



Research on the Construction of an Integrated Curriculum Group for “Spreading China” in English Majors Under the Background of “Understanding Contemporary China”

Anna Wang*, Wenwen Zheng

Foreign Languages Department, Qingdao Binhai University, Qingdao 266540, Shandong, China.

How to cite this paper: Anna Wang, Wenwen Zheng. (2024). Research on the Construction of an Integrated Curriculum Group for “Spreading China” in English Majors Under the Background of “Understanding Contemporary China”. *The Educational Review, USA*, 8(11), 1372-1378. DOI: 10.26855/er.2024.11.016

Received: October 16, 2024
Accepted: November 12, 2024
Published: December 9, 2024

Corresponding author: Anna Wang, Foreign Languages Department, Qingdao Binhai University, Qingdao 266540, Shandong, China.

Abstract

This paper centers on the extensive backdrop of “understanding contemporary China” and undertakes an in-depth exploration regarding the construction status of the “Spreading China” course group for English majors. Through a meticulous analysis of the present situation and a multitude of problems manifested in the current curriculum arrangement of English majors within institutions of higher education, a series of highly targeted construction strategies are subsequently proposed. These strategies encompass optimizing the curriculum framework, innovating teaching methodologies, intensifying practical teaching, elevating the professional acumen of teachers, and refining the teaching evaluation system. The central aim here is to foster English major students into talents who possess a solid command of the language and outstanding cross-cultural communication capabilities. By doing so, it is expected to contribute to the widespread dissemination of Chinese culture on the international stage, thereby effectively augmenting China's discursive power and cultural influence in the global arena.

Keywords

“Three Entries”; “Understanding Contemporary China”; Spreading China; Curriculum Group

1. Introduction

At the end of 2019, the Publicity Department of the Central Committee launched the pilot work of bringing the multilingual versions of “Xi Jinping: The Governance of China” into campuses, textbooks, and classrooms (referred to as “Three Entries” for short). The “Three Entries” work has promoted foreign language majors in colleges and universities to integrate Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era into the process of cultivating foreign language talents, clarifying the path of ideological and political teaching reform in foreign language major courses. As a key component of the “Three Entries” work, the multilingual series of textbooks “Understanding Contemporary China” compiled by the Ministry of Education has been popularized and applied in foreign language majors across the country since the fall of 2022. Each college or university is required to solidly implement the “Three Entries” work as an important political task and regard it as a core measure for comprehensively carrying out the ideological and political construction of foreign language major courses.

The emergence of the “Understanding Contemporary China” series of textbooks aims to deepen students' understanding

of the Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics by integrating language teaching with national conditions education and strengthening their ability to tell Chinese stories in foreign languages. University scholars have conducted numerous studies on topics such as the construction of this series of textbooks, teaching practice, and the cultivation of national consciousness in foreign language education. For example, You Guangjie (2023) proposed the teaching design of “Understanding Contemporary China - English Reading and Writing Course” based on the OBE (Outcome-Based Education) educational concept, focusing on the student-centered and learning-outcome-oriented teaching mode to cultivate students’ English proficiency, ideological and political literacy, and professional ability. Wang Mengya (2024) explored how to integrate the three steps of “driving, facilitating, and evaluating” into the teaching process of the English major reading and writing courses based on the POA (Production-Oriented Approach) to enhance students’ English reading and writing abilities and their in-depth understanding of the Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. Wang Chunli (2024) focused on how foreign language teachers construct multiple identities and integrate ideological and political education elements into the teaching process under the background of curriculum ideological and political education to cultivate students’ social responsibility and cross-cultural communication ability. Yan Xiaoling (2024) took “Comprehensive English” as an example to explore the practice of ideological and political construction in foreign language major courses under the background of understanding contemporary China, emphasizing the coordinated development of professional teaching and ideological and political education. Liu Li (2024) focused on integrating the red stories in the Yellow River culture into English major textbooks to inherit the Yellow River culture and highlight the importance of this integration in cultivating students’ national confidence and cultural inheritance awareness. Liu Hong (2023) analyzed the practical exploration of cultivating national consciousness through the multilingual series of textbooks “Understanding Contemporary China” from the perspective of national discourse, emphasizing the crucial significance and practical path of national discourse in foreign language education.

In summary, these studies not only involve the application of this series of textbooks in enhancing students’ foreign language reading and writing abilities, cross-cultural communication abilities, and the effectiveness of ideological and political education but also cover the role transformation of teachers in curriculum ideological and political education, the construction of multiple identities, and the integration of national discourse in foreign language education. They provide theoretical support and practical guidance for improving the quality of foreign language teaching in colleges and universities and the comprehensive development of students and also point out the thinking direction for foreign language education to serve the strategic needs of the country.

Against this background, this research relies on the “Understanding Contemporary China” textbooks and starts from the top-level design of the major to deeply explore the effective paths for the construction of an integrated curriculum group for “Spreading China” in English majors. Through measures such as integrating curriculum resources, optimizing teaching content and methods, strengthening practical teaching links, and enhancing teacher quality, it enhances students’ ability to spread Chinese culture, values, and contemporary China’s development achievements in English, providing theoretical support and practical reference for cultivating English majors with international vision and cross-cultural communication ability.

2. Problems Existing in the Current Curriculum System of English Majors

Through research on the curriculum setting of English majors in multiple colleges and universities, it has been found that although some colleges and universities have already offered courses related to Chinese culture, such as “Introduction to Chinese Culture” and “Selected Readings of Chinese Literature”, the proportion of these courses in the entire curriculum system is relatively small, and there is a lack of effective connection and integration between courses. Meanwhile, the integration of Chinese cultural elements in English major skill courses is also relatively insufficient. The main problems are as follows:

2.1 Unclear Curriculum Objectives

The objectives of some courses in cultivating students’ ability to spread China are not clearly defined, lacking specific requirements for students’ cross-cultural communication awareness and ability, resulting in students lacking clear directional guidance in using English to spread China during the learning process.

2.2 Fragmented Curriculum Content

The existing curriculum content presents a fragmented situation in terms of involving Chinese culture and contemporary China’s development, lacking systematicness and depth. For example, Chinese culture courses often only introduce simple cultural phenomena and fail to deeply explore the values and cultural connotations behind them, which is not conducive

to students' comprehensive and in-depth understanding and spreading of Chinese culture.

2.3 Single Teaching Method

The teaching method is still dominated by traditional classroom lecturing, lacking diversity and innovation. In cultivating students' cross-cultural communication ability, the practical teaching link is relatively weak, and students lack opportunities for actual operation and experience, making it difficult to transform theoretical knowledge into actual communication ability.

2.4 Insufficient Construction of the Teaching Staff

The professional quality of teachers in cross-cultural communication teaching needs to be improved. Some teachers lack in-depth research on Chinese culture and cross-cultural communication experience, making it difficult to effectively guide students to carry out English-spreading activities of Chinese culture.

3. Construction Strategies for the Integrated Curriculum Group of “Spreading China” for English Majors

3.1 Optimization of the Curriculum System

3.1.1 Expansion of the Contents of Original Core Courses

Relying on the original classic courses such as reading, writing, and translation, their contents and potential are deeply tapped. The “Understanding Contemporary China” textbooks with significant contemporary significance and value are closely integrated with the original professional textbooks. The teaching content is further expanded, and “dual-textbook” courses are meticulously created. On the basis of the original courses, not only new textbook elements are integrated, but also the depth and breadth of teaching are expanded, enabling students to more clearly grasp the development context and value concepts of contemporary China while learning professional knowledge.

3.1.2 Addition of New “Three Entries” Courses

A series of new “Three Entries” courses that closely follow the theme of the times, such as “Appreciation of Cultural Translation” “Chinese Culture Translation” and “Contemporary China Speech and Debate”, are actively added. The rich language materials in the important work “Xi Jinping: The Governance of China” are skillfully integrated into the course teaching. By setting up these new courses, students' love for Chinese culture and in-depth thinking about China's development is stimulated.

3.1.3 Construction of Online “Three Entries” Courses

“Three Entries” online open courses are built and blended teaching is carried out. Modern information technology is fully utilized to provide students with the convenience of learning at different times and spaces, enhancing the flexibility and autonomy of learning.

In the process of constructing the “Spreading China” curriculum group, the logical relationships between various courses need to be clarified, and a hierarchical and rationally structured curriculum system needs to be constructed. The core courses lay a solid theoretical foundation and language skills for students, and the expansion courses extend and expand on the basis of the core courses, prompting students to more comprehensively and in-depth understand Chinese culture and contemporary China and improve their cross-cultural communication abilities in different fields. The “dual-textbook” courses and the new “Three Entries” courses complement each other, and classroom teaching and practical teaching are closely linked, integrating Chinese culture and foreign languages into one. Under this teaching system, a distinctive and powerful integrated curriculum group of “Spreading China” is gradually formed, laying a solid foundation for cultivating outstanding talents with international vision and Chinese feelings.

3.2 Innovation of Teaching Methods

3.2.1 “Four-Step” Teaching Design Method

The four-step teaching design path of “teaching content integration - teaching strategy selection - teaching process implementation - teaching effect evaluation” is followed, with the POA (Production-Oriented Approach) as the core teaching concept, and the “production orientation” is run through the entire classroom teaching design. Through output-driven, input-facilitated teaching mode and teaching evaluation, students' learning motivation is effectively enhanced and the teaching effect of the “Three Entries” curriculum group is practically improved.

3.2.2 Project-driven Teaching Method

The project-driven teaching method is implemented and teaching activities are organized with projects as the orientation. For example, in the “Cross-Cultural Communication Practice” course, the teacher can design projects such as “Making Chinese Culture Brochures” and “Planning Chinese Culture Theme Activities” for students to complete in groups. During the project implementation process, students need to use the knowledge they have learned to conduct market research, select cultural content, write English copy, and design layouts, thereby improving their ability to comprehensively apply knowledge and teamwork ability, and also enhancing their actual operation ability in spreading Chinese culture.

3.2.3 Situational Teaching Method

Real or simulated cross-cultural communication situations are created for students to practice and experience. For example, in the “Contemporary China Speech and Debate” course, the teacher can simulate international conferences, and cultural exchange activities, and let students play different roles in conducting English communication and introducing Chinese culture. In this way, students can better adapt to the cross-cultural communication environment, improve their language application ability and adaptability, and also deepen their understanding of the way that Chinese culture is spread in different situations.

3.2.4 Application of Digital Teaching Means

Digital teaching means such as online course platforms, multimedia resources, and virtual reality technology are fully utilized to enrich teaching resources and teaching forms. Teachers can develop online courses, and provide rich learning materials including videos, audios, and e-books, to facilitate students’ autonomous learning. At the same time, multimedia technology is used to display the charm of Chinese culture, such as using virtual reality technology to let students experience the charm of Chinese historical and cultural sites on the spot. In addition, online interactive platforms are used to carry out activities such as discussion, assignment submission, and evaluation, enhancing the interaction and communication between teachers and students and among students, and improving the teaching effect.

3.3 Strengthening of Practical Teaching

3.3.1 Establishment of Practical Teaching Bases

Long-term and stable cooperative relationships with cultural enterprises, foreign affairs institutions, and international schools are established to establish practical teaching bases. For example, cooperation with local museums and cultural centers is carried out to let students participate in the translation and explanation work of cultural exhibitions; cooperation with foreign affairs departments is carried out to provide students with internship opportunities for foreign affairs reception and translation; cooperation with international schools is carried out to carry out Chinese culture promotion activities, and let students serve as volunteer teachers to teach Chinese culture courses. By establishing practical teaching bases, students are provided with more opportunities to conduct actual work, improving their practical ability and professional quality.

3.3.2 Organization of Practical Activities

A variety of practical activities such as English speech contests, English drama performances, translation competitions, and research on the overseas spread of Chinese culture are organized. English speech contests and drama performances can exercise students’ oral English expression ability and stage performance ability, and at the same time let students deeply study Chinese cultural themes during the preparation process, improving their cultural spreadability; translation competitions can improve students’ translation level and the accuracy of translating Chinese culture terms; research on the overseas spread of Chinese culture can let students understand the current situation and existing problems of the overseas spread of Chinese culture, providing a reference for their future learning and work.

3.4 Enhancement of Teacher Quality

3.4.1 Strengthening of Teacher Training

Teachers are regularly organized to participate in training courses and academic seminars on cross-cultural communication, Chinese culture research, and English teaching methods. Through training, teachers can update their educational concepts, learn the latest teaching methods and technologies, deeply understand the connotations of Chinese culture and the international spread trend, and improve their cross-cultural communication teaching ability. For example, the school can invite domestic and foreign experts and scholars to hold lectures and workshops to provide a platform for teachers to learn and communicate.

3.4.2 Conducting of Academic Research

Teachers are encouraged to conduct academic research related to “Spreading China”, such as research on the English expression of Chinese culture, cross-cultural communication strategies, and the effect of Chinese culture’s external spread. Through academic research, teachers can continuously deepen their understanding of the teaching content, apply the research results to teaching practice, and improve the teaching quality. At the same time, the academic research of teachers can also provide theoretical support and practical experience reference for the construction of the curriculum group.

3.4.3 Promotion of Teacher Cross-cultural Exchange

Teachers are supported to participate in international academic exchange activities and cultural exchange projects to broaden their international vision. During their overseas visits and studies, teachers can deeply understand the local culture and education system, learn advanced teaching experiences abroad, and at the same time, establish cooperative relationships with foreign scholars and educators to jointly conduct cross-cultural communication research and teaching cooperation projects. In addition, teachers or experts with cross-cultural backgrounds can be introduced to universities or colleges to inject new vitality into the teaching staff and promote cross-cultural exchange and cooperation among teachers.

3.5 Creation of an Integrated Evaluation System

Multi-dimensional evaluation methods such as immediate evaluation and delayed evaluation, self-evaluation and other evaluation, process evaluation, and final evaluation are integrated. The second classroom evaluation is integrated into the process evaluation, and the social evaluation of students participating in “Spreading China” creative competitions, volunteer activities, social practices, and innovation and entrepreneurship activities is incorporated into the assessment system. At the same time, the second classroom evaluation is integrated into the process evaluation to enrich the content and dimensions of the evaluation. Students’ participation in various activities such as “Spreading China” creative competitions, volunteer activities, social practices, and innovation and entrepreneurship activities can not only expand their vision and ability but also enable them to feel the value of curriculum ideological and political education in practice. Incorporating the social evaluation of students in these activities into the assessment system makes the evaluation more comprehensive, objective, and real. Through feedback from all sectors of society, teachers can better understand students’ performance and influence in society, further optimize the curriculum's ideological and political teaching, and cultivate outstanding talents with high social responsibility and innovative spirit.

4. Significance of the Construction of the Integrated Curriculum Group of “Spreading China” for English Majors

4.1 Enriching the Connotation of the Discipline

The construction of the “Spreading China” curriculum group can inject new vitality into the English major discipline, broadening the research fields and teaching contents of the discipline. In the past, English major teaching may have focused more on the English language itself and the study of Western culture. Now, with the inclusion of Chinese culture dissemination, the connotation of the English major discipline becomes more diverse and richer, covering various aspects such as the application of English from the perspective of Chinese culture and cross-cultural communication. This not only provides new teaching and research directions for English major teachers but also provides a broader learning space for students, inspiring their new interest in English major learning.

4.2 Enhancing Students’ Cross-cultural Communication Ability

The curriculum group covers a rich variety of curriculum contents, including Chinese culture, English language, communication theory and practice, and other fields. Through systematic learning of these courses, students can construct a comprehensive knowledge structure that includes profound Chinese cultural heritage, solid English language skills, and professional knowledge of cross-cultural communication.

The setting of the “Spreading China” curriculum group closely combines the learning of Chinese culture with the cultivation of English language skills. During the in-depth study of Chinese culture, students will continuously compare the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, which helps them more sensitively detect the influence of cultural factors on communication, and thus enables them to communicate more appropriately and effectively in cross-cultural communication scenarios.

4.3 Helping the International Dissemination of Chinese Culture

In the context of globalization, English, as an international common language, occupies a crucial position in cross-cultural communication. Through the construction of the “Spreading China” curriculum group for English majors, a group of professional talents who are proficient in English and have a deep understanding of Chinese culture can be cultivated. They can accurately introduce China’s traditional culture, modern development achievements, and unique values to people around the world in fluent English, thus breaking the barriers to the dissemination of Chinese culture caused by language differences and enabling Chinese culture to be more widely and deeply disseminated on the international stage.

5. Conclusion

The construction of the integrated curriculum group of “Spreading China” for English majors has important and non-negligible significance in promoting the international dissemination of Chinese culture, cultivating professional talents, serving national strategies, and promoting the development of the discipline itself. It is a necessary measure to meet the development needs of the times. Under the background of “understanding contemporary China”, the construction of the “Spreading China” curriculum group for English majors is an important task with far-reaching significance and in urgent need of promotion. Through the in-depth analysis of various aspects of this research, the following conclusions can be drawn: Relying on the “Understanding Contemporary China” series of textbooks, through “expanding the original classic courses” and “adding new courses”, building “Three Entries” online open courses, and carrying out rich and colorful second classroom activities, an integrated “Spreading China” curriculum group can be constructed where the “dual-textbook courses” and the “new Three Entries courses” complement each other, online courses and offline courses are organically integrated, and in-class and out-of-class teaching complement each other, thereby realizing the upgrade of the English major education system, implementing both the humanistic and instrumental natures of the major into course teaching, and truly realizing the synchronous progress of professional education and ideological and political education. The integrated curriculum group of “Spreading China” can also enable students to deeply cultivate patriotism, national pride, and cultural confidence, improve their ideological and political level, and enable them to tell good Chinese stories to the world in fluent foreign languages, allowing the world to better understand China and contribute to promoting the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind.

The construction of the “Spreading China” curriculum group for English majors is a long-term and systematic project. Although certain achievements have been made, continuous efforts are still needed to overcome existing problems and continuously optimize and improve to meet the new requirements of the times for the cultivation of English.

Funding

This paper is one of the phased research achievements of the Teaching Reform Research Project of Undergraduate Colleges and Universities in Shandong Province in 2022 “Research on the Integrated Construction of Ideological and Political Education in Foreign Language Majors under the Background of the ‘Three Entries’ of the Multilingual Versions of Xi Jinping: The Governance of China” (Project No.: 2022043), and also the research of the Shandong Higher Education Association for Higher Education Research in 2022 “Research on the Practice of Moral Education in Foreign Language Courses in Colleges and Universities in the Context of the Three Entries’ Campaign—Taking the Advanced English I* Course as an Example” (Project No.: 2022BY039).

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