

Original Paper

The Value and Practical Path of Developing an English Aesthetic Curriculum in Universities

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Received: May 23, 2024

Accepted: June 24, 2024

Online Published: July 1, 2024

doi:10.22158/selt.v12n3p1

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/selt.v12n3p1>

Abstract

The English-taught cross-cultural aesthetic courses in universities play a crucial role in promoting the spirit of art education and strengthening cultural confidence. They possess both theoretical value and practical significance. Currently, the number of English aesthetic education courses offered by domestic universities is relatively small, and there are issues such as scattered themes, fragmented teaching designs, and unclear methods. This article explores the construction and development models, as well as practical paths of English aesthetic education courses. It aims to expand the practical space and development opportunities for cross-cultural art education courses, seeking appropriate avenues and methodological resources for the contemporary practice and the development of aesthetic education.

Keywords

Higher education, Aesthetic education, Spirit of Chinese aesthetic

1. Background and Contemporary Requirements for the Construction of an English Aesthetic Program

The report of the 20th National Congress puts "enhancing the spreading power and influence of Chinese civilization" as one of the contents of promoting cultural self-confidence and self-improvement. "Accelerating the construction of the Chinese discourse and the Chinese narrative system, telling Chinese stories, spreading Chinese voices, and presenting a credible, lovable, and respectable image of China. ... deepen civilization exchanges and mutual understanding, and promote Chinese culture to better reach out to the world" (Xi, 2022). General Secretary Xi also mentioned in the collective study that "we should better promote Chinese culture to go out, to explain and promote to the world more excellent culture with Chinese characteristics, embodying the spirit of China, and containing the wisdom of China, by means of writing, spreading the voice of China, and educating the people" (Xi,

2021). Strengthening civilization exchanges and mutual understanding requires a "Chinese solution" to spread Chinese culture, learn from each other, and promote exchanges and dialogues among different civilizations. As one of the programs to tell China's story well, aesthetic education is the microphone to convey the voice of culture and to educate people. Telling the Chinese story through aesthetic education is a way to promote Chinese culture to the world.

The construction of aesthetic education programs in colleges and universities is an important way to spread the excellent traditional Chinese culture and promote the spirit of Chinese aesthetic education, and its role should not be ignored. The aesthetic education program in colleges and universities not only aims to enhance students' aesthetic literacy and stimulate innovative thinking, but also is a path that can lead students to understand and tell the Chinese story in an immersive way. The construction of an English aesthetic curriculum is a vehicle for strengthening the international communication capacity of Chinese culture and deepening the exchange and mutual understanding of world civilizations. Spreading Chinese aesthetic culture in English is a way to reflect the Chinese people's mind and personality, while the aesthetic education curriculum is an important channel for educating people through beauty and mutual understanding of civilizations.

The purpose of this paper is to study a path to excavate and disseminate the spirit of Chinese aesthetics through an English aesthetic course. The purpose of the construction of an English aesthetic course is to deepen cultural self-confidence, carry forward the spirit of Chinese aesthetic education, explore resources from traditional aesthetics, take the acceleration of the dissemination of Chinese culture as its own responsibility, and construct Chinese discourse and Chinese narrative system. Taking the first English aesthetic course "Chinese Aesthetic Journey" opened by Northwestern Polytechnical University as an example, this paper discusses the construction path of the English aesthetic course and how to tell the Chinese story and disseminate the Chinese voice in foreign languages.

2. The Current Status and Dilemma of Offering an English Aesthetic Course

"Deepening the comprehensive reform of aesthetic education in colleges and universities" is the necessary way for the development of aesthetic education in colleges and universities. The curriculum system of aesthetic education in colleges and universities is diversified, multidisciplinary, and interdisciplinary, and the construction of the mechanism of aesthetic education in colleges and universities for everyone should include the popularization of aesthetic courses in English. Promoting the education and teaching reform of these types of courses is essential for perfecting the aesthetic education curriculum system. However, the number of courses offered by domestic colleges and universities that teach Chinese aesthetic culture in English is relatively scarce at present, and the themes are scattered, with the following characteristics:

(1) Deepen the audience's understanding of Chinese culture: the course content focuses on Chinese history, philosophy, literature and art, etc. Through the full English textbooks and lectures, students can gain a deeper understanding of Chinese culture while improving their English proficiency.

(2) Adoption of interdisciplinary integrated teaching: Courses are designed to involve the integration of history, literature, art and social development, to help students understand Chinese culture from multiple perspectives, and to develop comprehensive analytical skills and interdisciplinary thinking. Some courses cover an all-encompassing range of Chinese art disciplines, crafts and technologies, schools of thought, rituals and customs, and culture in a limited number of class hours. The advantage of the broad and complex orientation of the course content is that it can efficiently lead students to familiarize themselves with Chinese culture. However, the lack of focus and distinctiveness of the subject matter leads to a weak academic and professional nature, preventing the course from delving into specific aesthetic and cultural phenomena, which can result in students not fully understanding the subject matter and remaining in a simple transfer of knowledge.

(3) Expanding Global Perspectives: Exploring the global impact of Chinese culture broadens students' international perspectives and enhances their competitiveness in the international environment. The cross-cultural perspective places Chinese culture in a global cultural context, helping non-native students understand the similarities and differences between Chinese art and other cultures, and enhancing cultural relativity and global awareness.

There are also limitations in the fully English-medium Chinese aesthetic and cultural courses that have been offered:

First, the orientation of the courses is not clear. There are two types of orientation: one is to use English to teach Chinese culture and art, which is aimed at an international audience, and its goal is to construct a path for international friends to recognize China. The other is to teach English through Chinese stories, targeting students who want to learn English. The objectives of the courses are sometimes ambiguous, as they want to serve both international and Chinese students; the former is positioned to popularize knowledge, while the latter focuses on language teaching, which leads to unclear types of courses and objectives and makes it difficult to achieve the expected effect of aesthetic education and cultural dissemination. These two types of courses have different audience orientations, and their content should be differentiated.

Secondly, the instructional design is characterized by fragmentation, and the systematic construction is more insufficient. The structure of such courses is mostly loose, with a wide range of Chinese cultural themes, covering a strong popularization. However, it leads to vague positioning and weak systematization of the course type, which makes it impossible for students to have a deep understanding of the development of Chinese aesthetics and its ideological connotations. The different orientation of the curriculum makes this type of course unable to follow the academic logic of aesthetic education and thus get systematic development.

Finally, in terms of content, the content of full English courses for aesthetic and cultural themes is set vaguely and does not form a focus. Courses on Chinese culture taught in English format often do not have a focal point, the theme is not distinct and prominent, and there is a problem of generalization in the content structure.

In short, the content of the courses is generally broader and covers too much ground, with such problems as generalized educational objectives, cluttered content, unclear methodology, and confusion between professional education in English and education in aesthetics, which is imperfect in terms of both the focus, scale, and standardization of the courses. The provision of English-teaching aesthetic education courses has not yet formed a systematic system, and the teaching effect has yet to be improved. There are few empirical studies on how to teach Chinese aesthetic culture courses in English in colleges and universities at home and abroad. Related teaching and research studies also focus on how to disseminate Chinese culture in English classes in colleges and universities, and there is no research that discusses the reform of English-medium teaching from the perspective of aesthetic education.

Based on the research of existing courses at home and abroad, this paper finds the orientation of the course, takes "educating people with beauty, touching people with beauty, cultivating people with beauty" as the guiding ideology, draws experience and methods and finds the direction and path from the actual teaching experience and the practice of aesthetic education, and devotes itself to the reform of education and teaching of the aesthetic education course of English-medium courses in colleges and universities, and builds an English liberal arts course focusing on Chinese aesthetics and culture. The aim of this course is to fill the gap of a full English course on aesthetics for the purpose of spreading Chinese aesthetic culture.

3. Goals and Practical Paths for the Construction of an English Aesthetic Program

Taking the English aesthetic course "Chinese Aesthetic Journey" offered by Northwestern Polytechnical University as an example, we explore the construction and development mode, and practice path of the English aesthetic course in terms of educational practice. The course construction is based on the students' demand for aesthetic education and public art courses. It aims to fill the lack of full English courses in the existing aesthetic education curriculum system.

The course is aimed at international students coming to China from universities and Chinese students who have a need for a full English language course. For international students, it provides a channel to deeply understand Chinese aesthetic culture, spreads China's excellent traditional culture to the world, and creates civilization exchanges and mutual understanding; for domestic students, it cultivates top-notch compound talents with international vision, improves Chinese students' ability to tell the story of Chinese aesthetic culture to the world in foreign languages, and develops their global competence. In terms of the construction goals of the aesthetic and cultural courses, we aim to cultivate students' cultural understanding, aesthetic perception, artistic expression ability, and creative thinking.

(1) Explore the innovative mode of ideology of the English aesthetic curriculum system to deepen cultural self-confidence.

The course "Chinese Aesthetic History" cruises through China's aesthetic history, deepens cultural confidence, and promotes the spirit of Chinese aesthetics. This course combs through the history of

aesthetics and literary phenomena in different eras of China, promoting the inheritance of excellent traditional Chinese culture and its promotion globally. It leads students to grasp Chinese aesthetic culture and artistic spirit. In retrospect, students will expand their aesthetic horizons and nourish their sexuality, and ultimately achieve the goal of promoting the spirit of Chinese aesthetic education and strengthening cultural self-confidence.

The English aesthetic course promotes the cultural identity of Chinese and foreign students towards the Chinese nation in the mutual learning of world civilizations, and enhances the dissemination power of Chinese culture. It takes the unity of beauty and goodness as the guiding ideology, and gives full play to the unique advantages of the emotional nature of aesthetic education and teaching. According to Du Wei, "the traditional concept of aesthetic education has a strong sense of family and country, focuses on the 'heart education' orientation of educating people, highlights the 'emotional education' characteristics of educating people, and pays attention to the 'implicit' method of educating people in aesthetic education's nurturing methods, etc., still have important theoretical and practical value today." (Du, 2019) The course creates contextual and immersive experiential learning modes to explore the spirit of Chinese aesthetic education and the aesthetic connotation, cultural spirit and ideological value of excellent Chinese art works. In the process of teaching, the construction of appreciation-experience-commentary mode, guiding students to think, cultivating students' perception, appreciation and discernment of traditional culture, improving students' aesthetic cultivation and spiritual pursuit, and realizing the fundamental goal of establishing morality and educating people in a value-led way. The fundamental goal of moral education is realized in value leadership.

In addition, a case library of course is constructed to present specific cases in the form of images, text and video. The cases of curriculum ideology in this course cover the following aspects: Chinese culture in the mutual appreciation of civilizations; building national self-confidence and cultural identity; craftsmanship in ancient artifacts; and the construction of ecological civilization. Taking the aesthetic culture of the Tang Dynasty as an example, starting from the introduction of the animal head agate cup, we use heuristic teaching method to let students understand the meaning of "mutual appreciation of civilizations" in the context of the Silk Road, and make clear the status and importance of Chinese culture in the world culture. Students will be able to cultivate their creative ability, comprehensive analytical ability and critical thinking ability.

(2) In terms of curriculum content, explore the path of spreading Chinese culture through English courses.

The construction goals of the English aesthetic course, "Chinese Aesthetic Journey", can be summarized into three points. First, to explore a feasible path to tell China's story through an English aesthetic course. To improve the argumentation of the construction idea of this type of course. Second, to promote the foreign dissemination of the Chinese discourse system. Explore the value of aesthetic education in traditional culture, and sort out the internal logic and path of explaining Chinese aesthetic culture. Finally, to enhance the national identity and cultural self-confidence of national students, to

guide students to have an international perspective, to strengthen their cultural comprehension, and to activate the value of excellent traditional culture in contemporary society.

The course combs through the veins of the development of Chinese aesthetic culture and artistic expressions, taps into the spirit of traditional aesthetics and the contemporary educational value of Chinese aesthetic culture, and guides students to perceive the laws of aesthetics, recognize the phenomena of beauty, and analyze the types of aesthetics by taking Chinese aesthetic cultural activities as the objects.

The course aims to promote the cultural identity of the Chinese nation among Chinese and foreign students in the mutual appreciation of the world's civilizations and to enhance the spread of Chinese culture. With the guiding principle of "educating people with beauty, touching people with beauty, and cultivating people with beauty", and following the characteristics of aesthetic education, the course will sort out the development of ancient Chinese aesthetics in chronological order and by type of art, so as to build up a course for learning and mastering the idea of Chinese aesthetic education in a macroscopic way.

The curriculum realizes the triple goal of value, ability and knowledge. It is expected that in terms of value objectives, taking beauty and goodness as the fundamental guide, internalizing knowledge in the process of aesthetic discernment, guiding students to understand the aesthetic dimension of the spirit of Chinese culture, carrying forward the spirit of Chinese aesthetic education, and cultivating patriotism. It also aims to make aesthetic education "for everyone", to use beauty as a medium, to strengthen cultural confidence, and to realize the exchange and mutual understanding between Chinese and foreign civilizations. In terms of competence objectives, students will develop global competence, learn how to tell a good Chinese story, enhance their aesthetic judgment, establish a correct aesthetic outlook, and learn to use aesthetic thinking to view reality. In terms of the intellectual objectives of curriculum, Chinese aesthetic and cultural activities are taken as objects to recognize the basic characteristics of traditional Chinese culture in different periods, compare the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western aesthetic ways of thinking, and grasp the laws and essence of beauty. To realize the multi-dimensional and comprehensive goal of educating people.

(3) In terms of pedagogy and teaching practice, the Chinese aesthetic spirit is integrated for Chinese and foreign audiences of different cultural backgrounds.

The English aesthetics course is characterized by cross-language, cross-discipline and cross-media. Facing two different audiences, international students and Chinese students, it is necessary to integrate the course content in the multicultural collision, innovate teaching methods in a targeted way, realize two different educational purposes, namely, to understand Chinese culture and to cultivate global competence, and ultimately to point to the teaching goal of "telling a good Chinese story".

The course is designed to increase the diversity of classroom teaching forms, give full play to the infiltration efficacy of aesthetic education, and revitalize the classroom. The basic knowledge spectrum and historical process of Chinese aesthetic culture is constructed by means of thematic research, with

equal emphasis on history and theory, following the problem-oriented heuristic teaching, and linking the logical clues of the course with the sense of problem. In terms of teaching design, the teaching method is optimized according to the characteristics of the course. The discursive nature of aesthetic thinking is explored to expand students' academic horizons. The theoretical part of the course is accompanied by images, videos and specific cases centering on the knowledge points, which improves the knowledge acceptance of international students and brings them into the aesthetic realm to understand the aesthetic dimension of Chinese cultural spirit.

In terms of methodology, according to the different characteristics of Chinese and foreign students, we adopt interactive teaching method, scenario teaching method, case study teaching method and other methods, combining classroom lectures, artwork appreciation, group discussions, guided reports, feedback and answers to questions, practical experience and other forms, realizing the transformation from teaching-oriented to learning-oriented, from classroom teaching to combining inside and outside the classroom, and increasing the immediate communication with the students. The problem-oriented learning method and the project-based learning method are used throughout the whole process of the class to guide the students' active thinking ability. The theory plus practice method is used to mobilize the students' participation and enthusiasm in order to deepen the understanding of aesthetic culture and to help the students perceive and understand the Chinese culture in the art experience, so as to achieve the effect of educating people and spreading culture in a subtle manner. The comparison of Chinese and Western cultures is adopted to deepen the students' acceptance and comprehension of the contents of the course. The students' acceptance and understanding of the course content will be deepened through the appropriate use of comparisons between Chinese and Western culture. We will shift from emphasizing the inculcation of knowledge to a model of education and evaluation that takes into account the enhancement of knowledge, ability, literacy and values.

The course emphasizes process evaluation and builds a comprehensive evaluation and assessment model. Flexible examination of students' comprehension ability is directed at cultivating comprehensive literacy, such as analyzing the phenomena and aesthetic culture involved behind the works and cases from the perspective of the works and cases. The course establishes a reform of the teaching evaluation system that focuses on the international student audience; shifts from result-based evaluation to an evaluation and assessment model that combines result and process; realizes all-round assessment of students in process evaluation. Classroom performance, group report, mid-term paper examination, and final subjective and objective examination together constitute a four-aspect course evaluation system of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

4. Conclusion

The English aesthetic course leads Chinese and foreign students to delve into the connotation of Chinese aesthetic culture in the form of English. It explores the path of spreading Chinese culture through the English course, embodies the kernel of cultural spirit with Chinese characteristics, expands

the vision of aesthetic education, and supplements and improves the localization-only weaknesses of the existing aesthetic education system.

Our aim is to create an open cultural exchange environment in the form of curriculum, so that domestic and international students can make progress together; to enhance cross-cultural exchange and mutual understanding of the spirit of Chinese aesthetic education, so as to achieve the value of the goal of promoting Chinese culture. Only by giving full play to the advantages of aesthetic education and infusing the classroom with Chinese aesthetics and culture can we tell a good Chinese story, let Chinese culture "go out", and promote the mutual understanding of the world's civilizations.

Fund Project

Northwestern Polytechnical University's Educational Teaching Reform Research Project "Cultivating People with Beauty, Spreading Voice with Culture - Research on the Reform and Practice of English Aesthetic Education General Education Course" Phased Achievements (2023JGY52).

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