

The Integration of Traditional Chinese Culture into the English Grammar Course in Regular Higher Education: A Practical Case Study

Shuai Song^{1, a}

¹Xianda College of Economics and Humanities, Shanghai International Studies University,
Shanghai 200083, China

^a2011024@xdsisu.edu.cn

Abstract

In the interconnected global society today, the significance of integrating traditional Chinese culture into English grammar education cannot be overstated, but it is often ignored in the practical teaching and theoretical research. Hence, this study aims to explore this integration in regular higher education to promote ideological and political education and their intercultural competence. Research questions include how traditional Chinese culture is practically integrated into the English grammar course in regular higher education and whether this integration is effectively achieved as well as what suggestions can be proposed for the future English grammar course and research. Considering this, a practical case study in the context of Xianda College of Economics and Humanities, Shanghai International Studies University in China is employed to address these questions. Twenty-nine first-year English majors, both females and males, voluntarily participate as research subjects. The specific research methods mainly involve a two-round questionnaire survey and a one-round interview. One of the conclusion is that traditional Chinese culture can be practically integrated into the English grammar course in regular education by the the strategy of “4-R”, namely “Revise Teaching Goals and Objectives, Refine Teaching Content, Revitalize Teaching Methods and Reform Teaching Evaluation”. This study focuses on adopting Chinese ancient poetry, Chinese opera, Chinese architecture, and Chinese festival customs as the main materials for traditional Chinese culture related to grammar points in this course. Moreover, based on the participants’ feedback from the second-round questionnaire survey and one-round interview, it is effectively carried out and attains the quality goals in the overall teaching syllabus to a large extent. Another conclusion is that some suggestions from students and the teacher are provided for the future English grammar course and relevant research.

Keywords

English Grammar Course, Ideological and Political Education, Intercultural Competence, Regular Higher Education, Traditional Chinese Culture.

1. Introduction

With the booming development of globalization, it is evident that there has been an increasingly close relationship between countries, highlighting the growing prominence of English as a lingua franca, so English education has aroused widespread attention and exploration all over the world. One traditional course of English education lies in the English grammar course. Traditionally, this course has concentrated heavily on the grammar aspects of the language and frequently overlooks cultural integration. However, language and culture are not as “two layers of skins” remotely separately, but within “one layer of skin” intimately intertwined, so it is

essential that cultural elements should be incorporated into the grammar course, which can greatly not only nurture learners' awareness of cultural knowledge but also facilitate their ability of cross-cultural competence, apart from enhancing their grammar knowledge and ability.

It is also noteworthy that the culture from native language should not be ignored in the English grammar course. However, in the practical classroom, traditional Chinese culture is often neglected in this course. In the Chinese context, it cannot be denied that traditional Chinese culture plays a vital role in the English education since traditional Chinese culture has its unique charm and profound implications. Despite the widespread teaching of English, there has been limited studies of how traditional Chinese culture can be integrated into the English language course, particularly in the English grammar course from the practical and micro perspective, to advance learners' linguistic and cultural understanding. This research mainly aims to fill this gap by exploring the practical strategy to embed traditional Chinese culture into the English grammar course.

Specifically, this paper aims to explore the incorporation of traditional Chinese cultural elements into the English grammar course in a regular higher education context. The case study is employed in one regular higher education institution, namely Xianda College of Economics and Humanities, Shanghai International Studies University in China, thus facilitating students' ideological and political education and intercultural competence.

One aspect is that learning traditional Chinese culture enables learners to strengthen their confidence in national culture and deepen their understanding of ideological and political education within the context of English grammar course. Chinese traditional culture, as the cornerstone of cultural self-confidence, demonstrates a unique charm and is an important resource for us to enhance cultural self-confidence, whether in terms of content characteristics, contemporary value, or international influence [1]. Furthermore, "Ideological and Political Education in Curriculum" is a new educational philosophy that means all university courses have a dual function of imparting knowledge and skills as well as ideological and political education, which plays a role in shaping students' worldview, outlook on life, and values [2]. Therefore, integrating traditional Chinese culture into the English grammar course not only contributes to students' cultural self-confidence but also aligns with the broad educational goal of ideological and political education.

Another aspect is that learning traditional Chinese culture enables learners to enhance their intercultural competence, thus improving their capability to understand diverse cultural contexts. By integrating elements of Chinese culture into the English grammar course, students can develop a more nuanced perspective on how different cultures affect language use and communication styles. This approach can foster greater empathy and appreciation for cultural diversity, which is essential in today's globalized world. Hence, Li and Fu (2020) [3] suggest that college English teachers should take the opportunity of teaching Western language culture and make the comparison of cultural differences between China and Western countries.

2. Literature Review

Culture is often defined as a collection of behaviors and norms that individuals utilize to navigate and comprehend the world around them [4]. Culture, with its complex and profound charm, has been appealing to researchers. Many researchers have extensively studied and confirmed the close relationship between language and culture. For instance, Galisson (1991) [5] claims that language and culture are inherently connected, and artificial attempts to separate them are futile. Others such as Brøgger (1992) [6] and Roberts et al. (2001) [7] also agree that language and culture are deeply intertwined, with some even saying that culture is language and vice versa. Additionally, Brown (2007) [8] emphasizes the intricate relationship

between language and culture, stating that they cannot be separated without losing their essence.

Given the well-established relationship between culture and language, it can be reasonable to conclude that culture holds significance and should be integrated into language education [9]. Kramsch (2013) [10] also emphasizes that culture plays a crucial role in language teaching. However, culture is frequently ignored in some practical language teaching contexts. As Gonen and Saglam (2012) [11] state, across various classrooms worldwide, teachers continue to neglect the value of teaching culture alongside language learning. Hence, it is necessary to integrate culture into practical language courses instead of merely theoretical studies.

English serves as an international language, whose widespread use makes it a powerful tool for communication and furthers interaction across cultures, so English courses have been gaining the popularity in the world. Notably, one of them is the course of English grammar, whose role in English language teaching is undeniable. For instance, Canale and Swain (1980) [12] contend that grammar knowledge is a basic component of our competencies, facilitating effective and successful communication. Kumayas and Lengkoan (2023) [13] also highlight the great significance of grammar when learning English as a foreign language, but they express their concern about the grammar because it receives less attention and comes to be viewed as the least important skill compared with other language skills. Meanwhile, they consider grammar as a challenging skill on the whole. Hampp et al. (2021) [14] supplement that grammar problems are indeed one of the most complicated problems in learning English, which has been proven by studies on grammar problems in TOEFL test results. Hence, it is obvious that the course of grammar plays a vital role in English language teaching, but we should be aware that it deserves more attention to change its neglected situation and needs more effective teaching strategies to resolve its tough problems.

In the practical context of the English grammar course in regular higher education in China, one of tough problems lies in the lack of cultural elements into English grammar teaching, especially Chinese own culture. Though teaching English grammar should be concerned with targeted language (English) culture, original language (Chinese) culture, especially traditional Chinese culture, should not be ignored.

In the context of academia, there are relatively few studies on the integration of traditional Chinese culture into English language teaching, with a more focus on the theoretical or macro perspective. For example, faced with the issue of the absence of local culture in English teaching in China [15-18], Jin (2013) [15] explores the significance of Chinese culture in English teaching from the theoretical angle. Cui (2009) [19] also concentrates on the theoretical level, but he goes beyond merely emphasizing the significance of integrating Chinese culture into college English teaching. The measures that need to be taken and several issues that should be considered are discussed. Different from them, some researchers explore this topic from a practical level. For example, Lu (2024) [20] adopts a practical study on the integration of Chinese excellent culture into college English courses under the POA concept. Wang (2024) [21] is based on the perspective from CET-4 paragraph translation questions to investigate the integration of excellent traditional Chinese culture into college English teaching. However, they both delve into English courses from a macro perspective instead of focusing on a specific English course.

Zhao (2024) [17] chooses a specific English course, namely the English reading course, to conduct a practical exploration of how Chinese culture is incorporated and represented in English textbooks. Zhong and Ye (2024) [18] concentrates on English oral course to do relevant practical research while Jin (2024) [22] pays attention to the English audio-visual speaking course to cultivate cultural confidence based on POA theory. Nevertheless, they fail to explore the English grammar course from a practical angle.

There are fewer relevant studies on the incorporation of traditional Chinese culture into the English grammar course. Some implement practical research on integrating Chinese culture into high school English classroom teaching (e.g. [23-24]) whereas others explore how to integrate Chinese culture into the English teaching under the context of the vocational education (e.g. [25]). Compared with them, the practical cases of regular higher education are more rare. For instance, Wang (2018) [26] shifts her attention to the English major grammar teaching in regular higher education and carries out the corresponding research, but she merely introduces the grammar communicative activities rather than a holistic grammar course.

Based on the above analysis, there is a gap from the a practical case of the integration of traditional Chinese culture into the English grammar course, especially in regular higher education, so this paper aims to fill in this gap.

3. Case Study

In this section, the case study is explored in detail, including research design, course overview and practical implementation as follows:

3.1. Research Design

Research questions include how traditional Chinese culture is practically integrated into the English grammar course in regular higher education and whether this integration is effectively achieved as well as what suggestions can be made for the future English grammar course and research. In light of this, this research adopts a case analysis of Xianda College of Economics and Humanities, Shanghai International Studies University in China, aiming to enhance students' ideological and political education as well as their intercultural competence. As to the research subjects, they are the first-year English majors, comprising both females and males, volunteer as research subjects in one class, with 29 students involved. They have not learned the course of English grammar in the college before.

The specific research methods used mainly include a two-round questionnaire survey and a one-round interview. The first-round questionnaire survey in the beginning of this course is used to mainly gather data on students' grammar levels and their suggestions about the integration of traditional Chinese culture into the English grammar so that it can pave the way for the following practical incorporation. After the course ends, a follow-up questionnaire survey is conducted to receive students' feedback, thus evaluating the effectiveness of traditional Chinese culture integrated within this English grammar course. Meanwhile, the interview is utilized to have a profound exploration of students' perceptions on its practical effectiveness. Participants are voluntary to engage in both questionnaire survey and interview. This multifaceted research methods can not only push forward the practical teaching on how to incorporate traditional Chinese culture into the English grammar course from the perspective of the teacher, but also contribute to the effectiveness of its assessment from the perspective of the researcher.

As to the implementation path of integrating Chinese traditional culture into the English grammar course in this college, it adopts the the strategy of "4-R", namely "Revise Teaching Goals and Objectives, Refine Teaching Content, Revitalize Teaching Methods and Reform Teaching Evaluation", concentrating on using Chinese ancient poetry, Chinese opera, Chinese architecture, and Chinese festival customs as the main materials to explore traditional Chinese culture related to the English grammar points. These four aspects play a vital role in the traditional Chinese culture, since they are the remarkable representatives of traditional Chinese culture from different angles and they have shone their unique glamour from the ancient China to the present China. However, their functions should not be overstated and they

need be appropriately integrated into the English grammar course, since the essence of this course lies in the English grammar instead of traditional Chinese culture. Moreover, the proper comparison between Chinese and Western cultures is applied to to boost students' intercultural competence, thus enhancing their capability to understand diverse cultural backgrounds.

3.2. Course Overview

This course is called the English Grammar, which is a compulsory course for the first-year students majoring in English. It is designed to help students establish a solid foundation in English grammar and paves the way for the development of English professional skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation), thus taking a fundamental and significant position in the discipline. The course is primarily practical, with theoretical instruction presented in a concise manner, emphasizing language practice. At the same time, the teaching content takes into the national context of China consideration, specifically the habits and challenges faced by Chinese learners of English, with a focus on traditional grammar while appropriately introducing contemporary language research findings.

The teaching content of this course mainly involves morphology and syntax whilst appropriately increasing communicative functions. During the teaching process, it is emphasized that a combination of classroom lectures and discussions, extracurricular self-study and guidance, as well as theoretical learning and practical exercises to effectively handle the relationship between grammar knowledge and language use. Students can understand the relationship between grammar structures and vocabulary meanings, as well as the connection between grammar knowledge and discourse. The course advocates a multi-dimensional teaching approach that integrates classroom instruction, multimedia, and online resources, with a purpose to to simplify complex concepts, combine teaching and practice, highlight key points, and ensure that students follow the latest developments in the field while solidifying existing knowledge. This will nurture students' ability to identify and correct grammar errors, improve their self-monitoring skills in language use, and enhance the accuracy and coherence of their language application.

In teaching context, there is a focus on fostering students to observe and study grammar phenomena from a certain height, avoiding the erroneous tendency of "grammar determines everything" and helping students strengthen the awareness that language is continuously developing and changing. The application of grammar theories and rules is also subject to dynamic development and change. In addition, this course adopts online and offline blended teaching mode to fully combine the strengths of online and offline teaching, which can maximize the effectiveness of teaching English grammar.

Concerning the textbook, the English grammar coursebook by Zhang (2017) [27] is employed since it is a renowned and authoritative grammar textbook for English majors in China and this edition is the latest one. Notwithstanding, it concentrates on the grammar points and corresponding exercises and lacks the cultural elements, especially ones in traditional Chinese culture.

3.3. Practical Implementation

During this English grammar course, the following strategy of "4-R" was practically implemented for one semester of the 2022-2023 academic year, with a focus on using four aspects (Chinese ancient poetry, Chinese opera, Chinese architecture, and Chinese festival customs as the main materials for grammar points.

3.3.1. Revise Teaching Goals and Objectives

Teaching goals and objectives serve as a guiding beacon, steering the smooth conduct of instructional activities, so it is essential to set appropriate teaching goals and objectives. This course is based on OBE (Outcome-Based Education). It is an educational approach that is

premised on desired outcomes, namely based on educational policies and guidelines, combined with the specific development status of the school, the teachers' competence, and the characteristics of the students to clarify the learning objectives for students and successfully achieve those objectives through a dedicated learning process [28]. OBE emphasizes the ultimate teaching outcomes, specifically the learning achievements of students, from the students' perspective rather than the traditional teacher view. This approach can be more effective in enhancing students' learning outcomes and fostering their initiative.

Previously, the teaching goals and objectives of this course ignore the ideological and political ones, especially ones linked to traditional Chinese culture, so according to BOE, they have been added not only to the overall syllabus but also to the teaching objectives of individual lesson, which can allow for a coherent alignment between them, thereby better realizing the OBE philosophy and guiding the practical integration of traditional Chinese culture into this course. For instance, the quality goals in the overall teaching syllabus have been revised as follows:

- 1. Students will develop an interest in traditional Chinese culture and enhance their national cultural confidence.*
- 2. Students will enhance their intercultural competence, and improve their capability to understand diverse cultural contexts.*

The quality goals in the course mainly enable students to nurture an interest in traditional Chinese culture, thereby increasing national cultural confidence. Additionally, by comparing Chinese and Western cultures, it can help students realize the second goal above. These teaching goals are also student-centered, embodying the OBE philosophy.

Regarding the specific teaching objectives (student learning outcomes) for each lesson, take revised quality objectives in one lesson as an example:

- 1. Students will develop an interest in Chinese opera culture and enhance their national cultural confidence by watching Chinese opera videos and participating in relevant activities.*
- 2. Students will enhance their intercultural competence, and improve their capability to understand diverse cultural contexts of operas by comparing Chinese and Western operas.*

The teaching objectives in the above lesson are set, which not only complies with the quality goals above in the overall teaching syllabus, but also provides a guidance on how to incorporate Chinese opera from traditional Chinese culture into this course in one practical lesson.

3.3.2. Refine Teaching Content

As is mentioned in the above course overview, the textbook is shortage of the cultural elements, especially ones in traditional Chinese culture. Hence, elements of traditional Chinese culture need be properly added to the teaching content to realize the revised teaching objectives mentioned above. It means that representative traditional Chinese culture among Chinese ancient poetry, Chinese opera, Chinese architecture, and Chinese festival customs need be carefully selected as the main learning materials for the integration of traditional Chinese culture into the English grammar course. What needs to be noted is that this course is actually an English grammar course instead of the course of traditional Chinese culture, so these materials should be closely related to the English grammar points in this course.

In addition, the chosen materials should follow participants' capabilities from the student-centered perspective. Based on the first-round questionnaire survey (Its results can be found in the section of Findings and Discussion) and the teacher's observation in the beginning of this class, the participants' overall level of English grammar is average, so these materials should not be too challenging to cater to their capabilities. Furthermore, it is advisable that every topic from Chinese ancient poetry, Chinese opera, Chinese architecture, and Chinese festival customs should be familiar to these participants but they have not fully understood and mastered the

specific materials. In this way, participants can easily get into these topics and have the curiosity to delve into more information on traditional Chinese culture.

For example, when imparting the grammar point of Infinitive (to do) in non-finite verbs, the teacher selects the Chinese version of the representative poem “望岳 (Gazing at Mount Tai)” by the famous poet 杜甫 (Du Fu), and its English version by the prestigious translator 许渊冲 (Xu Yuanchong). This poem and his author 杜甫 (Du Fu) are household names to the majority of participants, but few of them know its English versions, especially the one by the renowned translator Xu Yuanchong (许渊冲). Additionally, both Chinese and English versions of this poem are relatively easy to understand. Apart from mastering this grammar point in this poem, participants can stimulate their interest in this poem and traditional Chinese ancient poetry, which is conducive to boosting their national cultural confidence. By comparing its Chinese version and English version, participants can gain deep insight into the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, thus helping them improve their intercultural competence, and enhance their capability to understand diverse cultural contexts of Chinese ancient poetry.

Teaching Adjective and Adverb from the materials of Chinese opera is also a good example. Peking opera is chosen as a typical example among Chinese opera and participants know this topic well, but most of them have not their sufficient knowledge repository. Therefore, one video on “What is Peking Opera” can help participants deepen their overall understanding of Peking Opera while the other video on the classic Peking Opera named “霸王别姬 (Farewell My Lady)” can facilitate their nuanced appreciation of Peking Opera. This renowned play has been performed by numerous masters, especially the widely-acclaimed 梅兰芳 (Mei Lanfang)”. Another material lies in Peking Opera Facial Masks where different characters with different colors and styles are presented, which are also related to the grammar point of Adjective and Adverb used for describing their appearances and personalities. All these materials enable students to cultivate their interest in Chinese opera culture and elevate their national cultural confidence. Meanwhile, according to the comparison between Chinese and Western operas, it is beneficial for students to strengthen their intercultural competence, and enhance their capability to understand diverse cultural contexts of operas.

Likewise, materials from Chinese architecture, and Chinese festival customs are meticulously chosen to refine the teaching content aligned with both the overall teaching goals and specific teaching objectives.

3.3.3. Revitalize Teaching Methods

Different from the traditional teacher-centered teaching methods, the teaching methods are innovated based on the teaching goals and objectives as well as teaching content to establish a student-centered classroom, mainly including “Heuristic Teaching Method” and “Online and Offline Blended Teaching Method” as well as “Group Cooperative Learning Method”, as are listed below:

1. Heuristic Teaching Method

The purpose of Heuristic Teaching Method is to arouse students’ active thinking and discovery, through which students can actively and positively acquire knowledge and skills, and develop their competence, according to Lei (2009) [29]. This method is widely adopted in this course. For instance, before teaching the grammar point of Tense and Voice, the teacher asks students to guess what Chinese festival it is based on several successive clues to elicit the coming Dragon Boat Festival. Then, students are encouraged to introduce this festival and its customs. Subsequently, after watching a video clip on this festival, the teacher guides students to answer what kinds of tenses and voices are used and explore the reasons behind them.

After learning this grammar point, some students are guided to introduce the customs of Dragon Boat Festival, including “Dragon Boat Racing”, “Eating Zongzi”, “Hanging Mugwort and

Calamus” and “Worshiping Qu Yuan” while the others students are encouraged as judges to find what tenses and voices are employed and judge whether they are right. After the judges’ decisions have been made, the teacher guides the whole students to think whether their decisions are justified. In this way, the teacher gradually guides students to master this grammar point. More importantly, students can stimulate their learning interest and improve their competence. The integration of Chinese festival customs into this course can also be effectively implemented.

2. Online and Offline Blended Teaching Method

As online teaching has developed rapidly in recent years, it breaks the limitation of time and place and students can learn more flexibly, compared with traditional offline teaching, but the initiative of students in the online learning process cannot be guaranteed, so the blended teaching combining online and offline can utilize the advantages of both and improve the teaching effect [30]. One typical example using this method is the teaching of Tense and Voice by introducing Chinese architecture, namely 四合院 (Siheyuan). After students master this grammar point, the text on Siheyuan is shared in the online platform Xuexitong where students are encouraged to read through the whole passage and find out what kinds of tenses and voices are utilized and think over their reasons. Then, in the next offline class, students are required to share their answers and understanding so that this method can combine the advantages from online and offline to maximize the learning outcome.

Another typical example is concerned with the grammar point of Infinitive (to do) in non-finite verbs. Students need translate the English version of “望岳 (Gazing at Mount Tai)” offline by themselves, and the translated results can be uploaded to the discussion area of the online platform, so that more students have the opportunity to display and learn from each other. In addition, this online function can save classroom time, and more importantly, help to build the student-centered classroom to enhance students’ learning interest and effect.

3. Group Cooperative Learning Method

Group cooperative learning represents a collective, open, and inclusive approach to education, which involves group members working towards shared objectives and utilizing common resources, guided and monitored by the teacher [31]. It views peers as a learning resource, coordinating efforts and making joint progress in the process of exploring and mastering knowledge. This method can be represented by teaching the grammar point of Adjective and Adverb in the context of the customs of Dragon Boat Festival. An interesting activity is designed to consolidate what students have learned about this knowledge point, which is mentioned in the above Heuristic Teaching Method. Since this activity is relatively challenging for students, Group Cooperative Learning Method is adopted to decrease its difficulties and strengthen peers’ learning. Specifically, some students are voluntarily divided into four groups responsible for introducing the customs of Dragon Boat Festival, including “Dragon Boat Racing”, “Eating Zongzi”, “Hanging Mugwort and Calamus” and “Worshiping Qu Yuan” respectively. The others students are voluntarily grouped into four as the corresponding judges to find what tenses and voices are employed and judge whether they are right.

In the grammar point of Infinitive (to do), this method is also used in the activity of translating “望岳 (Gazing at Mount Tai)” mentioned in the above Online and Offline Blended Teaching Method. Actually, it is very difficult for students to translate this poem individually, considering their general English levels. Hence, this method enables students to reduce the translation difficulties, increase student-student interaction, stimulate students’ motivation, and enhance their learning effect. It can also facilitate the integration of traditional Chinese culture into the English grammar points.

3.3.4. Reform Teaching Evaluation

Teaching evaluation has been a tough topic, especially in terms of quality objectives. Traditionally, it is usually based on the teacher's evaluation on quality objectives. However, student-centered classroom should also focus on students' evaluation, so it is necessary to reform the teacher-centered evaluation into student-centered evaluation so that it can be well grasped whether the students achieve the quality objectives in the teaching objectives. During the course, students are encouraged to voice their feelings voluntarily on the online platform Xuexitong to have student-reflective evaluation, thus examining whether the specific teaching objectives (student learning outcomes) for each lesson are realized. For instance, students voluntarily conclude their feelings about Peking Opera by adopting some adjectives on the online platform. Among 29 students, 28 students take an active part in this activity and all show their positive feelings with diverse adjectives. The most frequently used adjectives include "Traditional", "Chinese", "Beautiful", "Facial" and "Long" and most of students express their feelings in more than three lines.

For instance, participant A writes that *"Peking Opera is the quintessence of the Chinese nation. It has a variety of genres, beautiful singing, distinctive "corner" and outstanding facial makeup, and has been deeply loved by the audience. After watching this video, I have a better understanding of Chinese national Opera culture."* Apparently, this student has benefited a lot through the video. Participant B links Peking Opera to pop music today, and realizes that more emphasis should be put on the Peking Opera. It is also commendable that she relates her own experience to publicize Peking Opera. The following is her words: *"Peking Opera is a folk art with a long history and is one of the oldest traditional arts in China. Nowadays, many people like pop music and ignore Peking Opera. I think this is wrong because Peking Opera is the quintessence of our country. We should attach importance to it and carry it forward. When I was a child, I was impressed by the vivid appearance of Shendan Jingchou in Peking Opera. I still like Peking Opera and hope that more people can learn more about it."* Through their feedback, it can be safely concluded that students has developed their interest in Chinese opera culture and enhanced their national cultural confidence by watching Chinese opera videos and participating in relevant activities.

Moreover, in the following offline class, students are motivated to make a comparison between Chinese and Western operas using some adverbs. Apart from consolidating the grammar points of Adjective and Adverb, students have boosted their intercultural competence, and enhanced their capability to understand diverse cultural contexts of operas by comparing Chinese and Western operas. It is also noteworthy that by adopting the voluntary form rather than compulsory one, it is be more real and effective to evaluate whether the students have attained the quality objectives in the above teaching objectives. The use of online discussion platform has also promoted the exchange and interaction between students, which benefits "Assessment for Learning" as well as the establishment of a student-centered classroom.

After the course, the questionnaire survey and interview are carried out to examine students' feedback, thus further evaluating the effectiveness of traditional Chinese culture integrated into this English grammar course and judging whether to fulfill the quality goals in the overall teaching syllabus.

4. Findings and Discussion

At the beginning of the course, the first-round questionnaire survey involved 26 voluntary participants among 29 students in one class. One of the results shows that 50% participants and 19.2% participants think their English grammar levels are the same and inferior to their peers on average respectively, while 15.4% participants and the rest of participants claim that their levels are superior and unclear respectively. Apart from this, students' overall grammar level is average, as is observed by the teacher in the classroom.

However, after learning this course, the second-round questionnaire survey with 29 voluntary participants reveal that 17.2% participants and 27.6% participants view their English grammar levels are the same and inferior to their peers on average respectively, while 41.4% participants and the rest of participants hold that their levels are superior and unclear respectively. Moreover, with respect to whether the students' ability of English grammar have been improved since they studied this course, 82.8% participants assert that their ability of English grammar have been improved, followed by 10.3% participants who believe that their ability remain the same. 6.9% participants indicate that they are unclear while there no one say that his/her ability of English grammar has been weakened. Consequently, students' overall grammar levels and their self-confidence on their grammar have been significantly enhanced after learning this course. It is also demonstrated by their overall improvement on the final exam.

Concerning the integration of traditional Chinese culture into this course, participants of the first-round questionnaire survey make some useful suggestions. For instance, several students put forward some Chinese festivals should be added while other students prefer videos related to traditional Chinese culture. Furthermore, Participant C considers it from a holistic perspective that *"...select appropriate teaching topics and content, design appropriate teaching methods, organize and optimize classroom teaching activities, and attach importance to the extension of teaching activities outside the classroom."* Participant D focus on the online function, proposing that *"The dissemination of traditional culture needs to rely on online publicity, which can provide students with more cultural grammar exercises, or introduce some cultural knowledge through grammar points."* All these contribute to the subsequent practical incorporation in class.

In the second-round questionnaire survey, in terms of students' perceptions on the this integration into this course in an open question, what are the most frequently expressed are "Good", "Interesting", "More familiar", "Learned a lot" and "Necessary". For example, Participant E maintain that *"I think this is a good way for students to understand Chinese culture and promote the spread of traditional Chinese culture."*; Participant F shows that *"Very interesting and improve my interest."*; Participant G claim that *"It makes me more familiar with Chinese traditional culture while learning grammar and promotes the development of my national spirit."* In addition, It is gratifying from participant H's words that *"Combining traditional Chinese culture and grammar points, use examples to enhance students' motivation for learning."* Based on students' overall feedback, it is apparent that 96.6% participants have presented positive attitudes towards the effectiveness of traditional Chinese culture into this course. However, although just one named participant I displays a negative attitude, considering *"It is not enough."*, it means that there is still room to enhance its effectiveness in the future.

Subsequently, every one-on-one semi-structured interview is implemented for about half an hour to make a further evaluation of the effectiveness of traditional Chinese culture incorporated into this English grammar course as well as the fulfillment of the quality goals in the overall teaching syllabus. There are 17 volunteers participating in this interview. This semi-structured interview is mainly based on the questions from the second-round questionnaire survey to explore more information. According to participants' overall interview, they still demonstrate their positive attitudes towards the effectiveness and fulfillment mentioned above, but supplement more information. For instance, some participants had thought that they knew traditional Chinese culture well, but this is not the case when learning this course. Actually, they fail to know some basic knowledge and hidden stories as well as English expressions concerning Chinese ancient poetry, Chinese opera, Chinese architecture, and Chinese festival customs. By studying grammar points associated with traditional Chinese culture, they have not only mastered these grammar points, but also learned English expressions related to these traditional Chinese culture. More importantly, with the help of class activities and materials,

they have gained a deep insight into these cultural knowledge and stories, thus triggering their intense interest in traditional Chinese culture, and boosting their national cultural confidence. Other participants highlight that the comparison between Chinese and Western cultures is advisable. For instance, Participant J assert that *"I had little knowledge about Chinese opera and even less about Western opera previously, but after learning the comparison between Chinese and Western operas, I know more knowledge about them. I also understand that operas can have different forms and beauties in different cultures."* Participant K voices a similar opinion, but states it from the perspective of the comparison between Chinese and English translation versions, namely that *"I think that it is very interesting to translate the famous poem named "Gazing at Mount Tai (望岳)" within groups online. Although it is difficult and our translation is not good, we are really delighted and interested. Also, through comparing our English translation versions with Xu Yuanchong's version as well as its original Chinese version, I learn this master's translating glamour and realize the differences between Chinese and Western cultures."* Participant L supplements that *"After comparing Chinese and Western ancient poems, I know some major differences between them so that I can share them with my foreigner friends. My intercultural competence is also strengthened."* Hence, it is apparent that students have generally advanced their intercultural competence, and their capability to understand diverse cultural backgrounds.

Regarding the suggestions on integrating traditional Chinese culture into the English grammar course in the future, some participants suggest that more cultural materials should be added to enrich their knowledge about Chinese ancient poetry, Chinese opera, Chinese architecture, and Chinese festival customs while others advise that other Chinese elements should be incorporated into this course, apart from the above aspects. Additionally, one participant propose a constructive suggestion that students can vote what they desire to learn from traditional Chinese culture. All these proposals will help further perfect this integration in the future course and research.

5. Conclusion

This research is designed to explore the integration of traditional Chinese culture into the English grammar course in regular higher education by using a practical case study of Xianda College of Economics and Humanities, Shanghai International Studies University in China. Research questions encompass the practical integration of traditional Chinese culture into the English grammar course offered in regular higher education, the effectiveness of this integration, and potential suggestions for improving the future English grammar course and relevant research.

With respect to the first research question, the strategy of "4-R" (Revise Teaching Goals and Objectives, Refine Teaching Content, Revitalize Teaching Methods and Reform Teaching Evaluation) can realize this integration. This study concentrates on using Chinese ancient poetry, Chinese opera, Chinese architecture, and Chinese festival customs as the main materials for grammar points in this course.

Firstly, the teaching goals and objectives need be revised under the guidance of OBE to supplement quality goals and objectives related to traditional Chinese culture. Furthermore, there should be a consistency between teaching goals from the overall syllabus and the teaching objectives from specific lesson. Secondly, the teaching content should be rooted in the grammar points of the lesson, enriching typical examples that encompass the aforementioned teaching goals and objectives, and considering issues from the students' perspective. Thirdly, different from the traditional teacher-centered teaching methods, teaching methods in this course should be revitalized based on the teaching goals and objectives as well as teaching content to establish a student-centered classroom, mainly including "Heuristic Teaching Method", "Online

and Offline Blended Teaching Method” and “Group Cooperative Learning Method”. Lastly, teaching evaluation should accordingly reform the teacher-centered evaluation into student-centered evaluation, by adopting students’ self-reflective assessments, and utilizing voluntary forms combined with online and offline evaluation platforms. This evaluation can occur both in the course to assess the teaching objectives and after the course to assess the teaching goals. Based on students’ voluntary feedback during the course, it can be safely concluded that the quality objectives in the teaching objectives are generally achieved. During these “4-R” stages above, some representative examples from Chinese ancient poetry, Chinese opera, Chinese architecture, and Chinese festival customs are applied to expound on the specific implementation.

To resolve the second research question on the effectiveness of this integration, the questionnaire survey and interview are utilized. According to the first-round questionnaire survey at the beginning of the class, the students’ English grammar level is generally average and students put forward some useful suggestions. For instance, several students advise that some Chinese festivals should be added while other students expect to add videos related to traditional Chinese culture. These results lay a groundwork for the subsequent practical implementation. Following the completion of the course, the second-round questionnaire survey and interview are carried out, which reveals that this integration is effective and attains the quality goals in the overall teaching syllabus to a large extent. Moreover, students’ overall English grammar level and their confidence on English grammar have been improved, compared with those at the beginning of the course.

In response to the third question on the suggestions of this incorporation for the grammar course and relevant research in the future, the interview is conducted to obtain suggestions from the perspective of students. They provide some constructive proposals, such as “adding more cultural materials from Chinese ancient poetry, Chinese opera, Chinese architecture, and Chinese festival customs”, “supplementing other Chinese elements apart from these four aspects above” and “students’ voting for what they want to learn from traditional Chinese culture”. From the the teacher’s perspective, there is still room for improvement in the future English grammar teaching. For instance, more interesting activities can be designed to appeal to students and some measures can be taken to encourage students to make a comment on their peers’ opinions of traditional Chinese culture. In terms of studies related to this topic in the future, it is recommended that the researcher should design relevant research based on the specific contexts. Furthermore, faced with the burgeoning development of technology, it is feasible to incorporate some new technology into this English grammar course.

On the whole, these three research question are addressed by this practical case study to some extent, which can provide some teaching and research guidance for integration of traditional Chinese culture into the English grammar course in regular higher education to advance ideological and political education and intercultural competence in English grammar course. However, more relevant exploration is needed in the future.

Project Support

Shanghai Higher Education Young Teachers’ Training and Support Program in 2022 (Project Number: ZZ202230007)

References

- [1] F. Du: Excellent traditional Chinese culture and cultural self-confidence, *Exploration*, (2017)No.2, p.163-168.
- [2] Z. Li: Outcome-oriented teaching design, *Chinese Journal of University Teaching*, (2015)No.3 , p.32-39.

- [3] F. Li, H. Fu: Study on college English teaching based on the concept of ideological and political education in all courses, *Creative Education*, Vol.11(2020)No.7, p.997-1007.
- [4] J. Gregg, S. Saha: Losing culture on the way to competence: the use and misuse of culture in medical education, *Academic Medicine*, Vol.81(2006)No.6, p.542-547.
- [5] R. Galisson: *From Language to Culture through Words* (CLE International, France 1991).
- [6] F. C. Brøgger: *Culture, Language, Text: Culture Studies within the Study of English as a Foreign Language* (Scandinavian University Press, Norway 1992).
- [7] C. Roberts, M. Byram, A. Barro, S. Jordan, B. Street: *Language Learners as Ethnographers* (Multilingual Matters, UK 2001).
- [8] H. D. Brown: *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (5th ed.) (Pearson Education, USA 2007).
- [9] T. Q. Tran, H. V. Dang: Culture teaching in English language teaching: Teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices, *Korea TESOL Journal*, Vol.11(2014)No.1, p.207-223.
- [10] C. Kramsch: Culture in foreign language teaching, *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, Vol.1(2013), No.1, p.57-78.
- [11] S. I. K. Gonen, S. Saglam: Teaching culture in the FL classroom: Teachers' perspectives, *IJGE: International Journal of Global Education*, Vol.1(2012)No.3, p.26-46.
- [12] M. Canale, M. Swain: Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing, *Applied Linguistics*, Vol.1(1980)No.3, p.1-47.
- [13] T. Kumayas, F. Lengkoan: The challenges of teaching grammar at the university level: Learning from the experience of English lecturer, *Journal of English Culture, Language, Literature and Education*, Vol.11(2023)No.1, p.98-105.
- [14] P. L. Hampp, T. A. Kumayas, F. Lengkoan: Synthesizing Grammar and Structure Problems Faced by Indonesian TOEFL Participants, *Journal Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Undiksha*, Vol.9(2021)No.1, p.64-68.
- [15] H. Jin: The significance of Chinese culture in English teaching, *Curriculum, Teaching Material, and Method*, Vol.33(2023)No.08, p.77-82.
- [16] R. Zhang: The issue of the absence of native culture in college English teaching and coping strategies, *Knowledge Library*, Vol.40(2024)No.14, p.107-110.
- [17] L. Zhao: Research on the integration and presentation of Chinese culture in English textbooks: A practical discussion based on Reading Course, *Higher Education Journal*, Vol.10(2024)No.26, p.79-82+89.
- [18] J. Zhong, X. Ye: A practical study on integrating Chinese culture into English speaking teaching under the concept of output-oriented approach, *Journal of Zhejiang Gongmao Vocational and Technical College*, Vol.24(2024)No.01, p.26-30.
- [19] G. Cui: The infiltration of Chinese culture in college English teaching, *China University Teaching*, (2009)No.03, p.86-89.
- [20] Y. Lu: Practical research on the integration of Chinese excellent culture into college English courses under the POA concept, *Popular Literature and Art*, (2024)No.17, p.184-187.
- [21] F. Wang: Exploring the integration of excellent traditional Chinese culture into college English teaching: A perspective from CET-4 paragraph translation questions, *Journal of Xinjiang Police College*, Vol.44(2024)No.2, p.74-80.
- [22] Y. Jin: A study on the cultivation of cultural confidence in English audio-visual speaking courses based on POA theory, *Teaching of Forestry Region*, (2024)No.09, p.76-79.
- [23] Y. Li: Research on integrating Chinese culture into high school English classroom teaching, *Gaokao*, (2023)No.12, p.15-17.
- [24] H. Qin: A preliminary exploration of integrating Chinese culture into high school English grammar teaching model: Taking the teaching of "non-finite verbs as adverbials" as an example, *Middle School Teaching Reference*, (2022)No.19, p.25-27.

- [25] C. Shen: Integration of vocational English teaching and Chinese culture based on teaching content, Journal of Wuhan Institute of Metallurgy Management Cadres, Vol.30(2020)No.04, p.75-78.
- [26] M. Wang: The introduction of grammar communicative activities and Chinese cultural elements in English major grammar teaching, Journal of Multimedia and Network Teaching in China (Early Issue), (2018)No.08, p.136-137.
- [27] Z. Zhang: A New English Grammar Coursebook (Student's book) (6th ed.) (Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, China 2017).
- [28] X. Song: A study on the teaching model of college English speaking under the OBE concept, Journal of Heihe University, Vol.8(2017)No.9, p.135-136.
- [29] Q. Lei: The application of heuristic teaching in English teaching, Journal of Southwest Agricultural University (Social Science Edition), Vol.7(2009)No.3, p.190-192.
- [30] Y. Wang, X. Song, T. Zhang: Exploring the teaching model combining online and offline, Journal of North China University of Water Resources and Electric Power (Social Science Edition), Vol.35(2019)No.03, p.39-42.
- [31] Y. Wu: An analysis of the application of cooperative learning in college English classroom teaching, Science Education and Culture (Upper Monthly Issue), (2007)No.19, p.63-64.