

Original Paper

A Study on the Paths of Integrating Lingnan Culture into
Ideological and Political Education in College English
Curriculum

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Abstract

Amid the comprehensive advancement of ideological and political education in curriculum, college English teaching undertakes the dual mission of cultivating linguistic competence and guiding values. As an important component of excellent traditional Chinese culture, Lingnan culture boasts the spiritual traits of openness and inclusiveness, pragmatism and innovation, and the courage to be a pioneer, which provides abundant local cultural resources for the ideological and political education in college English curriculum. This paper mainly explores the significance, practical problems and specific implementation paths of integrating Lingnan culture into the ideological and political education in college English curriculum. It aims to realize the in-depth integration of language teaching and cultural education by reconstructing teaching contents, innovating teaching methods, optimizing evaluation mechanisms, improving teachers' professional quality and strengthening resource development, thereby enhancing students' cultural confidence and patriotism, and providing a referential practical model for the construction of ideological and political education of English courses in local universities.

Keywords

Lingnan Culture, College English, Ideological and Political Education in Curriculum, Implementation Paths

1. Introduction

Amid the comprehensive push for “fostering virtue through education” (li de shu ren) in higher education and the deepening of ideological-political education across curricula, college English bears

the dual responsibility of language teaching and character development. It should consciously fulfill the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education and assume the educational function of developing ideological and political education in the curriculum. (Xu, 2025) In 2019, the *Opinions of the Ministry of Education on Deepening the Reform of Undergraduate Education and Comprehensively Improving the Quality of Talent Cultivation* stressed that ideological-political education construction is a key link in fostering virtue, and that resources in all courses and methods should be fully tapped. (Ministry of Education, 2019) Subsequently, the *College English Teaching Guidelines (2020 Edition)* further stated that college English courses should consciously undertake the mission of value guidance, enhancing students' national identity, cultural confidence, and global vision while improving their comprehensive language application ability, and effectively strengthening their capacity to disseminate Chinese culture in English. These have charted the direction for college English teaching reform, namely, the necessity of achieving an organic unity between linguistic instrumentality and humanistic quality, and between knowledge transmission and value shaping. (The National College Foreign Language Teaching Steering Committee under the Ministry of Education, 2020) As an important branch of China's excellent traditional culture, how to organically integrate Lingnan culture into the ideological and political education of college English courses is of significant practical importance for enhancing the educational function of college English courses and promoting the international dissemination of Lingnan culture. Although current academic research has paid attention to the integration of culture and ideological and political education in English courses, there are still few systematic studies on the integration of regional cultures like Lingnan culture, and there is a lack of operable paths that align with the actual teaching practices of local universities. Based on this, this paper, grounded in the practice of local universities in Guangdong Province, systematically explores effective paths for integrating Lingnan culture, aiming to provide theoretical and practical references for enhancing cultural education in college English.

2. The Importance of Integrating Lingnan Culture into Ideological and Political Education in College English

(1) Aligning with the Educational Essence of Fostering Virtue through Education in College English

College English teaching has never been a mere training of language skills; it carries the dual mission of cultivating language competence and shaping values. The patriotic sentiment embedded in Lingnan culture (e.g., the patriotic spirit manifested in the destruction of opium at Humen), the reform consciousness (e.g., the practical exploration of reform and opening-up in Guangdong), and the pragmatic character (e.g., the integrity and hardworking spirit upheld by Cantonese merchants) naturally align with the core socialist values. If these cultural elements are organically integrated into college English classrooms, abstract value guidance can be transformed into perceptible and resonant concrete content, truly achieving the deep integration of knowledge transmission and ideological-political education, and effectively responding to the fundamental educational question of

“what kind of people to cultivate, how to cultivate them, and for whom to cultivate them.”

(2) A Core Support for Enhancing the Cultural Depth and Educational Effectiveness of the Course

For students, Lingnan culture is never an abstract concept in textbooks; it is the life scenes they are exposed to daily—arcade buildings along the streets, dragon boat races during festivals, and the customary practice of drinking tea. These familiar elements possess natural affinity and appeal. By transforming these vivid cultural materials into usable resources in English classrooms, the course content naturally becomes closer to students' life experiences, and their sense of engagement is correspondingly enhanced. In short, value guidance should not be rigid indoctrination imposed from the outside, but rather a conviction that grows naturally from within as students develop identification with their local culture. This deep integration of culture and teaching provides a concrete pathway for innovating the “language + culture + critical thinking” teaching model, helping to push college English teaching beyond the limitations of mere instrumental training toward a direction with greater humanistic warmth and intellectual depth.

(3) A Key Measure for Promoting Local Cultural Inheritance and International Dissemination

In an era of parallel globalization and localization, society increasingly needs talents who can skillfully use English to tell China's story well and disseminate local culture. Lingnan culture, with its profound foundation in Chinese civilization and its distinctive maritime cultural characteristics, serves as excellent material for cross-cultural communication. Through systematic training in college English classrooms, students can not only enhance their language ability to interpret local culture in English, but also gradually develop a proactive awareness of disseminating local culture and acquire cross-cultural communication skills. This cultivates a cohort of communicators who are both proficient in English expression and firm in their cultural stance, thereby contributing to the global dissemination of Lingnan culture and Chinese culture at large.

3. Existing Problems in Integrating Lingnan Culture into Ideological and Political Education in College English

At present, the reform of ideological and political education in college English courses is still in its exploratory stage across universities nationwide, and the systematic integration of regional cultures, especially Lingnan culture, faces a series of practical difficulties. Through actual teaching observations, the author has identified the following four main problems:

(1) Lack of Systematic Cultural Integration in Teaching Content

Current college English textbooks are still primarily organized around language knowledge and general cultural themes, with limited representation of Chinese indigenous culture, and even less coverage of distinctive regional cultures like Lingnan culture. When dealing with Chinese culture, most textbooks tend to focus on nationally recognized elements such as Peking opera, calligraphy, and the Spring Festival, lacking systematic integration of Lingnan local cultural elements (e.g., Cantonese opera, arcade buildings, tea-drinking customs, dragon boat culture). Even when some teachers attempt to

supplement relevant content, it often appears as scattered and incidental embellishments, failing to form an organic connection with unit themes and language training objectives. Moreover, English-language materials suitable for classroom use that combine language learning functionality with cultural depth (such as bilingual readers, audio-visual resources, and case libraries) remain scarce, leading to a shortage of teaching resources.

(2) Traditional Teaching Methods Lacking Cultural Experience

In actual teaching, the integration of Lingnan culture is still predominantly carried out through teacher-centered lecturing, commonly in the form of PPT presentations of cultural knowledge points or playing relevant videos. This culture-informing approach fails to fully exploit the language practicality and interactivity that English courses should possess, leaving students in a passive receiving state and lacking deep participation and cultural experience. For instance, when teaching about Lingnan architecture, classroom activities often stop at picture displays and terminology translation, without designing task-driven, experiential language practice activities such as simulating an English-guided tour of arcade neighborhoods or using English to discuss the wisdom and family culture of wok-shaped gable roofs. The disconnect between teaching methods and the emotional and experiential aspects of cultural education results in students' understanding of Lingnan culture remaining at a superficial informational level, failing to stimulate emotional resonance and value identification.

(3) Evaluation System Overemphasizing Language Skills and Neglecting Cultural Literacy

The Opinions of the Ministry of Education on Deepening the Reform of Undergraduate Education and Comprehensively Improving the Quality of Talent Cultivation emphasize the need to improve the academic assessment system that organically combines process-oriented and outcome-oriented evaluations (Ministry of Education, 2019). Current college English course evaluations still center on final written examinations, focusing primarily on assessing language knowledge and general skills, lacking effective evaluation dimensions for cultural literacy and value identification. Even when class participation is included in the usual performance score, it is mostly based on indicators such as frequency of speaking and completeness of assignments, without systematic and scientifically sound assessment dimensions and observable indicators for measuring students' depth of understanding of Lingnan culture, accuracy in interpreting relevant value concepts, and willingness and ability to disseminate local culture in cross-cultural contexts. This evaluative bias leads both teachers and students to focus more on easily assessable language knowledge points, inadvertently undermining the teaching investment and learning motivation for cultural integration and ideological-political education.

(4) Insufficient Teachers' Cultural Literacy and Pedagogical Transformation Ability

The Guidelines for the Construction of Ideological and Political Education in Higher Education Curricula (No. 3 [2020] of the Ministry of Education) point out that teachers are the key to comprehensively advancing the construction of ideological and political education in curricula. To implement the reform of foreign language teaching with ideological and political education, teacher development is an unavoidable issue. Foreign language teachers have long been accustomed to

language-training-oriented teaching based on cultivating foreign language ability, with teaching content concentrated on language knowledge and skills. Ideological and political education in the curriculum poses a new challenge for most teachers (Ministry of Education, 2020). The Guidelines also call for strengthening teachers' capacity building in ideological and political education, conducting regular exchanges of typical experiences, on-site teaching observations, teacher training sessions, and making full use of modern information technology to promote the sharing and utilization of high-quality resources. It also advocates relying on university teacher online training centers, teacher teaching development centers, etc., to conduct teacher training, establish collective lesson-planning and research systems for ideological and political education, and encourage cooperative teaching and research between ideological and political theory teachers and subject teachers (Ministry of Education, 2020).

Teachers are the key to effectively integrating culture. However, many college English teachers, especially those who are not native to Guangdong or lack systematic understanding of Lingnan culture, do not have a deep grasp of the historical context, spiritual core, and contemporary manifestations of this cultural system, facing the dilemma of "knowing little and having nothing substantial to say." Moreover, how to transform cultural content into teaching activities suitable for English classrooms that are communicative, thought-provoking, and engaging places higher demands on teachers' curriculum design ability and teaching wisdom. Currently, systematic teacher training and teaching-research support mechanisms specifically for regional cultural pedagogical transformation are not well-established, and teachers often rely on personal interests for sporadic attempts, making it difficult to form sustainable and replicable teaching paradigms.

4. Specific Paths for Integrating Lingnan Culture into Ideological and Political Education in College English

(1) Reconstructing Teaching Content and Embedding Cultural Essence

At present, many college foreign language textbooks used in China are compiled based on language points, emphasizing the transmission of language knowledge. Against the background of ideological and political education in curricula, textbook compilation should shift from knowledge transmission to the cultivation of language use ability. (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2020) In terms of teaching content, modular school-based textbooks can be developed in collaboration with foreign language teachers from provincial universities, experts in history and literature, and front-line master teachers. Lingnan cultural elements can be categorized by history, spirit, and contemporary practice, complementing existing textbook unit themes (such as "innovation," "cultural inheritance," and "cross-cultural communication"). Each cultural element can be designed in three modules: language acquisition, cultural cognition, and value deliberation. The history category focuses on English narratives and spiritual interpretations of events such as the Humen opium destruction and the Maritime Silk Road, accompanied by exercises like excerpts from historical documents and translation of English historical materials. The spirit category delves into core traits such as openness,

inclusiveness, pragmatism, and innovation, reinforcing value identification through activities like case studies of Cantonese merchants and debates on cultural concepts. The contemporary practice category engages with real-world issues such as the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the transformation and upgrading of Dongguan's manufacturing industry, designing practical tasks like English research reports and drafting international communication proposals.

(2) Innovating Teaching Methods and Constructing Situational Scenarios

In terms of teaching methods, teachers need to break away from the traditional one-way knowledge transmission model and shift toward constructing student-centered, experiential, interactive, and deliberative cultural learning scenarios. Teachers can systematically design project-based learning tasks, such as organizing students to carry out practical projects like "creating short videos for international promotion of Lingnan culture," "building digital English archives of intangible cultural heritage items in Dongguan," or "conducting English interviews on the internationalization process of Greater Bay Area enterprises." These projects guide students to use English in authentic contexts for cultural exploration, content creation, and dissemination, thereby deepening their understanding and identification with cultural connotations through language use. At the same time, modern educational technologies can be more extensively integrated. Using tools such as VR and AR, digital teaching resources like "VR immersive guided tours of Chen Clan Ancestral Hall" and "AR interactive experiences of Cantonese cuisine culture" can be developed to create highly simulated and interactive cultural scenes, giving students a greater sense of participation and fostering emotional resonance. Furthermore, the "second classroom" needs to be further expanded, such as involving students in volunteer English interpretation activities at local museums and memorial halls, hosting Lingnan-themed exhibition areas at campus international cultural festivals, or conducting online cultural live-broadcast exchanges with overseas partner institutions. Through these authentic social and cross-cultural communication contexts, students can not only practice their language skills but also enhance their confidence in cultural dissemination and strengthen their sense of cultural belonging, ultimately achieving the organic integration of knowledge acquisition, ability enhancement, and value guidance.

(3) Optimizing the Evaluation System with a Competency-Oriented Approach

The evaluation mechanism plays a guiding role in the ideological and political education of college English courses, and optimizing the evaluation system for ideological-political objectives is of great significance. (Xu, 2025) Incorporating ideological-political elements, including Lingnan culture, into the assessment system can effectively promote teaching deepening and learning internalization, thereby significantly improving the overall educational effectiveness of college English courses. On the one hand, formative assessment should be strengthened, focusing on the internalization process of students' values. Instead of relying solely on final written examinations, evaluation should permeate the entire teaching process. For instance, during class discussions on topics like "Cantonese merchant spirit and contemporary entrepreneurs' responsibilities," teachers can carefully observe students' contributions

and record the depth and logic of their thinking. On the other hand, summative assessment should be optimized by deeply integrating language skills and cultural literacy assessment. In final examinations or course-end evaluations, a dedicated cultural literacy assessment module can be set up, using more open-ended and comprehensive question types rather than simple cultural knowledge true/false questions. In addition, the diversification of evaluation subjects should be promoted, constructing a teaching-learning-evaluation community. Teachers should not be the sole evaluators; student self-assessment, peer assessment, and even external practice mentors (where feasible) can be invited to participate in the evaluation.

(4) Enhancing Teacher Competence and Empowering Ideological-Political Teaching

To “tell Lingnan stories well” in college English courses, teachers’ leading role must be fully utilized, with students as the main participants. To comprehensively advance the educational work of ideological and political education in curricula, teachers must optimize their own knowledge structure and professional competence. (Xu, 2025) Universities can create opportunities for foreign language teachers to learn about Lingnan culture, such as regularly organizing “special training seminars on Lingnan culture,” inviting historians and cultural experts to explain its historical context, spiritual traits, and core values, and arranging field trips to sites like Chen Clan Ancestral Hall, Dr. Sun Yat-sen’s Former Residence, and the Shenzhen Reform and Opening-up Exhibition Hall for immersive cultural experiences. At the same time, institutions can establish regular teaching-research platforms through activities such as curriculum design workshops for ideological and political education and observation and discussion of exemplary integrated lesson cases. These activities should focus on training teachers on how to identify cultural entry points and ideological-political elements from language materials, and how to design progressive task chains that guide students to naturally transition from cultural awareness to value deliberation through language practice.

(5) Strengthening Resource Development and Building Collaborative Mechanisms

Universities should take the lead in establishing multi-party collaborative education mechanisms to provide foundational support for the implementation of various paths. First, systematically develop Lingnan cultural resources adapted to college English teaching, such as compiling bilingual textbooks like English Reader of Lingnan Culture and building a digital English resource platform for Lingnan culture. Second, establish cooperative foreign language practice teaching bases with local cultural institutions (e.g., museums, intangible cultural heritage protection centers) to provide students with authentic extracurricular practical scenarios. At the same time, actively tap into business cases from local enterprises (e.g., leading companies in technology and manufacturing) that reflect the contemporary Lingnan spirit of innovation, and incorporate them into classroom teaching. Additionally, in collaboration with peer provincial universities and overseas partner institutions, establish a regional foreign language teaching alliance to regularly conduct teaching-research exchanges, resource sharing, and student exchange activities, forming a multi-party collaborative educational synergy.

5. Conclusion

Integrating Lingnan culture into the ideological and political education of college English courses is an important pathway for enhancing cultural confidence and implementing the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education. This study systematically constructs an integration pathway around five aspects: reconstructing teaching content, innovating teaching methods, optimizing the evaluation system, enhancing teacher competence, and building collaborative resources. This integration enables students to deepen their cultural identity and foster patriotic sentiments while improving their language abilities. Future research could further conduct empirical teaching studies to explore the deeper mechanisms of technology-empowered cultural integration, providing continuously optimized theoretical and practical references for the construction of regionally distinctive ideological and political education in foreign language courses.

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