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Article

Strategies for Cultivating Cultural Confidence in Senior High School English Teaching from the Perspective of Core Competencies

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of core competencies, senior high school English teaching should not only focus on improving students' language ability, but also attach greater importance to cultivating students' cultural confidence. This paper investigates the cultivation of cultural confidence in senior high school English teaching from the perspective of core competencies. It first elaborates on the connotations of core competencies and cultural confidence, and clarifies their significance in senior high school English teaching, namely, helping students develop correct values, improving students' overall English proficiency, and promoting the dissemination of fine traditional Chinese culture. It then analyzes the current situation of senior high school English teaching, identifying problems such as insufficient attention paid by schools and teachers to the cultivation of cultural confidence, and students' weak awareness of actively absorbing cultural nourishment. On this basis, it proposes strategies for integrating cultural confidence into English teaching, including tapping into cultural content in textbooks, creating a multicultural learning environment, organizing diverse cultural activities, expanding cultural learning resources, and enhancing teachers' cultural literacy.

Keywords: cultural confidence; core competencies; senior high school English teaching

1. Introduction

In today's rapidly advancing wave of globalization, cultural exchanges are becoming increasingly frequent. Telling China's stories well and spreading Chinese culture is an important responsibility entrusted to us by the times. Meanwhile, the English Curriculum Standards for Ordinary Senior High Schools (2017 edition, revised in 2020) (hereinafter referred to as "the New Curriculum Standards") clearly stipulates that English as a subject should integrate instrumentality and humanism, and lists cultural awareness as one of the goals of cultivating English core competencies. This means that senior high school English teaching is no longer confined to the transmission of linguistic knowledge; it also shoulders the heavy responsibility of cultivating students' intercultural competence and enhancing their cultural confidence. Cultural confidence, as a social psychology and spiritual force formed by a country and a nation in the course of their own development, is "a more fundamental, deeper and more enduring force" compared with other forces [1]. China's foreign language education community has conducted extensive research and attempts on how to cultivate students' cultural confidence in English teaching. For example, Wan Xian believes that in primary school English teaching, the teaching practice path of integrating language and culture can be explored from four dimensions: "meaning discovery—learning material integration—inquiry-based activities—accompanying evaluation" [2]; Xu Zongrui holds that current foreign language education in colleges and universities lacks sufficient integration of cultural confidence, and that universities, foreign language departments and foreign language educators must implement relevant requirements and fully integrate cultural confidence education by innovating teaching

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concepts, developing teaching resources and improving teaching evaluation [3]; Zhang Hong and Yu Rui, through a content analysis of college English textbooks, found that the representation of Chinese culture in these textbooks is insufficient in both content proportion and presentation form, and pointed out that college English textbooks should strengthen the representation of Chinese culture so that students can develop both international vision and cultural confidence [4]. In summary, these studies have greatly enriched the theoretical content and practical experience of implementing the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education in China's foreign language education. However, relatively few studies have focused on the cultivation of students' cultural confidence in senior high school English classrooms from the perspective of core competencies.

The main purpose of this study is to analyze how to cultivate students' cultural confidence in senior high school English teaching from the perspective of core competencies, and to help front-line teachers and relevant researchers understand the specific measures for cultivating students' cultural confidence in English classrooms. The following sections will first clarify the connotations of core competencies and cultural confidence, then analyze the significance of cultivating cultural confidence in senior high school English teaching and the current problems in teaching practice, and finally propose specific strategies for cultivating students' cultural confidence in senior high school English classrooms.

2. The Connotations of Core Competencies and Cultural Confidence

2.1. The Connotation of Core Competencies

Based on the overall goals of the English curriculum, the New Curriculum Standards propose the specific goal of English teaching as cultivating and developing students' core competencies of the discipline, including language ability, cultural awareness, thinking capacity and learning ability. Specifically, language ability emphasizes learners' comprehension and expression of meaning by means of listening, speaking, reading, viewing and writing in real social situations; cultural awareness focuses on learners' cognition of both Chinese and foreign cultures as well as their identification with and inheritance of fine traditional Chinese culture; thinking capacity is reflected in the level of logical reasoning, critical reflection and innovative thinking; learning ability reflects learners' awareness and ability to actively employ learning strategies, broaden learning approaches and optimize learning efficiency.

2.2. The Connotation of Cultural Confidence

When culture thrives, the nation thrives; when culture is strong, the nation is strong. Cultural confidence is "a more fundamental, deeper and more enduring force" in the development of a country and a nation. This positioning shows that cultural confidence is not cultural enthusiasm in the general sense, but a foundational force concerning whether national rejuvenation can obtain spiritual support. As far as this paper is concerned, drawing on the widely accepted definition in academic circles, cultural confidence can be understood as a nation, a country and a political party's full affirmation of and active practice in their own cultural values, as well as their firm confidence in the vitality of their culture. However, discussing this concept in the context of senior high school English teaching also requires transforming it into learning experiences that students can feel and act upon—that is, whether students can identify, identify with and express the value of Chinese culture in the process of exposure to foreign cultures, rather than merely staying at the level of memorizing abstract expressions.

3. The Significance of Cultivating Cultural Confidence in Senior High School English Teaching from the Perspective of Core Competencies

In the era of economic globalization and the blending of diverse cultures, cultural exchange has become an important aspect of state-to-state relations. English is an international lingua franca and the main medium of cultural exchange. The British scholar

Byram believes that foreign language education has political attributes and is part of civic education, aiming to cultivate citizens who are tolerant, rational and possess critical cultural awareness [5]. Integrating cultural confidence into senior high school English teaching can not only cultivate students' intercultural communication ability, but also effectively enhance their cultural identity and national confidence.

3.1. Helping Students Develop Correct Values

With the development of globalization, various cultural concepts collide and blend with one another, and students' values are also subject to the impact and influence of diverse cultures. A large amount of content in movies, TV dramas, short videos, social platforms and popular culture that students encounter in daily life carries value presuppositions of different cultural backgrounds. Senior high school is a period when students' judgment tends to take shape, and English class is one of the venues where foreign cultural materials are most concentrated; therefore, the cultivation of discernment has a natural entry point here. The role of cultural confidence education integrated into English teaching is not to let students memorize more cultural knowledge, but to help them establish a frame of reference: only when students truly understand the value concepts and historical context of Chinese culture can they avoid swinging between "wholesale acceptance" and "blanket rejection" when facing foreign cultures, and instead be able to first identify, then compare, and finally make choices.

3.2. Helping Improve Students' Overall English Proficiency

From the perspective of language learning rules, cultural understanding and language ability are mutually bound. Many senior high school students face a typical dilemma in speaking and writing: "having something to say but no words to use"—they want to introduce the Spring Festival to foreign friends or express their views on a domestic film, but get stuck at the fault line of vocabulary and cultural expression. Cultural confidence education can precisely bridge this gap: the more authentically students understand the connotations of Chinese culture, the more content they can rely on when outputting in English, and the accuracy and richness of their expression will improve accordingly. Furthermore, students with cultural confidence can participate in dialogue with a more peaceful mindset in real communication settings, such as international exchanges, online conversations, and future study-abroad and work scenarios—clarifying their viewpoints while naturally conveying the Chinese position. Therefore, integrating cultural confidence into English teaching improves not only "overall proficiency" in the examination sense, but also students' expressive confidence and communication ability in real intercultural communication.

3.3. Helping Promote the Dissemination of Fine Traditional Chinese Culture

A long-standing asymmetry is this: Chinese students learn about the world in English a lot, while the world learns about China through English relatively little. This pattern of "more input, less output" is directly related to foreign language education's long-standing emphasis on the introduction of target-language culture and neglect of the expression of native culture—many students have learned English for years and can talk about Christmas and Hollywood, yet find it difficult to explain clearly in English the cultural logic behind a traditional festival or a folk custom. Integrating Chinese culture into English classrooms is precisely a correction of this imbalance: English here is not only a tool for absorbing foreign culture, but also assumes the channel function of outward expression. This function becomes concrete when it comes to senior high school students—for example, introducing solar terms and food culture in English, comparing differences in Chinese and foreign etiquette, and telling exchange partners about their hometown's cultural heritage. These exercises are both language use and cultural output.

4. Analysis of the Current Situation of Senior High School English Teaching

To discuss strategies for cultivating cultural confidence in senior high school English teaching from the perspective of core competencies, it is necessary to analyze in depth the

problems existing in current senior high school English teaching. Judging from the actual situation, many problems restrict the effective integration of cultural confidence into English teaching.

4.1. Insufficient Attention Paid by Schools and Teachers to the Cultivation of Cultural Confidence

Although the state has repeatedly emphasized the integration of Chinese culture, under the pressure of college entrance examinations, many senior high school English teaching practices still focus excessively on test-oriented education, taking gaokao scores as the main pursuit [6]. For example, when explaining English reading passages, teachers often only focus on analyzing the answers to the questions while neglecting the Western cultural background and values reflected in the passages. This deviation in teaching objectives results in students who, although possessing certain test-taking abilities in English, only have a superficial understanding of English-speaking countries' cultures and find it even more difficult to disseminate Chinese culture effectively in English, which is unfavorable to the cultivation of cultural confidence.

4.2. Students' Weak Awareness of Actively Absorbing Cultural Nourishment

Whether cultural confidence can be established ultimately depends on whether students themselves are willing to absorb cultural nourishment, and this is precisely the weak link. It is not difficult to observe in daily life that many senior high school students narrow English learning down to "memorizing words and doing practice tests": vocabulary and grammar are regarded as hard currency, while cultural content is classified as "soft knowledge" that is optional to learn [7]. Over time, students do not deliberately reject Chinese culture, but gradually drift away from it in their daily distribution of interest—this "unconscious alienation" is harder to reverse than explicit resistance, and it is precisely the problem that the cultivation of cultural confidence most needs to address.

5. Strategies for Integrating Cultural Confidence into Senior High School English Teaching

5.1. Tapping into Cultural Content in Textbooks

English textbooks are the basic tool of teaching. English textbooks compiled in accordance with the New Curriculum Standards contain the cultural knowledge that students should master as required by the Standards, as well as annotations and explanations of relevant cultural knowledge. Teachers should be good at tapping into the cultural content in textbooks, grasp the design intentions and practical operation essentials of cultural awareness cultivation activities in the textbooks, and purposefully and consciously infiltrate cultural knowledge teaching and cultural awareness cultivation into teaching activities, so as to help students learn in depth [8].

5.2. Creating a Multicultural Learning Environment

The best way to learn linguistic and cultural knowledge and cultivate cultural confidence is obviously to experience and perceive different cultures in intercultural contexts. However, most English learners have no opportunity to experience and perceive different cultures in authentic intercultural contexts (such as studying or living abroad). To make up for this deficiency, English teachers should carry out language practice activities as much as possible, allowing students to learn about and understand foreign cultures in language practice activities. Students can be allowed to experience and perceive culture directly or indirectly by observing pictures, watching video materials, and reading English literary works. The popularization of computers, mobile devices and the Internet has brought great convenience to collecting and playing video materials. Teachers should be good at using these convenient conditions to collect video materials that can intuitively reflect cultural content and apply them to classroom teaching in a timely manner.

5.3. Organizing Diverse Cultural Activities

In senior high school English teaching from the perspective of core competencies, organizing diverse cultural activities plays a crucial role in cultivating students' cultural confidence. Schools can consciously organize English practice activities related to traditional Chinese culture outside class. For example, telling Chinese stories in English and introducing traditional Chinese festivals; in addition, schools can hold English cultural festival activities covering English drama performances, English song singing, English poetry recitation and many other events. Taking English drama performance as an example, students need to deeply study the cultural background in the script, including Western history, customs and values. In the preparation process, they not only improve their English language ability but also broaden their cultural horizons. In addition, cultural exchange activities are also an effective way to cultivate cultural confidence. Schools can invite foreign teachers to give cultural lectures introducing the cultural customs of English-speaking countries, while encouraging students to share Chinese culture. Through such activities, students can treat different cultures with a more open and confident attitude and disseminate Chinese culture in intercultural communication.

5.4. Expanding Cultural Learning Resources

Expanding cultural learning resources in English teaching centers on breaking the limitations of textbooks and introducing diverse materials with both Chinese and Western comparative attributes, so that students can develop cultural discernment and confidence in language learning.

On the one hand, schools can set up an English culture corner, equipped with English books, magazines, newspapers and other materials, to help students expand the English expression of Chinese culture—for example, introducing the book series Telling China's Stories in English, clips of CCTV's English documentary Wild China, and illustrated English introductions to intangible cultural heritage projects—guiding students to learn to express local cultural symbols such as traditional Chinese medicine, calligraphy and the Twenty-Four Solar Terms precisely in English and to master the ability of "cultural translation". On the other hand, authentic cultural resources of English-speaking countries should be supplemented, such as English original picture books, talk show clips, and holiday-themed short videos, allowing students to discover the characteristics and commonalities of different cultures through comparison.

At the same time, life-oriented resource platforms can also be built—for example, creating a class cultural-themed English corner to collect bilingual Chinese-English signs encountered by students during travel and English introductions to cultural and creative products; or recommending students to follow English accounts such as China Global Television Network (CGTN), TED Talks, and China Daily, learning how to tell Chinese issues from an international perspective through news reports. The integration of these resources can enable students to not only understand the "world language" but also tell "China's stories" in English learning, truly internalizing cultural confidence into language use.

By expanding cultural learning resources, a richer and more diverse English cultural learning environment can be created for students, which helps to better cultivate students' cultural confidence in English teaching, enabling students to not only master linguistic knowledge in the process of learning English, but also deeply understand the essence of different cultures, thereby establishing confidence in their own national culture and respect for the world's diverse cultures.

5.5. Enhancing Teachers' Cultural Literacy

Integrating cultural confidence into English teaching requires enhancing teachers' cultural literacy as the core premise. Teachers must first take "fostering virtue through education" as their own responsibility and possess both a solid foundation in the culture of English-speaking countries and a profound accumulation of fine traditional Chinese culture, so as to guide students to establish cultural confidence in intercultural communication. To enhance teachers' cultural literacy, schools and education departments can adopt a series of practical measures. For example, teachers can be

regularly organized to participate in cultural literacy training courses covering traditional Chinese culture, Western culture, intercultural communication and many other aspects. Teachers can also be encouraged to conduct self-directed learning and research. Schools can also provide teachers with rich cultural learning resources, such as setting up a special reading room for cultural books and purchasing various books, journals and electronic resources related to Chinese and Western cultures. At the same time, a teacher cultural learning and exchange platform can be established so that teachers can share their learning experiences and teaching practices.

6. Conclusion

In the process of senior high school English teaching, teachers should not only guide students to accumulate linguistic knowledge and develop thinking capacity, but also lead students to seek, understand and inherit fine traditional Chinese culture in the process. Taking this as an opportunity, students will further enhance their sense of identity with fine traditional Chinese culture and develop a sense of national pride and cultural confidence arising from the splendid and glorious Chinese culture. Teachers should recognize the importance of infiltrating fine traditional Chinese culture into senior high school English teaching, reasonably tap into and supplement materials containing fine traditional Chinese culture, create a good cultural environment, organize rich cultural activities, and supplement corresponding cultural resources, so as to better combine English teaching with fine traditional Chinese culture. At the same time, teachers should keep learning and enhance their own cultural literacy. Only by internalizing it in their minds and externalizing it in their actions can they help awaken students' deep thinking about fine traditional Chinese culture, cultivate students' cultural confidence, and enable students to become inheritors of fine traditional Chinese culture.

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