

A Study on Local Culture Transmission in Spoken English Teaching: Taking Chu Culture as a Carrier

Xuan Gao

Yangtze University College of Arts and Sciences, Jingzhou, Hubei, China

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Abstract: With the increasing importance of cross-cultural communication skills in foreign language teaching, local culture, as an important part of Chinese culture, has become increasingly valuable in external dissemination. In order to improve the cultural inheritance of oral English teaching and strengthen the cultivation of students' oral communication ability, this paper takes Chu Culture as the carrier to carry out a study on the local cultural inheritance in oral English teaching. It reviews the current status and achievements of Chu Culture inheritance, points out its unique value and existing problems in integrating it into oral teaching, and, based on the practical teaching situations of multiple schools, proposes four-level inheritance strategies: optimizing content development, strengthening teacher training, establishing oral teaching norms, and enhancing practical guidance. The results can help to integrate Chu Culture into oral English teaching, enrich the cultural attributes of local English teaching, improve students' cross-cultural expression ability, and enhance students' cultural confidence.

Keywords: Chu Culture; Oral English teaching; Local culture inheritance

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1. Introduction

The *National Standard for Undergraduate Teaching Quality of Foreign Language Majors in Colleges and Universities* issued by the Ministry of Education in 2022 clearly states that foreign language majors should have "Chinese feelings and international perspectives," and be able to skillfully use foreign languages to tell Chinese stories and disseminate Chinese excellent culture. Integrating local culture, as the in-situ expression of excellent Chinese traditional culture, into oral English teaching can significantly improve teaching quality. Chu Hua, as one of the important sources of Chinese civilization, is a cultural IP with distinct regional characteristics. Currently, scholars both at home and abroad have conducted various studies on the issue of cultural integration in foreign language teaching, including the construction of cultural materials and the innovation of teaching methods, etc. ^[1]. This also provides a framework for this research. However, there

is still little existing research focusing on the content of classroom teaching practice of local culture. Based on this, this paper explores the path of integrating local characteristic culture into English oral teaching, promotes the external dissemination of local culture, enhances the experiential nature of oral teaching, and provides certain references for the reform of English teaching.

2. Summary of the current situation of Chu Culture transmission

2.1. Contemporary dissemination of the main contents of Chu Culture

The contemporary dissemination of Chu Culture has recently taken on a pattern of “official leadership, diversified participation.” During the first Chu Culture Festival in 2023, the organizing committee set up an office and 12 working groups, vigorously promoting the contemporary dissemination of Chu Culture ^[2]. This publicity campaign also generated 145 hot topics on popular platforms across the internet, with a cumulative reading volume exceeding 790 million. Jingzhou introduced 64 key projects worth over 500 million yuan, with a total investment of 129.73 billion yuan. During the event, 12 dynamic performances of outstanding local operas attracted 2 million people to listen to Chu music and search for Chu roots online and offline, and 110,000 people visited the Jingzhou Museum, releasing the vitality and charm of traditional culture. In terms of external communication, the international influence of Chu Culture is also increasing, and many Confucius Institutes have opened courses related to Chu Culture, as shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Current situation of Chu Culture transmission

Data category	Specific indicator	Value
Chu Culture Communication Data	Number of Hot Topics Across the Network	145
	Total Topic Readership	Over 790 million
	Number of Signed Projects in Jingzhou Worth Over 500 Million Yuan	64
	Total Project Investment	129.73 billion yuan
Chu Culture Communication Data	Number of Participants in Local Opera Performances	2 million person-times
	Number of Visitors to Jingzhou Museum	110,000 person-times

It can be seen that the dissemination of Chu Culture has already gained a broad social foundation and considerable influence. Incorporating Chu Culture into the English language teaching system is of practical necessity ^[3].

2.2. Current paths and effects of the external dissemination of Chu Culture

In terms of communication paths, the external communication of Chu Culture is mainly through official cultural exchange activities and the export of cultural products, as well as some academic exchanges and cooperation. For example, the Department of Culture and Tourism of Hubei Province holds Chu Culture Week activities overseas every year, as well as the export of lacquer replicas, books related to Chu Ci, and chime bells in Jingzhou and other places in Hubei Province ^[4]. Can bring different degrees of Chu Culture external communication. Universities like Wuhan University, Central China Normal University, and Yangtze University have established cooperation mechanisms in the field of Chu Culture research and held international academic symposiums on Chu Culture, which have attracted participation from scholars from various countries. From the perspective of communication effectiveness, most of the existing communication paths show Chu Culture, but there are few activities that attract scholars and ordinary people from all over the

country to participate in the interaction of Chu Culture. Most activities are held by the government, and the proportion of private activities is low ^[5]. Most of the dissemination activities focus on the display of cultural relics, but have not yet focused on the display of the core spirit of Chu Culture and the interpretation of its contemporary value. Compared to national-level cultural IPs such as the Palace Museum and the Terracotta Army, the external dissemination effect of Chu Culture still needs to be improved. At present, oral English teaching in schools is generally based on British and American cultural scenes, with less content related to Chinese culture and even less content related to traditional local culture.

3. Current problems of Chu Culture in the inheritance of spoken English teaching

3.1. Lack of relevant content on Chu Culture in the textbook system

The textbook serves as the carrier of teaching content. However, the commonly used English textbooks in China rarely cover the content related to Chu Culture ^[6]. The school-based curriculum systems established by various schools also have limited content related to Chu Culture, and most of the related cultural content mainly focuses on introducing cities and cultural relics. The existing textbook system has not yet presented the main content of Chu Culture systematically. The lack of content in textbooks also leads to the dilemma that teachers often face a lack of content when teaching local culture. Even if some teachers take the initiative to integrate local culture into oral English teaching, there is also a lack of systematic teaching resources. Teachers can only introduce some common knowledge of Chu Culture sporadically, and cannot carry out systematic and complete oral English teaching for students ^[7]. In the oral English teaching of Chu Culture in some schools, there is a lack of supporting teaching plans and related teaching resources. Teachers need to spend a lot of time and energy to build a curriculum system when carrying out systematic teaching, which has become one of the main obstacles to the integration of Chu Culture into oral English teaching.

3.2. Insufficient cultural reserve and teaching ability of teachers in cross-cultural teaching

In the implementation of teaching, English teachers' cultural reserve and cross-cultural teaching ability directly determine the effect of integrating local culture into the teaching system. However, at present, English teachers in some schools mainly focus on Western culture in terms of cultural reserve and lack systematic knowledge reserve of local traditional culture ^[8]. Most teachers have only received systematic education on British and American cultures and rarely studied the systematic knowledge content of Chu Culture. The proportion of teachers who can proficiently explain Chu Culture in English is relatively small. Teachers' own lack of understanding of Chu Culture also makes it difficult for them to accurately and deeply design the oral teaching content of Chu Culture and guide students to carry out in-depth cultural discussion. Most teachers also lack systematic training to integrate local culture into language teaching. Some teachers even worry that the integration of cultural content and oral English teaching will take up the time of language training. Most schools pay more attention to the training of teachers' language skills, and relatively ignore the cultivation of teachers' cultural teaching ability.

3.3. Lack of a systematic norm for English expressions of Chu Culture

The unified and standardized expression system is the basis for the external communication of Chu Culture, and it is also an important support for oral practice. However, there are many problems in the current English

translations related to Chu Culture, and there is a lack of unified, systematic standards ^[9]. For instance, the term “Chu Culture” has various translations such as “Chu Culture,” “Chu Civilization,” and “Ch’u Culture,” and “Chu Ci” has multiple expressions like “Songs of Chu,” “Elegies of Chu,” etc. Ordinary students find it difficult to determine which translation is more accurate when using it. For some proper nouns with Chu cultural characteristics, such as “Chime-bells of Marquis Yi of the Zeng State,” “Driving wretched cart in ragged clothes to clear thorny undergrowth of wild mountains,” and “Fenghuang Tong,” there is a lack of authoritative English translation standards in current teaching, making it difficult for teachers to provide precise guidance to students during oral teaching. Students, in order to avoid ambiguous expressions in their oral communication, will also reduce the use of oral communication content related to Chu Culture. At present, in the English academic content related to the external communication of Chu Culture in the academic circle, different scholars also show great differences in the translation methods of the same term. The lack of expression standards not only increases the difficulty of students’ learning and teachers’ teaching, but also affects the unity and accuracy of the external communication of Chu Culture.

As the main learners, the degree of students’ attention to the English expression of local culture directly affects the actual effect of integrating Chu Culture into oral language teaching. However, due to the influence of many factors, students generally pay more attention to Western culture than local culture, especially in the expression of oral English. Most students are used to obtaining oral resources and materials from British and American literary works, film and television works, and few students take the initiative to understand the English expression of Chu Culture. Some students believe that learning English means learning Western culture, and they think that learning the English expression of local culture has no significant help in improving English proficiency and may even affect the learning effect of standard English. Chinese culture, especially local culture, is also rarely involved in the evaluation standards of students’ oral expression and in standardized tests such as CET-4 and CET-6 and IELTS and TOEFL. In English learning, students are more willing to spend time studying the content that is likely to appear in the exams. This cognitive bias and lack of motivation cause students’ low willingness to learn the English expression of Chu Culture, which has also become an important obstacle for Chu Culture to be integrated into English teaching.

4. The inheritance strategy of Chu Culture in oral English teaching

4.1. Developing special oral teaching resources with Chu Culture characteristics

In order to enrich the teaching materials system for the integration of Chu Culture into spoken English, local education authorities should organize foreign language teachers in schools and experts in Chu Culture research to jointly develop characteristic spoken English teaching materials ^[10]. Firstly, in the compilation of the textbooks, the developers should create systematic oral language teaching content for students of different grades and different English proficiency levels. In the existing oral language teaching curriculum system, incorporate basic oral language training related to historical figures, cultural relics, traditional festivals, etc., of Chu Culture, as well as cross-cultural comparison content such as comparing Chu Ci with Shakespeare’s poetry and Chu Culture with ancient Greek culture. This will guide students to conduct more systematic cultural thinking and oral expression. Secondly, schools should also enrich the resource presentation of oral English teaching, make full use of English short videos, audio books, VR virtual scenes, and other multimedia teaching resources, enhance the interest and interactivity of oral English teaching, so that students

can learn cultural knowledge in an immersive experience and carry out systematic language expression. Local schools should be encouraged to develop school-based curriculum resources by combining their own characteristics and forming a system of oral English teaching content with regional characteristics.

4.2. Conducting special training for teachers on cross-cultural teaching

The school should strengthen the special training for teachers' cross-cultural oral teaching skills. In collaboration with institutions for Chu Culture research, it should regularly invite experts in Chu Culture to give special lectures to English teachers, enhancing their understanding of the main connotations and contemporary value of the Chu Culture history, and helping them establish a systematic understanding of Chu Culture. This ensures that teachers can accurately explain relevant content of Chu Culture when guiding students in oral expression. At the same time, schools should also actively organize teachers to integrate Chu cultural content into language teaching through teaching and discussion, and actively promote cultural comparison teaching, task-based teaching, project-based learning, and so on in the class, so as to integrate cultural content with hot topics of oral knowledge. In addition, the school should establish a mechanism for teacher cultural dissemination practice, regularly organizing English teachers to participate in Chu Culture foreign exchange activities and serving as volunteers for Chu Culture activities, to enhance teachers' cross-cultural communication ability and improve the existing teacher performance evaluation and assessment system. For teachers who have achieved good results in effectively integrating local culture into oral English teaching, teaching rewards and professional title evaluation will be given, and the enthusiasm of teachers to carry out integrated teaching will be fully aroused, and their exemplary and leading role will be played.

4.3. Establishing a unified and standardized system for the English expression of Chu Culture

Schools should actively participate in the construction activities of the English expression standardization system of Chu Culture. Together with experts in Chu Culture research, translation experts, and foreign language education experts, they should jointly formulate the English translation norms for the core terms of Chu Culture. Schools should clarify the standard translation methods of Chu Culture-related content in different contexts, and add relevant supplementary explanations for different translations, so as to facilitate teachers in carrying out practical teaching. During the process of oral language teaching, teachers can also encourage students to jointly explore the uniqueness of the connotation of Chu Culture, refer to the standard translations of other local cultures, and translate and explain the special vocabulary of Chu Culture. Teachers can also lead students to show the translation results discussed in class on the new media platform and the school's external communication platform, and use these words in the external publicity materials, so as to guide students to become active practitioners of the external communication of Chu Culture. Teachers should also fully mobilize students' initiative to actively participate in oral English expression and build multi-level oral practice platforms for students, such as holding English speech competitions and Chu Culture short-video production competitions, etc. Stimulate students' initiative to participate in oral communication and enhance interest in the activities.

5. Conclusion

Chu Culture, as an important part of China's excellent traditional culture, holds significant value in enriching

the content of English oral language teaching and enhancing students' cross-cultural communication skills. When integrating Chu Culture into English oral language teaching in schools, efforts should be made to address various issues such as the lack of teaching materials, insufficient teacher capabilities, absence of expression norms, and low student attention. Strategies for systematic content development, teacher training, system construction, and platform establishment should be developed to form a distinctive development path for English oral language teaching. In the future, the integration of Chu Culture into English oral language teaching will require the formation of more systematic teaching support. Enhance the collaborative participation of educational authorities, schools, and cultural institutions to form a joint force for the inheritance of Chu Culture, so that Chu Culture, an ancient regional civilization, can go to the world through oral English communication in the new era, and enhance the international influence of Chinese culture.

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