

Original Paper

Integrating the Community Awareness into American Literature Teaching for Multi-Ethnic Frontier Universities: Text-based Comparative Teaching Strategy

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Abstract

As a core major course for English undergraduates, A History of American Literature covers a large number of ethnic and immigrant literary texts, which provide natural comparative perspectives for cross-cultural humanistic education. For multi-ethnic frontier universities in Yunnan, the routine teaching of this course is faced with the prominent dilemma of lacking localized supporting materials and fragmented excavation of humanistic connotations disconnected from local ethnic life. Based on undergraduate research training project, this study adopts three qualitative research methods including literature sorting, close textual reading and teaching case induction. Nine canonical American literary works across five literary periods are selected to sort literary themes of ethnic harmony and cross-cultural exchange. Centered on text-based comparative reading, this paper constructs a three-stage closed-loop teaching framework including pre-class material preparation, in-class progressive speculation and after-class reflective tasks, and puts forward standardized classroom operation norms, so as to provide replicable localized teaching strategies for literature teachers in frontier colleges and realize the integrated cultivation of literary appreciation ability and inclusive humanistic quality. This complete targeted teaching design fully fits the key overall new liberal arts construction reform demands of local border ethnic higher education institutions in southwest China.

Keywords

curriculum ideological education, a history of American literature, community awareness, multi-ethnic frontier universities, comparative text teaching

1. Introduction

Under the guidance of national documents on curriculum ideological construction and ethnic unity education, foreign language literature teaching has shifted its single knowledge-oriented goal to the compound training objective of literary competence and humanistic literacy. The fundamental task of fostering virtue through education requires all professional courses to combine knowledge teaching with value shaping instead of separating literary learning from humanistic cultivation. Courses like A History of American Literature involve massive immigrant and racial narratives, which can form natural comparative dialogues with the integrated multi-ethnic reality of Yunnan province with 25 indigenous ethnic groups. As a border province with complex multicultural environments, Yunnan's college students grow up under dual cultural influences of ethnic folk customs and mainstream national culture. Such unique life experience enables them to generate real emotional resonance when discussing themes of ethnic communication, cultural integration and group mutual aid in literary texts, which creates rare favorable conditions for carrying out comparative literary teaching with local cultural materials.

However, current frontline teaching still has two obvious practical defects that hinder the quality improvement of curriculum ideological infiltration. First, most teachers lack classified localized comparative materials sorted by literary units, resulting in scattered excavation of humanistic elements without systematic logical threads. Many teachers only collect scattered online articles temporarily before class, which cannot form stable comparative dialogue between Western racial stories and students' daily ethnic life experience. Second, most existing research focuses on inland comprehensive universities with single ethnic composition, while few targeted teaching frameworks are developed for frontier ethnic colleges, leading to rigid value infiltration separated from literary aesthetics (Zhang, 2024). In many inland teaching designs, teachers first finish text analysis and then add independent ideological preaching links, which easily makes students resist humanistic guidance and weakens the persuasive power of value education.

Domestic and overseas literature review shows clear research gaps worthy of further exploration. Overseas pedagogy of American ethnic literature takes the contradiction analysis of Western racial society as the core, and its theoretical system cannot be mechanically transplanted to China's integrated multi-ethnic education system. Western multicultural teaching theories are derived from the single ethnic governance model of capitalist countries, which cannot match China's institutional system of unified leadership and multi-ethnic coexistence. Domestic mainstream research takes cultural confidence as the core research objective, yet complete localized text comparison systems suitable for Yunnan's regional characteristics are still insufficient (Liu, 2023; Wen, 2021). Most existing comparative teaching designs only carry out Sino-Western cultural contrast at a macro level, without connecting regional minority culture in border areas with American ethnic literary plots for targeted micro-text comparison. Based on the above research deficiencies, this paper takes qualitative text and

case research to build a localized teaching framework, which provides operable classroom schemes for American literature teaching in border ethnic universities.

Against the general background of new liberal arts educational reform across Chinese higher education institutions, the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) teaching model has been widely promoted and applied in foreign language major courses. The four-dimensional core logic of CLIL covers content, language, cognition and culture, requiring teachers to integrate literary knowledge learning, English skill training and implicit humanistic guidance into one coherent classroom process without artificial segmentation. Traditional lecture-dominated American literature classrooms only focus on explaining literary plots and language points, ignoring students' subjective speculative ability and their connection with real life. For frontier ethnic students, mechanical memorization of Western literary plots cannot trigger deep thinking on ethnic harmony and cultural coexistence. This study fully absorbs the core advantages of CLIL student-centered teaching logic, embeds localized ethnic comparative discussion links into every independent teaching unit, and takes students' personal ethnic life experience as the starting point of all cross-cultural speculation activities, so that curriculum ideological education can be rooted in students' real life and avoid empty preaching detached from texts and reality.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overseas Research on Multicultural American Literature Teaching

Overseas research on ethnic American literary teaching focuses on critical reading of racial and immigrant texts, exploring students' critical consciousness of social prejudice (Dun, 2013). Dunbar (2013) pointed out two typical reading biases in multicultural literature classrooms: over-universalization and othering foreign ethnic groups, yet the research fails to combine regional local culture to build bidirectional comparative reading links (Dun, 2013). In general, overseas teaching design lacks localized comparative paths adapted to China's multi-ethnic education demands.

2.2 Domestic Research on Ideological Construction of American Literature Courses

Since 2020, domestic foreign language academia has formed two mainstream research orientations on curriculum ideology. The first orientation excavates Chinese cultural elements in American texts to carry out Sino-Western comparison and enhance cultural identity. Liu (2024) proposed integrating traditional Chinese culture into Anglo-American literature teaching to resolve the "Chinese cultural aphasia" of foreign language majors, but the research does not involve frontier ethnic teaching scenarios (Liu, 2024). The second orientation extracts humanitarian spirits such as equality and solidarity from literary works to realize implicit value guidance. Wen (2021) built a universal implementation framework for foreign language curriculum ideology, yet most research objects are inland universities without localized material design for border areas. Most existing achievements are scattered single-lesson cases without full-cycle systematic resource banks for literature courses.

2.3 Research on Community Awareness in Foreign Language Teaching

Current domestic studies integrating the sense of community for the Chinese nation into university teaching mostly target public English and ethnic bilingual courses, while special research on core literary courses such as *A History of American Literature* is insufficient. Zhang (2024) explored foreign language teaching paths for frontier ethnic universities, but did not take American literary texts as core analysis carriers. Domestic research represented by Zhou et al. (2025) expands the OBE curriculum ideological construction model applicable to college English, and its resource classification ideas provide supplementary reference for the material construction of this paper (Zhou & He, 2025). This study makes up the above deficiencies via textual sorting and case induction.

3. Research Methodology

This research adopts three interrelated qualitative research approaches, with all research work centered on text collation, teaching case induction and tiered classroom strategy design.

3.1 Literature Sorting Method

Three categories of documents are systematically organized for theoretical support: national policy documents on curriculum ideology and ethnic unity education; domestic and foreign monographs on American ethnic literature; domestic research on frontier foreign language teaching and curriculum ideology. Before formal sorting, this research first sets screening standards for documents: priority select papers taking border multi-areas and American literature teaching as dual research objects, filter out macro theoretical papers without specific classroom operation schemes. All collected documents are sorted to summarize the advantages and limitations of existing teaching paths and clarify the overall research framework and innovative points of this paper. The innovation of this literature sorting work lies in separating inland university teaching modes and border regional teaching experience, clearly distinguishing the two types of research with different applicable objects, so as to avoid mechanically copying inland teaching models to frontier classrooms.

3.2 Close Textual Reading Method

Nine representative literary works covering five American literary eras are selected for paragraph-by-paragraph intensive reading: *A Model of Christian Charity*, *Walden*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Old Man and the Sea*, *The Joy Luck Club*, *Disgrace*. When carrying out detailed reading, this research does not carry out comprehensive analysis of the whole text, but locks paragraphs closely related to ethnic identity, racial conflict and cross-cultural communication as key analysis fragments, and marks corresponding matching themes of Yunnan multi-ethnic life. The research extracts text fragments related to ethnic communication and cultural collision, sorts out literary motifs that can form mild comparison with Yunnan's multi-ethnic reality, and forms standardized annotated reading materials for classroom use. Among all texts, *The Joy Luck Club* is the core research carrier for cross-cultural identity discussion, and its multi-layer immigrant identity confusion plot can form natural comparative topics with local

minority teenagers' dual cultural identity cognition.

3.3 Teaching Case Induction Method

Public ideological teaching cases of American literature from multiple domestic universities are collected, combined with frontline teaching experience of Yunnan Normal University's literature instructors. During case induction, this research eliminates teaching schemes only suitable for inland single-ethnic student groups, and retains cases with cross-cultural comparison links combined with local regional culture. Suitable group discussion activities and lightweight after-class tasks are summarized. Local humanistic materials recording multi-ethnic mutual learning in Yunnan are matched with corresponding literary texts one by one to form replicable full-cycle classroom operation steps. The collected local materials cover ethnic folk stories, inter-ethnic mutual aid records and bilingual literary excerpts, which are all real cultural materials collected from Yunnan local public cultural platforms, with strong authenticity and student affinity.

4. Three-tiered Comparative Teaching Framework

Following the core principle of "text as core, comparison as bridge, independent speculation as goal", this paper constructs a closed-loop teaching system without independent ideological lecture sessions. All humanistic reflection links are embedded into routine literary appreciation. The whole framework strictly follows the normal semester teaching progress of A History of American Literature, and each stage's tasks match the teaching rhythm of different literary periods, which will not increase extra teaching burden for teachers or heavy homework pressure for students.

4.1 Pre-class: Classified Supporting Material Construction

Two types of supporting materials are developed. The first is annotated literary excerpts marked with ethnic relation paragraphs and neutral theme explanations, reserving independent thinking space without single fixed conclusions. Each group of annotated materials corresponds to one teaching chapter, and the annotation content only explains historical background and text logic, without preset unified value judgment, leaving sufficient discussion space for students' group exchange in class. The second is localized comparative materials collecting objective records of Yunnan's multi-ethnic coexistence, forming mild contrast with racial conflict plots in American texts and building cross-cultural discussion bridges. All local materials are divided into three thematic catalogs: ethnic mutual assistance, cultural identity and cross-cultural communication, which are convenient for teachers to quickly match corresponding literary chapters before class and realize one-to-one correspondence between text themes and local cultural cases.

4.2 In-class: Progressive Three-step Teaching Flow

Class teaching follows standard literary schedule without extra independent teaching hours. The design of each step takes the cognitive characteristics of minority students in frontier colleges into full consideration, controlling the difficulty of discussion topics within students' accessible range, avoiding overly abstract academic questions that reduce students' participation willingness. Step one completes

conventional plot, character and writing technique analysis to extract ethnic symbiosis motifs. Teachers can draw simple theme mind maps on the blackboard to sort out complex racial clues in texts, helping students quickly grasp the core comparison direction of this class. Step two organizes group open discussion with localized materials, allowing free student viewpoints without unified standard answers. The group size is controlled at 4–6 people to guarantee every student has speaking opportunities, especially minority students with rich ethnic life experience. Step three returns to original text aesthetic sublimation, integrating cross-cultural reflection into literary connotation analysis and keeping literary appreciation as the permanent classroom main line.

4.3 After-class: Lightweight Reflective Assignments

Low-burden reflective essays and brief in-class sharing are designed to extend humanistic thinking without heavy academic pressure. Apart from short reflective articles, this research adds two differentiated after-class tasks for students with different English levels: basic level students only need to write 300-word simple comparative records; advanced students can complete short group presentation drafts combining local ethnic materials. Students record personal reflections on multicultural coexistence based on learned texts, and short student sharing sessions are set at the beginning of each new class to consolidate implicit cultivation effects. All after-class tasks are included in usual formative assessment with low weight, taking the stimulation of students' thinking as the core goal rather than rigid score evaluation.

4.4 Standardized Teaching Norms

Three unified operational norms are summarized: text priority norm (all expansion must be based on original texts); implicit infiltration norm (no independent ideological lectures); open speculation norm (respect diverse student viewpoints without rigid unified conclusions). These three norms restrict teachers' classroom operation behaviors from three dimensions of teaching foundation, infiltration mode and student subjectivity, avoiding two extreme phenomena of empty value preaching and complete neglect of humanistic guidance in daily teaching.

5. Discussion

5.1 Theoretical Value

This study supplements localized curriculum ideological research for frontier ethnic university American literature teaching. Most previous relevant papers only stay at the level of macro theoretical deduction, lacking complete operable classroom supporting systems matched with border regional characteristics. Distinct from previous theoretical discussion papers, this research forms a complete pre-class, in-class and after-class closed-loop teaching logic based on text reading and case induction. It clearly distinguishes the educational positioning of literary professional courses and independent ideological theory courses: literary courses realize value guidance through text aesthetic comparison, while ideological courses carry out systematic theoretical explanation, forming complementary collaborative education relations, and provides standardized qualitative research paradigms for similar

foreign language literature research in other border colleges. The research enriches the application cases of CLIL teaching model in multi-ethnic frontier foreign language classrooms, expanding the applicable scope of this foreign language teaching theory to regional ethnic college scenarios.

5.2 Practical Significance

The tiered comparative teaching framework has direct operability for Yunnan frontline teachers. For most frontier foreign language teachers, the biggest teaching difficulty lies in the lack of systematic localized comparison resources and operable classroom discussion designs. Classified supporting materials sorted in this research can be directly printed and used in each class, greatly reducing teachers' time cost of temporary material collection and arrangement. The three-step progressive classroom mode avoids rigid indoctrination, conforming to the implicit education requirement of foreign language curriculum ideology. The overall framework is universal; universities in Guangxi, Guizhou only need to replace regional cultural materials to apply this teaching model. From the perspective of student development, this set of design takes their ethnic life experience as the entry point of learning, effectively improves classroom participation and the depth of cross-cultural critical thinking, realizing the simultaneous promotion of literary professional ability and inclusive ethnic awareness. The regional cultural resource classification method adopted in this paper draws on the research results of Chen (2026), which can be popularized to southwest border provincial colleges.

5.3 Research Limitations

Restricted by the research cycle of undergraduate training projects, this study has two limitations. First, only qualitative text and case research are adopted without long-term continuous classroom tracking and quantitative data statistics, so the specific influence degree of this framework on students' inclusive cognition cannot be accurately quantified. Follow-up research can cooperate with multiple frontier colleges to carry out semester-long teaching tracking and questionnaire data collection to supplement quantitative research results. Second, only mainstream canonical texts are selected, while modern and postmodern niche ethnic literary works are not covered, which can be supplemented and expanded by expanding the reading text list in subsequent research.

6. Conclusion

Taking A History of American Literature course of Yunnan Normal University as the research object, this study adopts literature sorting, close textual reading and teaching case induction to explore localized comparative teaching strategies integrating community awareness for multi-ethnic frontier universities. In the context of new liberal arts reform and ethnic unity education requirements, this research solves two prominent practical teaching pain points of border colleges: insufficient localized comparison materials and separated literary appreciation and value guidance. A three-stage closed-loop teaching system covering pre-class material sorting, layered in-class speculation and lightweight after-class reflection is constructed, with specific classroom steps and three unified teaching norms proposed. The whole teaching system fully absorbs the student-centered logic of CLIL theory, takes

literary text appreciation as the permanent main line of teaching, and realizes gentle implicit humanistic guidance through objective cross-cultural comparison and students' autonomous reflection.

The proposed framework fundamentally changes the single lecture mode of traditional American literature classrooms, builds a two-way comparative dialogue channel between Western ethnic literary narratives and Yunnan multi-ethnic real life, and helps frontier ethnic students form rational, inclusive cross-cultural thinking while mastering literary professional knowledge. For foreign language instructors undertaking American literature teaching in multi-ethnic frontier universities, this replicable teaching framework can be directly applied to daily semester teaching and adjusted flexibly according to school's own ethnic student composition and local cultural resources. Follow-up relevant research can expand the coverage of literary reading texts, collect richer regional folk cultural materials from other border provinces, and combine quantitative classroom tracking data to further optimize the matching degree between this comparative teaching framework and the humanistic education demands of frontier university literature classrooms.

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