

# English Reading Teaching in Senior High School based on the Cultivation of Cultural Awareness

## -- A Case Study of "A Child of Two Cuisines"

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### Abstract

The New Curriculum Standards regarded the cultivation of students' cultural awareness as one of the important teaching objectives. And in this globalized world, trades and exchanges between countries are increasingly common, so it is necessary to understand western cultures, which is the basis of cross-cultural communication ability. Language is the carrier of culture, and culture is the support of language, thus teachers should strength students' cultural awareness through English reading teaching. This paper just takes a reading passage in "understanding ideas" part of unit 1 in NSE Book 1 for grade nine as an example, which aims to illustrate the practical teaching for developing students' cultural awareness.

### Keywords

English Reading Teaching; Cultural Awareness; A Case Study.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Research Background

The English Curriculum Standards for Senior High School (2017 Edition, 2020 Revised) stated that cultural awareness reflects the value orientation of the key competences of English subject, and it refers to the understanding of Chinese and foreign cultures, the identification of excellent cultures, and the cross-cultural cognition, attitude and behavior orientation of students under the background of globalization. The formation and development of cultural awareness depend on the teaching of cultural knowledge in class which means students not only need to learn and accumulate the knowledge of Chinese and foreign cultures, but also need to understand their spiritual connotation, compare cultural differences and further internalize excellent culture into personal awareness and behaviors, which is a process that is internalized in the mind and externalized in the practice (Yang Mingjie, 2023). The reading materials involving affluent cultural elements in students' books are the most important and critical medium for teachers to cultivate students' cultural awareness, thus reading teaching has a pivotal part to play in developing students' cultural awareness.

### 1.2. Research Significance

It is helpful to strengthen students' cultural confidence. It mainly refers to people's identification to Chinese culture, which is the necessary quality of a citizen. In today's English textbooks, there are so many contents about Chinese cultures, especially in reading parts. So in the process of teaching reading, teachers can help students have a more comprehensive and deeper understanding of Chinese cultures, so that they can build up their strong cultural confidence of it.

It is propitious for students to form the multicultural awareness. In the globalized world, trades and exchanges between countries is increasingly frequent. As the important power of China's

development in the future, students should have the ability to understand some different cultural phenomena, attitudes and values in different countries in order to have the competence of intercultural communication and cooperation to better meet the needs of globalization.

It is conducive to the implementation of the new curriculum reform. The new curriculum standards clearly put forward that cultivating students' cultural awareness should be taken as an important teaching objective of English subject, and emphasize that teachers should be aware of the relationship between cultural awareness and students' key competences, and explore effective English teaching methods from different perspectives. So this is in line with the new requirements of the new curriculum reform.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Definition

According to the new curriculum standards, cultural awareness refers to the understanding of Chinese and foreign cultures and the identification of excellent culture, and it is students' cross-cultural cognition, attitude and behavioral orientation in the context of globalization (Ministry of Education, 2017). Besides, Chen&Yan (2020) stated that cultural awareness refers not only to the ability to understand some cultural phenomena, attitudes, and values, but also the cultural stance, cultural identity, and cultural identification ability formed through interpreting, comparing, analyzing, and evaluating the cultural traditions and social-cultural phenomena reflected in the discourse.

Besides, Chen Wencun (2020) claimed that this kind of cultural awareness--the awareness of cultural diversity, tolerance of cultural differences, understanding of members of other cultures and their behaviors, as well as perception and reflection of Chinese cultural values and behaviors--can help learners to actively learn and understand cultural knowledge, and flexibly apply it in the process of cross-cultural communication, which is not limited to the target language culture.

### 2.2. Study at Home and Abroad

#### 2.2.1. Study at Home

Many scholars have researched the strategies of developing students' cultural awareness in reading class. Wang Liangliang (2023) came up with some teaching strategies from the perspective of teachers, such as renewing teachers' traditional ideas, deeply studying the contents of discourses to excavate the cultural elements, paying attention to the introduction of background knowledge and constructing cultural learning context, and guiding students to read after class. Li&Qi (2023) concluded that improving students' cultural awareness is not only the need of society, but also the necessity of respecting other cultures and promoting friendly exchanges. Zou Xinwei (2022) thought that teachers should cultivate students' cultural awareness in English reading by enriching the teaching organization mode, introducing diversified material resources and organizing practical activities, which is also an important way to improve the quality of students' English reading learning.

#### 2.2.2. Study Abroad

Although few foreign researchers have studied the ways of developing students' cultural awareness, they still attached importance to the study of cultural awareness. Drame Imbi (2021) studied the association between students' emotional intelligence, cultural competency, and cultural awareness, and concluded that previous exposure to cultural competency training impacts cultural competence scores most significantly. Álvaro Pérez García (2021) stated that Competence in "Cultural awareness and expressions" requires very stimulating activities for its development, and cinema can be used as an interesting enhancer of educational action. Simone

Howells (2016) found that clinical placement may positively influence cultural awareness development and students' own cultural backgrounds may influence this more.

### **3. A Case Study**

#### **3.1. The Analysis of the Textbook**

According to the English textbook (NES Book2), it is for grade nine and is published by the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press in 2019. And the case analyzed is selected from the second part in Unit 1 where the topic is about food for thought. The topic of this passage going to analyze is a child of two cuisines, which means that a child has enjoyed food from both of two countries because his father is British and his mother is from China. The whole unit is divided into six parts, namely starting out, understanding ideas, using language, listening and speaking, developing ideas and presenting ideas, and the reading passage researched is in the part of understanding ideas. After studying the part, students should be able to strengthen their own national pride and build up their awareness of cross-cultural communication.

#### **3.2. The Practice of Developing Students' Cultural Awareness**

##### **3.2.1. Lead-in for Background Knowledge to Create the Context of Cultural Learning**

Firstly, the teacher will play a video about some delicious food and some comments on them from different people. Before playing, the teacher will ask students to pay attention to two questions when they are watching, namely what different types of food are introduced in the video and what comments are made on each food in the video. Then, students begin to watch the video. After that, some students will answer the two questions. Then, the teacher will show some pictures about some special food from China and western, and the students need to differentiate that which belongs to Chinese food or western food.

With this kind of lead-in, not only students will understand what they will learn in this class, but also their enthusiasm and background knowledge about Chinese and western food is aroused, which can lay a good foundation for the following study.

##### **3.2.2. Absorb Cultural Knowledge by Reading the Text Carefully**

Before students reading the text, the teacher guides students to guess the main idea of this passage according to the title. The teacher will provide some sentences about the topic for students to choose so that students can understand the title more easily. And then students will read the text carefully to find the supporting details about the three characters'--the son, the mother from China and the father from America--opinions of different food.

By this way, students can understand that different people will have different tastes and Chinese people will enjoy western food and westerners will also like Chinese food, which can help students strengthen their cultural identification and prepare for the following deep understanding.

##### **3.2.3. Compare Chinese and Western Culture to Sublimate the Theme**

In order to strengthen students' feelings about differences between China and western countries, the teacher will design three activities. Firstly, the teacher will encourage students to understand the sentence--one man's meat is another man's poison--in the text after finding the family members' different opinions of different food and then ask students that do you know other similar sayings in Chinese, which can help students understand the differences between Chinese and western language. Secondly, students need to brainstorm the differences between China and Western food according to their own experience. And then, they will compare Chinese and Western culture related to food, such as the sitting pattern, dining tools cooking ways and food differences.

After the three activities in post-reading, students can have a deeper understanding of differences on food from two different cultures and learn to respect other countries' culture.

### 3.2.4. Guide Students Extracurricular Reading to Strengthen the Cultural Awareness

After learning this passage, the teacher can recommend some extracurricular reading resources based on the learning theme in this unit in a bid to deepen students' understanding of the cultural knowledge of this unit.

English discourse is a unique product of different social backgrounds and communication contexts and the content of a discourse reflects social culture and concepts, and serves as the basis for students to understand relevant cultural information and accumulate subject knowledge (Wang Liangliang, 2023). Although there are two reading articles in each unit of English teaching materials, it is far enough for high school students. Therefore, teachers should guide students to actively participate in extracurricular reading activities, and expand their English knowledge through extracurricular reading, which is helpful to realize the dual promotion of knowledge accumulation and cultural awareness.

## 4. Conclusion

The cultivation of cultural awareness is a subtle process. So in the class teachers should not just impart simple cultural knowledge or cultural phenomena to students, but stimulate their drive and gradually internalize their cultural intuition and cultural awareness through various activities deliberately designed, so as to help students build up cultural confidence, and form correct outlook on life, values and world outlook, and thus achieve the goal of fostering integrity and promoting rounded development of people. English teaching of reading is the effective and efficient way to cultivate students' cultural awareness in high school English reading teaching. Thus, teachers should lay emphasis on the importance of cultural awareness and try to help students comprehend the world's multi-culture including English culture on the basis of English as a universal language, understand the world from the perspective of the diversity of language representation, and deepen the understanding of Chinese culture, so that students can form the harmony but different cultural awareness and cultural ability through reading teaching.

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