

# Exploration of Practical Strategies for Teaching Chinese Culture in College English Classrooms Under the Background of Telling China's Stories Well

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## Abstract

Chinese stories are carriers of Chinese culture and national spirit, and college students are the main force in telling Chinese stories well. How to integrate Chinese culture into the classroom, tell Chinese stories well in English, and spread Chinese culture has become a major issue in English teaching in universities. This study analyzes the current situation and existing problems of telling China's stories well in college English classrooms, and proposes a blended learning strategy that deeply integrates Chinese culture with English teaching.

**Key words:** Telling China's stories well in English; Chinese cultural education; Cultural confidence; Blended learning strategy

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## INTRODUCTION

The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China clearly stated: "Accelerate the construction of Chinese discourse and narrative system, tell Chinese stories well, spread Chinese voices well, and showcase a credible, lovely, and respectable image of China." Telling China's stories well in English is the teaching goal proposed for university English education in the new era. The Chinese story should tell all the theories, practices,

experiences, and wisdom related to China. The Chinese story is supposed to reflect the Chinese civilization and historical tradition show the Chinese path to modernization and reflect the reality of China. To tell China's stories effectively in English, two essential elements are required: a comprehensive and profound understanding of Chinese culture and national conditions, as well as accurate English expression. Neither can be neglected.

College English has the characteristics of being instrumental, humanistic, and international, and has obvious advantages in telling Chinese stories well. In recent years, in the CET-4 and CET-6 translation exams, Chinese cultural loaded words such as lanterns, Spring Festival, reunion dinner, Karez wells, and new energy vehicles have been involved, and students have also reported difficulties in translating the cultural vocabulary involved in these questions. This phenomenon suggests that the integration of Chinese cultural elements in English teaching remains insufficient, and the inadequate storytelling of China's stories will inevitably lead to obstacles for students in cross-cultural language communication.

## 1. CURRENT RESEARCH STATUS AT HOME AND ABROAD

With the rapid development of China's economy and society and the continuous elevation of its international status, the task of telling China's stories effectively and enabling the world to gain a deeper understanding of China has become increasingly pressing and significant. President Xi Jinping emphasized in 2021 that telling China's stories well, spreading China's voice effectively, and presenting a true, three-dimensional, and comprehensive picture of China are important tasks in strengthening China's international communication capacity-building.

The China's Stories focus on the cultural concept of telling benevolence, valuing the people, upholding integrity, upholding justice, valuing harmony, and seeking great harmony. The research topics of Telling China's Stories Well include theoretical exploration, teaching activity research, teaching status investigation, translation principles and translation strategy research, etc. The existing research results mainly focus on analyzing the current situation and causes of the phenomenon of aphasia in Chinese culture, proposing countermeasures or coping strategies, and these measures and strategies are mainly theoretical thinking and exploration, with relatively little research involving empirical and practical teaching.

This study aims to explore teaching strategies for expressing Chinese culture in English under the background of telling China's stories well. Its main objective is to cultivate more college students of the new era, equipping them with the ability to proficiently introduce Chinese culture and tell China's stories well in English.

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## 2. A CASE STUDY

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This study aims to explore the integration of Chinese culture teaching into college English instruction, identify effective teaching methods and approaches, enhance college students' awareness of introducing Chinese culture in English, and cultivate their proficiency in telling China's stories effectively in the English language. A survey was conducted on 176 freshmen undergraduate students of the 2024 class at Qingdao University of Science and Technology to explore the current situation of telling China's stories well in college English classes.

### 2.1 Design of the study

The selected 176 students major in computer science, machinery, new energy, etc. A semester long teaching practice was carried out to investigate the current situation of telling China's stories well in college English classes. In the early stage of this survey, a survey questionnaire was prepared, and a test on students' Chinese cultural literacy was designed. At the end of the semester, a retest will be conducted on the implementation of telling China's stories well in English. The survey results will be statistically analyzed to understand the changes in students' ability to tell China's stories in English before and after the project, and empirical research will be conducted through quantitative and qualitative analysis. Through a questionnaire survey and reflection, this study verified the feasibility and effectiveness of college students' ability to tell Chinese stories well in English, providing reference for college students to inherit Chinese culture, tell Chinese stories well, and spread and practice Chinese values.

### 2.2 Data collection

This survey was distributed to relevant students and conducted online using the Wenjuanxing platform to ensure survey efficiency. A total of 168 valid questionnaires were collected, with a questionnaire collection effectiveness rate of 95.4%. The questionnaire analyzed the attitude, current situation, challenges, and needs of college students in telling China's stories well in English.

This study used the Chinese Culture English Expression Test paper and survey questionnaire designed by the research group. It mainly consists of themes such as Overview of China and Natural Landscapes, Chinese Cuisine, Folk Customs and Festivals, Chinese Historical Site, Chinese Studies and Modern Chinese Society, etc., aiming to test the English expression of Chinese cultural vocabulary among non-English major students. The Chinese Cultural English Expression Test mainly includes the ability to translate Chinese cultural vocabulary into English. The second part is a paragraph translation on Chinese culture, which is as difficult as the translation practice on the College English Test Band 4, testing students' ability to translate Chinese culture into English.

### 2.3 Teaching Plan

Based on the unit teaching of the English textbooks *New Horizon College English* and *New Goal College English Audio Visual Speaking Course* currently being used by our university, we conducted a practical study on college students telling China's stories well in English. Therefore, this study proposes the following research questions. To start with, what Chinese stories should be told in English? What's more, how to tell the story of China? What methods and approaches can be used to tell the story of China? How to naturally integrate the teaching process of telling China's stories well in English into college English classroom teaching? Most importantly, what are the problems with telling China's stories well in college English classes? What is its cause?

### 2.4 The findings of the study

In classroom teaching, telling China's stories well faces many difficulties and challenges, such as limited class hours, weak storytelling awareness of the teacher, and an incomplete evaluation system. On the one hand, teachers lack sufficient output of Chinese stories and traditional culture in college English teaching, and lack in-depth exploration and refinement of Chinese story elements. On the other hand, students have weak oral and translation skills in Chinese cultural English, and are unable to accurately express and introduce Chinese cultural content in English. Therefore, it is necessary to improve their relevant knowledge reserves.

Through a semester long teaching practice, 95.6% of students believe that they have deepened their

understanding of Chinese culture, increased their interest in Chinese culture, and 96.2% of students have expanded their English vocabulary related to Chinese culture and accurately expressed Chinese culture in English. The survey results of teaching practice indicate that the teaching process of telling China's stories well in English can be flexible and diverse.

### 3. STRATEGIES OF TELLING CHINA'S STORIES WELL IN COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING

#### 3.1 Select Chinese cultural symbols optimize and expand teaching content

In recent years, there has been a gradual addition of questions testing Chinese cultural elements in the College English Test Band 4 and Band 6. These elements cover traditional Chinese festivals, customs, and cuisine, as well as cultural symbols related to contemporary Chinese development achievements. What Chinese stories can be told in college English to convey a true, three-dimensional, and comprehensive understanding of China? The content of Chinese stories is extremely rich. President Xi Jinping proposed to tell five aspects of Chinese stories well, including the story of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the story of the Chinese Dream, the story of the Chinese people, the story of excellent Chinese culture, and the story of China's peaceful development. Therefore, it is necessary to make the excellent traditional Chinese culture, red revolutionary culture, advanced socialist culture, and the idea of a community with a shared future for mankind together form the main body of China's story.

The fourth edition of *New Horizon College English* (Ideological and Political Wisdom Edition) that we are currently using specifically lists Chinese cultural themes in each unit, introducing Chinese culture related to the unit theme in English, such as filial piety, heroes of the times, China's digitalization, Chinese youth, and the Maritime Silk Road. Teachers are expected to actively incorporate the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation into college English teaching, and combine Chinese stories with contemporary hot topics. For example, through the spread of the compass, the topic of the *The Belt and Road* can be introduced, and the stories of the pioneers of the *The Belt and Road* represented by Zhang Qian, Zheng He, etc. can be introduced to help students deeply understand the *The Belt and Road*. According to the teaching theme of Heroes of our time, students are required to learn the spirit of Yuan Longping, acquire the basic vocabulary and important expressions related to heroes of the times, and be able to tell stories of heroes of the times in English. This type of content can help students expand their vocabulary and sentence expression related to Chinese thought, and enhance their basic English language skills.

#### 3.2 Adopt a blended learning model to optimize teaching evaluation

In blended learning, teachers can engage in diverse teaching activities to maximize teaching effectiveness. Before and after class, students should make full use of online learning platforms to provide diverse cultural expansion learning resources such as audio, video, text, and tests, deepen their understanding and identification with Chinese culture, and enhance cultural confidence.

From the perspective of teaching practice, limited class hours are an important factor affecting the exploration and telling of China's stories. College English teaching should fully leverage the advantages of modern information technology and vigorously promote the deep integration of modern information technology with curriculum teaching. By adopting a blended learning model, we aim to enhance cultural translation teaching and improve students' English proficiency in telling China's stories and spreading Chinese culture.

Therefore, English teachers should first base themselves on the existing textbook system, focus on actual teaching content, and integrate Chinese stories with course content through multiple online and offline platforms, using audio, video, and image materials. Teachers can use online platforms to assign learning tasks and materials related to telling China's stories well in advance, and students can preview them independently online, enabling them to have early access to materials related to classroom content. At the same time, with the help of U Campus, QQ groups and other tools, it's advisable for teachers to regularly share relevant news and various online learning materials on China Daily and CGTN, and integrate Chinese stories into students' online learning environment.

In the classroom teaching process, teachers can set discussion topics related to Chinese stories based on unit themes such as the community with a shared future for mankind, the Chinese Dream, and the rural revitalization strategy, guiding students to use digital narrative methods such as oral practice, translation, PPT, and short videos to tell China's stories in English and integrate new era Chinese elements into university English teaching.

With the rapid development of AI technology, teachers are encouraged to use generative artificial intelligence technology to assist students in generating English texts and audio of different levels, allowing students to choose suitable learning materials about Chinese stories to imitate and follow according to their own level. AI detects pronunciation accuracy and helps students correct incorrect pronunciation in real-time. By simulating real-life human-machine conversations, students can obtain detailed assessment reports on pronunciation, grammar, intonation, and other aspects, making English learning more precise and efficient. AI empowers students to better tell China's stories in English by using dubbing

software and collaborating in groups to complete dubbed videos, enhancing their ability and sense of autonomous learning through interaction. After class, teachers can also assign oral and translation exercises around Chinese culture, using modern information technology such as AI technology or online platforms to enhance communication between teachers and students, allowing students to further consolidate their knowledge and ensure maximum learning effectiveness. This combination of online and offline teaching methods not only broadens students' knowledge, but also improves their language application skills.

### 3.3 Strengthen the comparison between Chinese and Western cultures and enhance critical thinking skills

Every country and ethnic group has its unique language system and style. To tell a good Chinese story in English, one must understand and respect each other's language style and customs. Firstly, it is necessary to clarify the content of the story and the Chinese perspective to be expressed, and then think about how to use one's own words to tell the story clearly and thoroughly.

In college English teaching, many students invest their time in mastering basic language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation, or spend a lot of time learning Western culture, while neglecting the study of their own mother tongue culture, lacking awareness of the comparison between Chinese and Western cultures and critical thinking. They cannot describe their country's excellent culture well in English, and there is a serious phenomenon of Chinese cultural aphasia. It is the responsibility for English teachers to combine the characteristics of language teaching and textbook content to summarize and generalize the differences in language culture and expression habits between the East and the West, guide students to pay attention to different ways of expression in Chinese and English, and teach students methods and techniques for telling China's stories.

In order to enhance students' language knowledge through cultural comparison, comparative explanations of Chinese and Western cultures can be provided, allowing students to engage in discussions and critical thinking. For example, in the teaching content of tea culture, it is beneficial to compare English afternoon tea with traditional Chinese tea art, etiquette knowledge, and the philosophical essence of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism behind Chinese tea ceremony. This approach can expand the historical depth of Chinese stories. When introducing Zheng He's voyages to the West, students are expected to compare China's Maritime Silk Road and Columbus' discovery of the New World, and a rational perspective is introduced to view the differences between Chinese and Western cultures. For example, when practicing critical thinking, by taking the traditional story

of *Kong Rong Sharing Pears* as an example, students can learn to compare Chinese and Western cultures and identify the differences between Chinese values of courtesy and humility reflected in the story and Western values of individualism and independence. Only by fully understanding the culture of our nation, possessing firm cultural discernment and judgment, can we confidently tell the story of China and promote Chinese culture to the world in future international exchanges and cooperation.

### 3.4 Add an English version of the Chinese Culture Expansion Course

Universities can offer a wide range of expanded courses on Chinese culture overview, cross-cultural communication, and comparison between Chinese and English cultures throughout the entire campus. These carefully designed courses with Chinese cultural characteristics not only enable students to become familiar with authentic English expressions of Chinese stories, but also effectively enhance their comprehensive ability to use English to spread Chinese culture. Besides, students can choose to participate in English output practice activities such as creating videos after class, such as English speech contests, oral English competitions, writing competitions, dubbing competitions, English song competitions, etc. This can not only stimulate their learning interest and subjectivity, but also promote the coordination of English language learning input and output.

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## CONCLUSION

Telling China's stories well in English is a process of cross-cultural communication, and college students need to take on the important mission of telling China's stories well and spreading Chinese voices well. This study examines the current situation of telling China's stories well in college English classes, analyzes the existing problems and their causes, and proposes strategies and suggestions for teaching practice. By exploring a practical path for college English courses to tell the story of China well, the paper aims to provide some inspiration for college English teachers to help students spread the voice of China in English. To spread Chinese culture, one must express it in a language that the other party can understand. Cultivating college students' English expression ability from the perspective of telling China's stories well is conducive to improving their English language application ability, as well as enhancing their critical thinking ability and cultural confidence, building patriotism and international vision.

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