English cultural knowledge. We need to cultivate students' national cultural identity through English teaching. Increasing the proportion of traditional culture in English textbooks is beneficial for improving students' cultural literacy and even political awareness. Chinese culture is extensive and profound, and we should fully utilize English teaching to teach traditional culture. By comparing and analyzing the differences between cultures, students can discover the excellence of Chinese culture, which plays a significant role in their development in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor aspects. The 2017 edition of textbooks involves more Chinese culture related to moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education than the 2003 edition. The 2017 edition has more explicitly targeted educational functions, which can improve students' moral qualities and cultural literacy, making them individuals with well-rounded personality development, strong social responsibility, and cross-cultural communication abilities. Meanwhile, students can also promote Chinese culture to the world in the future.

5.3. Implications for Teaching Strategies

The increase in the proportion of national identity culture requires teachers to adjust their teaching strategies in a timely manner, no longer preparing lessons according to past standards. In English teaching, we cannot ignore an important issue, which is to cultivate students' national cultural identity. English teachers have a responsibility to enhance students' national cultural identity in their teaching, helping them

better understand and respect different cultures.

First, we need to clarify that national cultural identity is not only about loving and respecting the mother culture but also having a thorough understanding of one's own culture. Therefore, in English teaching, teachers should emphasize discussions about Chinese culture with students, helping them understand the characteristics and advantages of their own culture. Meanwhile, teachers should also help students recognize the differences and commonalities between different cultures, broadening their horizons and enhancing cross-cultural awareness.

Secondly, teachers should create a multicultural atmosphere in the classroom. For example, students can appreciate, perform, or share songs, traditional stories, and artworks in their mother tongue, deepening their understanding and appreciation of their own culture. Additionally, guiding students to watch or appreciate original English movies or TV programs can help them understand and experience different cultural expressions, thereby enhancing their cross-cultural awareness and understanding. Given the limited classroom time, teachers can extend to extracurricular activities, encouraging, supporting, and guiding students to engage in a variety of extracurricular activities. This allows students to explore and discover national identity culture through self-exploration and group discussions, deepening their understanding of traditional culture and enhancing their teamwork and practical skills.

Furthermore, teachers themselves must continually learn and enhance their cross-cultural awareness and literacy. Teachers should adopt a tolerant and respectful attitude towards different cultures and guide students to understand and appreciate various cultural backgrounds and values. Most English teachers have a certain sensitivity to national identity culture; they understand the requirements of the new curriculum standards and are aware of the traditional culture included in the textbooks. However, their deep understanding of the culture is often insufficient. For some material culture, teachers may only have partial knowledge, making it difficult to provide students with comprehensive and detailed explanations from origin to evolution to development, leaving students with a partial understanding. The deficiency in spiritual culture is more evident, as teachers find it challenging to accurately and thoroughly express the qualities intended to be cultivated in students by the textbooks in English. The author suggests that teachers can broaden their knowledge by reading more books and materials to deepen their understanding of traditional culture. Additionally, they can observe and learn from excellent teachers' public lessons to learn how to skillfully express Chinese culture in English, thereby improving their ability to convey traditional culture. Teachers should also engage in secondary development of textbooks, creating school-based courses tailored to the teaching environment and students' characteristics, presenting knowledge in a more vivid form to overcome the drawbacks of students' lack of interest or difficulty in understanding due to textual and pictorial presentations. Lastly, schools can incorporate traditional culture learning into the evaluation criteria for teachers and students. A reasonable evaluation mechanism can promote active learning of traditional culture by teachers and students, ensuring that the cultural content the textbooks aim to convey is maximally understood and absorbed by students.

In summary, enhancing students' national cultural identity in English teaching is very important. This not only helps

students better understand and respect different cultures but also aids them in becoming citizens with global awareness and cross-cultural abilities. As English teachers, we should actively explore and practice effective teaching methods during the teaching process to help students enhance their national cultural identity in the process of learning English.

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